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55th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 37

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/609)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.11)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.11.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): It is an honour for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/L.11).

Transition in the areas of security, politics and economics has made remarkable progress this past year under strong Afghan leadership. The year 2014 will once again be a year marked by such pivotal events as the presidential elections in April and the termination of the International Security Assistance Force at the end of the year. As we approach those watershed moments, the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and the international community is evolving. However, it is essential to understand that redefining that very relationship should reinforce it. That is also the core message of the draft resolution before us today. Allow me to briefly highlight five core elements of the draft resolution.

First, with respect to transition in the area of security, on 18 June, President Karzai announced the final tranche of the transition process. The Afghan National Security Forces are now in the lead to provide security throughout the country. Since the inception of the transition process, the Afghan National Army and Police have continuously improved their capacities. Yet challenges remain, and the achievements made so far remain fragile. The draft resolution therefore underlines the international community's resolve to support the Afghan security forces during the transition and beyond and reiterates the commitment made at the Chicago Summit in 2012 to sustain international support for the Afghan security forces beyond 2014.

We welcome the convening of a *loya jirga* to decide on a security agreement with the United States. That agreement will constitute a cornerstone in the architecture of international support to Afghanistan in the years to come. The German Government has offered to continue supporting the Afghan National Security Forces in their challenging effort to provide security for the Afghan people. We are looking forward to working with our Afghan partners to set the legal and practical framework for that involvement in the coming months. In accordance with the Chicago Summit joint declaration, Germany will work towards a sound legal basis for our future cooperation, aiming at a Security Council resolution.

Secondly, the draft resolution is about the long-term commitment of the international community throughout the transformation decade. That commitment, declared by the Government of Afghanistan and its international

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partners at the Bonn Conference of 2011 and reaffirmed at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, rests firmly on the principle of mutuality. Building on that unique framework, the international community has pledged \$16 billion through 2015 in support of the economic and political stabilization of Afghanistan. It has committed itself to sustaining its support at or near levels of the past decade through 2017, in line with the principles of aid effectiveness.

The Afghan Government, in turn, has committed itself to achieving its governance and development goals in a determined manner. Indeed, during the past decade Afghanistan has made remarkable progress in a variety of areas, including health, education and infrastructure. However, continued efforts are of paramount importance to protecting and advancing the gains made in past years. In that context, I welcome the resolve of the Government of Afghanistan to fulfil its commitments within an accelerated time frame.

Thirdly, the draft resolution expresses our appreciation about the recent progress made in the preparation of presidential and provincial council elections. We particularly welcome the adoption of a legislative framework and the appointment of new members of the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission. A broad range of political leaders have announced their candidacies to run in those historic elections. It is key that the exemplary work of the Afghan authorities result in a legitimate outcome and that widely accepted election results yield a peaceful transfer of power.

The electoral process is just one example of the empowerment and leadership of Afghan institutions. We expect to see similar ownership and dedication by the Government in maintaining the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission as an effective institution for the protection and promotion of human rights. As reflected in the draft resolution, preserving and consolidating gains in the protection and promotion of human rights and the equal participation of all members of society, especially women, in all spheres of Afghan life remains critical.

Fourthly, the draft resolution reiterates the importance of the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. For that process to yield sustainable results, it needs to be inclusive. In that context, respect for the Afghan Constitution and its human rights provisions — the rights of women in

particular — is essential. The draft resolution expresses appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan in advancing the process and reaffirms the continued support of the international community in that regard.

Finally, the Istanbul Heart of Asia Process, which aims to enhance regional cooperation and dialogue, is another pillar for a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. We call on all partners and supporters to accelerate the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures in the coming months. We commend China for hosting the next Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, in 2014, and we look forward to the Process gaining renewed momentum.

To conclude, I would like to express our gratitude to all delegations that participated in this year's informal consultations, in particular to my colleague Ambassador Tanin and his team for their dedication and close cooperation.

By adopting the draft resolution once again by consensus today, the General Assembly will reaffirm its commitment to a prosperous and peaceful future for Afghanistan and send a strong message of support to the Afghan Government and people.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): We come together today to adopt this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/L.11). I thank all Member States that participated in a spirit of cooperation for their support for the efforts of the Afghan Government and their solidarity with the Afghan people in their struggle to build a democratic, stable and prosperous future. We also thank Ambassador Peter Wittig and our colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations for facilitating the draft resolution.

As we gather to take stock of the situation in Afghanistan, we are mindful of the monumental progress made to date. From the ashes of war, over the past 12 years a new State was founded on the basis of a democratic Constitution and the will of the Afghan people. Afghanistan regained its historical place as a responsible member of the international community, and the country again became home to all Afghans, all ethnic groups, men and women. Millions of Afghan refugees who had escaped war, violence and devastation returned home. The Afghan flag is now raised in the far remote ends of the country and around the world. Today millions of Afghan boys and girls have access to education. Ninety per cent of people

receive primary health care in hundreds of clinics and health centres countrywide. We made tremendous progress in reducing maternal and child mortality, and people live longer and with more certainty about their future. Our vibrant civil society and independent media are emblematic of an emerging democracy in the region. Big steps were taken to restore the rights of women, elevate their status and strengthen their role in society. Afghan people enjoy their democratic rights and freedoms, which are guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution. In summary, Afghanistan's progress has been huge and, to a larger extent, unprecedented for a country that is still struggling to leave conflict and violence behind.

Following a decade of extraordinary engagement by the international community in reconstruction and stabilization efforts, Afghanistan is moving towards a new beginning characterized and guided by the principles of national ownership, leadership and strengthened sovereignty. Tomorrow in Kabul, the consultative *loya jirga* will confer on the agreement that is at the core of strategic relations between Afghanistan and the United States. That is an important event, following the signing of the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America on 1 May 2012, following 15 months of negotiations between the Governments of Afghanistan and the United States. Representatives of the Afghan people will have their say on the pact, which will shape our future in a changing world.

In four months, Afghanistan will hold its next presidential and provincial council elections. In a spirit of national unity, Afghans from all segments of society will go to the polls to choose the new leadership of the country. That will mark the first peaceful, democratic transfer of power from one elected President to another. All efforts are being made to ensure that the elections are transparent, credible, free and fair. The inclusion of women as candidates, voters and active civil society members is essential to those efforts. The Afghan people expect the outcome of the elections to further solidify political stability and to strengthen the gains of the past decade.

At the end of next year, we will enter a new phase when the international military forces will leave the country. Afghan forces assumed full security responsibility in June and will be in charge of the security and defence of the country nationwide. Beyond

2014, training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces will remain imperative. In that connection, we are in the process of determining, together with our NATO partners, the structure of the NATO post-2014 posture in the country.

As we look to the future, Afghanistan is focused on a number of immediate priorities that are key to the success of the transition and achieving lasting peace and stability in the country.

First, on peace and reconciliation, the Government of Afghanistan is continuing its efforts to achieve a political settlement, reconciliation and secure durable peace. Many attempts have been made in the past year to restart peace talks with the Taliban, through the vigilant efforts of the High Peace Council as well as the framework of bilateral and trilateral initiatives. We have taken additional steps. Despite some setbacks, we are confident that we will reach a political solution. We continue our efforts to move the process forward, and we are encouraged by the commitment and cooperation of our brotherly country Pakistan, which is vital to the advancement of the peace and reconciliation process.

Secondly, with regard to regional cooperation, peace and security in Afghanistan is inextricable from peace and prosperity in the region. We are working together with all our neighbours, through different forums and initiatives, to enhance cooperation in a number of areas. The Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan is central to our goal of realizing a secure, stable and prosperous region. We have come a long way in enhancing the Process by strengthening the framework of cooperation through dialogue and by focusing on a concrete set of confidence-building measures. The senior officials meeting of the Istanbul Process held in New York in September was another important step forward. We look forward to working closely with our Chinese partners in preparation for the upcoming fourth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process, to be held in Tianjin, China. In recent months, the Government of Afghanistan conducted a number of high-level consultations with the leadership of neighbouring countries and countries in the region, aimed at furthering cooperation and collaboration for the region's collective security and stability, particularly during the transition and beyond.

Thirdly, on economic development, moving from a predominantly aid-dependent to a non-aid-dependent

economy is at the core of our economic transition. We are improving our economy, attracting national and international private-sector investment, strengthening trade and seeking to make the most of our rich and untapped natural-resource supply, which will serve as the backbone of our economy in future.

It is important to emphasize that Afghanistan's social and economic development also requires greater coherence and efficiency with regard to the provision of international assistance, as well as greater transparency and accountability. In that respect, we look forward to further progress in meeting the mutual commitments set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. For our part, we are vigorously pursuing inclusive and sustained growth, with a focus on strengthening our infrastructure, and a sound legal policy and institutional environment, which is essential to the realization of our self-sufficiency strategy and sustained economic growth. In addition, we are making every effort to implement our national development strategy by way of our national priority programme, into which our Millennium Development Goals have been integrated. We underscore the importance of aligning assistance with the national priority programme and channelling aid through our core budget.

Fourthly, good governance and strengthening the rule of law have been central to our efforts. This year, new steps were taken towards improving governance at the national and local levels, including in the areas of administrative reforms and the fight against corruption. To that end, I should note that President Karzai's decree of July 2012 continues to be implemented in Government ministries, organs, agencies and directorates.

Our good-governance effort is grounded in a comprehensive approach that entails various components, including a robust effort to improve security and overcome the problem of narcotic drugs. The nexus between narcotic drugs, criminality and terrorism poses a serious threat to the rule of law. To that end, we are seriously engaged in implementing our national drug-control strategy, including our prioritized implementation plan and benchmarks. Nevertheless, we underscore once again that a real solution to the problem of narcotic drugs relies on a holistic approach that addresses all components — production, trafficking and consumption. In that connection, let me highlight again the importance of the principle of shared responsibility in our joint efforts to defeat the scourge of drugs. We emphasize, and are thankful for,

continued regional and international support in our continued fight against that menace.

Lastly, the Afghan Government has been fully committed to its responsibilities to protect and promote the rights of all Afghan people, including those of women and girls. By virtue of our Constitution, all Afghans — the elderly, youth, men and women, boys and girls — enjoy more rights and fundamental freedoms today than ever before. We continue to take bold steps towards the advancement of women and their rights and to empower them as proactive members of society who contribute to building a new Afghanistan. In assessing the plight of Afghan women, it is imperative to not lose sight of the gains made thus far. We have come a long way, and continued support and commitment are essential to the advancement of women's rights in the country as we proceed into the transformation decade. We deem unacceptable any incident of violence or discrimination against women and are pursuing all cases with serious attention. Let me note that this year has seen notable progress in the implementation of the law to eliminate violence against women. Investigations and prosecution of alleged crimes against women have increased significantly. All perpetrators will be held accountable.

As a country that is committed to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Afghanistan is fully aware of the importance of universal values, fundamental freedoms and rights, as enshrined in our Constitution. Afghanistan has throughout history been a diverse and tolerant society, respectful of the customs, traditions and religious beliefs of all peoples, including those of other faiths. By the same token, we underscore the need for awareness and respect for the cultural norms, values and beliefs of Afghan society. That will only serve to benefit our enduring partnership on the way forward.

The coming year for Afghanistan is crucial. We are embracing the challenges of the future with full confidence. Our commitment to building on the achievements of the past is as strong as ever. We know that the journey we embarked upon more than a decade ago has not come to an end and that the way forward will not be free of challenges. But, if anything, today's draft resolution is a manifestation of the prospects for success, made possible by the enormous sacrifices made by the people of Afghanistan, who throughout history have demonstrated resilience, fortitude and courage in overcoming the most difficult of obstacles

and achieving success. Our international partners were central to those efforts, and I would like to take this opportunity to gratefully thank all our international friends and partners who stand with us in support and solidarity as we seek to complete the goal we set out to achieve in 2001.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Like others, I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I also thank all delegations that participated in the consultations on the draft resolution (A/68/L.11), in particular the Permanent Representative of Germany and his team for so ably facilitating the negotiations. We look forward once again to its adoption by consensus.

Afghanistan has achieved considerable political, security, economic and development progress over the past decade. The draft resolution before us today highlights many of those advances, for which the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people deserve much credit. But the gains made are fragile and major challenges remain.

In the EU statement at the Security Council debate on Afghanistan on 19 September (see S/PV.7035), we highlighted the role of institutions in Afghanistan and reiterated that the full implementation of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework remained paramount for a successful transition. We stressed the shift from a military to a civilian focus and underlined that a political solution was needed for long-term stability and development in Afghanistan. We also emphasized that a future peace and reconciliation process should be Afghan-led and inclusive and should engage all parts of society. In this statement, we want to make a few brief remarks on the upcoming elections, human rights and, lastly, economic development and regional cooperation.

First, with regard to the upcoming presidential and provincial elections, it will be critical to Afghanistan's

future that the elections be inclusive and transparent and lead to a legitimate outcome. We are very much encouraged by the progress made on the electoral preparations by the Afghan authorities and stress the importance of appropriate measures to ensure security for voters and officials, to combat fraud and to promote women's participation. We also believe that domestic and international election observation will be critical to the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. The willingness of the Government of Afghanistan to facilitate that observation is very much appreciated.

The United Nations is, in our view, a key player in supporting Afghanistan's electoral preparations, and will remain so post-2014. For our part, we are providing financial and technical support to the electoral oversight institutions and to voter outreach through the electoral assistance programme of the United Nations Development Programme. We remain firmly committed to supporting the Afghan electoral process over the coming months.

Secondly, let me turn to human rights. Such rights, in particular concerning the situation of women and girls, have advanced considerably in the past decade. That deserves praise but also demands our continued collective efforts. We welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government to implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. It is significant that the draft resolution we will adopt today contains a clear message from all Member States that our commitment to achieving the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of Afghan life is steadfast and unwavering. It is clear that the situation of women continues to require our attention, as it remains of considerable concern.

There is still much to be done to safeguard progress and to ensure the full implementation of statutory provisions. We encourage paying particular attention to the progressive implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the law on the elimination of violence against women. The completion and publication of the report on the implementation of that law will establish an important benchmark against which to judge future progress.

It is also significant that today's draft resolution recognizes the risks faced by human rights defenders

in Afghanistan. Those individuals, groups and civil society organizations play a central role in protecting and promoting the rights of others, often at great personal risk. The draft resolution rightly condemns the violence against them. In addition, we want to emphasize the importance of the Government of Afghanistan's reaffirmation of its commitment to maintaining standards to retain the "A" status of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

Finally, I would say a word on economic development and regional cooperation. Afghanistan has achieved impressive rates of economic growth over the past decade. But, recently, the rate has slowed dramatically as investors wait to see the outcome of the elections and the transition process. It is critical that the Government of Afghanistan take all possible measures to improve the business and investment climate. In the short term, the Government must show leadership to ensure that the mining law, the law on the value-added tax and the anti-money-laundering law are all passed before the end of the current Administration.

Increased trade and investment can only strengthen and support the welcome initiatives of the countries in the region within the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. To take the Istanbul Process to the next level, it is important that the Heart of Asia countries further the delivery of concrete results through the implementation of confidence-building measures. The European Union itself is testament to how increased economic links can provide the foundation for increased political and security cooperation.

In conclusion, it is important that the international community remain strongly committed to progress in Afghanistan over the long term. For our part, we will continue to support the transition process to promote the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan): It gives me great pleasure, in my capacity as the representative of the country chairing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to deliver this statement on behalf of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and my own country, the Republic of Tajikistan.

As a close neighbour of the SCO, Afghanistan enjoys friendly relations with all SCO member States. Last year, Afghanistan was granted observer status

in the SCO, which provided new opportunities for cooperation with member States.

The SCO members have been closely following the process of strengthening peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan and support the development of cooperation between Afghanistan and the countries of the region on a bilateral and multilateral basis. We are pleased to see some positive developments in the economic and social spheres in Afghanistan, in particular in the fields of infrastructure development, the construction of roads, railways and power-transmission lines, health care and education.

We support the efforts of Afghanistan and the international community to address the problems of the transition period, reconciliation and post-conflict rehabilitation. The SCO member States also support efforts to make Afghanistan an independent, neutral, peaceful and prosperous country that is free of terrorism and drug-related crime. The SCO member States emphasize that national reconciliation, as an important component of any Afghan settlement, should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned in order to facilitate the early achievement of peace and stability in the country. However, we believe that the process can have a positive effect only if there is strict compliance by the insurgents with three basic principles, namely, they must lay down their weapons, recognize the Afghan Constitution and break ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist and extremist organizations.

In the course of its reconstruction, Afghanistan still faces a number of pressing challenges and problems. There is no complete stability in its security situation. We strongly believe that increased terrorist activities by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorists and extremists, along with illicit drug production and trafficking, seriously undermine the achievements in the security sphere within the country and beyond its borders. The tensions and internal conflicts in the country remain one of the main sources of threat to regional security and stability.

We believe the illicit production, trade and trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan to be a threat to international peace and stability. Countering the illicit production and trafficking of drugs remains one of the key components in achieving stability in Afghanistan. The fight against, and prevention of, the illicit drug trafficking that has turned the country into a breeding ground for international terrorism and organized crime

should be an integral part of our common struggle against terrorism and extremism.

The SCO member States have consistently supported peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan and have provided all feasible support, including humanitarian assistance, to the Afghan people. We are ready to continue our efforts aimed at strengthening trade and economic ties between SCO members and Afghanistan in order to achieve social and economic progress in Afghanistan, through the implementation of infrastructure, energy and transport projects, with a view to ensuring economic growth and creating jobs in the country.

We believe that Afghanistan should be involved in the multifaceted regional cooperation process. The involvement of neighbouring countries in the development of Afghanistan while taking into account the regional context in the post-conflict rehabilitation of the country would ensure success in the efforts undertaken by the international community. In that context, the SCO member States will continue to strengthen and upgrade regional cooperation within the SCO framework and other existing relevant regional forums so as to make the SCO region a region of lasting peace, friendship, prosperity and harmony.

We would welcome Afghanistan's involvement in the activities of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. Afghanistan's active participation in the region's anti-drug activities would be highly appreciated. We also hope that collaboration between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations will continue to be progressively enhanced in future.

The United Nations should continue its central role in coordinating international peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. We support the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in providing and enhancing the necessary assistance to the peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in the country according to its mandate.

The SCO members support the draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/68/L.11), prepared by a wide group of sponsors. Its adoption by consensus would facilitate enhancing the concerted efforts of the international community in Afghanistan.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on

Afghanistan (A/68/609) submitted to the General Assembly. We welcome the imminent adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/68/L.11).

China associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), by the representative of Tajikistan in his capacity as acting Chair of the SCO.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Afghan Government and people, the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan has made headway. However, as Afghanistan enters a crucial stage of its transition period, the comprehensive construction of a peaceful, stable and prosperous country will continue to require the coordinated efforts of Afghanistan and the international community.

China supports Afghanistan in the safeguarding of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and respects the right of the Afghan people to choose their development path based on the country's situation and to successfully achieve the transition. It is our hope that the international community will continue its support towards the early achievement of peace and development in Afghanistan. In that connection, I would emphasize the following points.

First, China welcomes the efforts of Afghanistan in preparing for the presidential and provincial elections in 2014 and hopes that the preparations will move forward steadily, to ensure the smooth conduct of the elections in order to lay the foundation for Afghanistan's transitional stage. We urge the international community to carefully consider the opinions and requirements of Afghanistan and its people in providing technical and financial assistance for the elections.

Secondly, to achieve peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, we must fully support ownership by and the leading role of the Afghan people. We support the Afghan Government in its ongoing efforts to accelerate capacity-building. We call upon the international community to assist Afghanistan in enhancing its sustainable-development capacity and supporting the strengthening of its military and police capacities with a view to taking over the responsibility for safety and security and to achieving, as soon as possible, the goal of Afghanistan being run by Afghans themselves.

Thirdly, we support the continuing support for the national reconciliation process, owned and led by the

Afghans. We hope that the High Peace Council will play an important role in promoting national reconciliation. We welcome the positive contributions of regional States in supporting Afghanistan's national reconciliation efforts. The international community should support related efforts by the Afghan Government with a view to ensuring a conducive environment to that end.

Fourthly, the comprehensive promotion of peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan requires the sustained support and assistance of the international community. China calls upon the parties concerned to genuinely honour their assistance commitments to Afghanistan and to support the country in implementing its national development strategy, while respecting the priority development areas defined by the Afghan Government.

China supports the leading role played by the United Nations in coordinating all of the actors involved in the international effort to support the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We hope that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will step up its communication and cooperating efforts with the Afghan Government.

Fifthly, China supports Afghanistan in improving friendly, good-neighbourly relations with regional States through regional cooperation and efforts to actively respond to commonly faced challenges, including terrorism and drug-related crimes. China will host the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process next year to facilitate the continued positive role of regional States in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Related regional initiatives must respect Afghanistan's sovereignty, take into account the legitimate concerns of the States of the region, leverage the roles of regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and proceed on the basis of broad consultation and consensus on the part of the interested parties.

China and Afghanistan maintain a tradition of friendly neighbourliness. We sincerely hope for peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. We have actively participated in the process of peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan. We have provided assistance to the Government and the people of Afghanistan to the best of our ability in areas including infrastructure construction, resources, energy development, training in human resources, health, culture and education. China is ready to work

together with the international community to continue our positive contribution to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan and the region.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): As we all know, Afghanistan is at a historic juncture. And as we near the end of 2013, we can reflect on the very real and tangible progress that Afghanistan has made with its security, political and economic transition.

It has now been five months since President Karzai announced milestone 2013, with the start of the fifth and final tranche of the transition to full Afghan responsibility for security. The announcement marked a major turning point for Afghanistan, with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) taking the lead for security across the country. The 2013 summer fighting season was the first time in over a decade that the ANSF has fought the insurgency largely independently. In the lead, the ANSF has taken the fight to the insurgents, demonstrating its ability to provide security for their own people. In the southern province of Uruzgan, where Australia has focused its own efforts, the ANSF is on track to take over operational responsibility by the end of this year. In line with the transition process agreed by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in partnership with the Afghan Government, Australia's presence in Uruzgan will end next month. Our drawdown in Uruzgan marks a change, but, of course, does not end Australia's engagement with Afghanistan. In 2014, our military contribution will include around 400 personnel, who will play training and advisory roles in Kabul and Kandahar and, more broadly, our diplomatic and aid engagement will continue as a nationally oriented mission.

We know that there are still challenges ahead. A diminished but persistent insurgency will continue to seek to undermine peace and security in Afghanistan. But a strong ANSF, with the continued support of the international community, will provide security and stability for the Afghan people during the transition period.

There is a comprehensive international framework to support not only Afghanistan's security challenges but also the development and economic challenges through the transition and beyond. At the May 2012 Chicago summit, partners pledged to help sustain the ANSF from 2015 on and to help support the estimated annual ANSF budget of \$4.1 billion. At Tokyo, in July 2012, partners pledged \$16 billion in aid through 2015.

Further progress by the Afghan Government against the reform priorities jointly identified and agreed at the Tokyo Conference is obviously vital to the Afghan Government's goal of self-reliance and to the international community's ability to sustain providing significant support to Afghanistan. The Tokyo commitments will assist Afghanistan to forge a stronger economy. With the drawdown of forces, Afghanistan's economic growth and revenue generation will be crucial to supporting Afghanistan's institutional capacities and to fostering long-term stability. We encourage the Afghan Government to continue to implement much-needed economic reform, foster the participation of women so as to maximize growth, assist capacity-building in Afghan ministries and support investment that will provide employment and sustainable livelihoods.

We look forward to the holding of peaceful, credible and inclusive presidential and provincial elections in April 2014, as an indication of the progress Afghanistan has achieved in the past decade. While technical preparations for that election are more advanced than in previous elections, it is true that significant challenges remain, including maximizing voter participation, especially the participation of women. Those issues will need to be addressed proactively in order to ensure a result that will be accepted by the Afghan people themselves.

We continue to back an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. As Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) on Taliban sanctions, we are conscious of the role that the Taliban sanctions regime can play to facilitate that process. Afghanistan's neighbours also have a crucial role to play in helping create a peaceful and stable future for Afghanistan.

On human rights, Afghanistan needs to lock in and build on the gains of the last decade, particularly in relation to the rights of women and girls, as was mentioned by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, this afternoon. We continue to urge full implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women and encourage the Afghan Government to finalize and implement a national action plan on women, peace and security. Gender inequality remains a significant barrier to Afghan women's active participation in Afghanistan's development. Striving to keep women and girls free from discrimination and the threat of violence is

integral to ensuring that lasting change and peace endure in Afghanistan.

Finally, Australia recognizes the highly important role of the United Nations in supporting Afghanistan's transition. As Security Council coordinator — or penholder—on Afghanistan, we look forward to working to secure a strong mandate with the backing of the Afghan Government, a mandate that ensures that an appropriately resourced United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is able to fulfil that role.

In conclusion, we, along with the international community, will continue to support Afghanistan at the national level by providing funding for equitable development assistance and security force sustainment. However, national progress and reform is, ultimately, for the Afghan Government and the people themselves to determine. We are confident that the people will seize the opportunity before them to shape their future and create a secure and prosperous Afghanistan. It is with that sense that Australia again sponsors draft resolution A/68/L.11 and looks forward to its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, the Russian Federation aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan remains the main focus of the international community's close attention, particularly since the country is approaching the important 2014 milestone, which will largely determine the trend of events, not only in Afghanistan, but in the entire region.

We must highlight the efforts of the Afghan Government to adapt its military to counter the terrorist threat. However, it is difficult to imagine a fundamental improvement in the security situation in Afghanistan. The actions of the opposition have changed in character. We are particularly concerned by the fact that an Afghan fingerprint is being detected more frequently in actions carried out by Central Asian extremist organizations. And all of that is taking place against the backdrop of the final stages of completing the transfer of security responsibilities from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

It is unfortunate that participants in the international coalition are often perceived as unjustifiably accelerating the transfer of security responsibilities

to the Afghan National Security Forces without considering the situation on the ground in specific areas. To avoid any negative effects on the situation in Afghanistan resulting from the withdrawal of the ISAF forces, we must ensure that the drawdown of foreign forces already under way will be compensated by a strengthening of the military capacities of the Afghan military. At the end of the day, the Afghans must be able to independently control the security in their country so as to effectively counteract extremist groups and drugs crime.

The plans of the international partners regarding the format, objectives and legal basis of the remaining military forces in Afghanistan remain unclear. It is our hope that we will soon receive an exhaustive explanation in that connection. Let us speak plainly. It is unacceptable that there should be a long-term foreign military presence in Afghanistan that could be used to inject forces into the neighbouring region, including in the area under the responsibility of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or against other States.

After the culmination of the stabilization process, a foreign military presence in Afghanistan will no longer be necessary. Instead of being needed to combat terrorism, such a presence could become a factor leading to further irritation at the regional level. We suggest that the future NATO mission in Afghanistan — if one remains — should be based on a clear international legal foundation. The reform of ISAF into a new international mission without the necessary Security Council mandate would lead to a serious problem in terms of further logistical cooperation.

We support the efforts of the Afghan Government to combat illegal drug production and trafficking, and we pay tribute to the Afghan National Security Forces and their anti-drug division, which have suffered serious losses in fighting that scourge. We are still puzzled as to why ISAF is not playing an active role in that field. A source of serious concern is the increase in the drug flows out of Afghanistan, which threaten international peace and stability, given their close links with the financing of terrorism.

Furthermore, that criminal business has a transnational dimension. We recognize that Afghanistan will not be able to deal on its own with the problem, the scale of which has been steadily increasing. That fact was clearly evidenced by recent data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In 2013,

the area dedicated to cultivating poppies for opium grew by 36 per cent, drug production grew by 49 per cent and the revenue from those criminal activities grew by 31 per cent.

As an active member of the CSTO, we would like to assure the Assembly that our organization is ready to continue to provide Afghanistan with the necessary support to combat the illegal production and distribution of drugs, including by providing anti-drug training for law enforcement officers through our national training centres and by supplying them with the necessary equipment and materials.

We are convinced that, in addition to law enforcement programmes, we must also develop socioeconomic programmes that will allow us remove a significant part of the Afghan population from involvement in criminal business dealings. We continue to be seriously concerned about the numerous cases of civilian deaths as a result of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by members of the armed forces, including civilian deaths caused by the use of drones.

We believe that the Government of Afghanistan is adopting the correct approach with regard to national reconciliation through dialogue between the High Peace Council and representatives of the armed opposition. We believe that such a dialogue can have a positive impact only if Kabul takes a leadership role and shows unconditional respect for the basic principles of reconciliation and ensures that the militants lay down their weapons and recognize the Afghan Constitution and sever their connections with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. We must also continue to effectively support the Security Council's sanction regime, which remains the only effective counter-terrorism tool.

In the context of the anticipated enhancement of the United Nations role in the Afghan reconciliation after the ISAF withdrawal, we believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan should remain the main focal point for international efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that during the current preparations for the 2014 presidential elections, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will operate strictly within its mandate and maintain a neutral stance.

Regional cooperation is increasingly playing a stronger role in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan

with a view to creating a peaceful, independent and economically prosperous State. Afghanistan continues to strengthen its ties with regional organizations. Among them, the CSTO, which is currently presided by the Russian Federation, plays a special role. Our organization is taking effective measures to further develop and strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan. Through the Working Group on Afghanistan, under the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers, we are analysing the situation with a view to considering specific proposals to provide post-conflict support to Afghanistan, including the fight against the drug and terrorist threat coming from that country. To that end, the CSTO conducts the annual anti-drug Operation Channel.

In April, Afghanistan obtained the status of observer in the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly. At the same time, we believe that the so-called Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan can serve as a platform for exchanging ideas, which can then be implemented by the regional players, such as the CSTO and the SCO.

Russia is ready to participate in major regional projects aimed at ensuring the sustainable economic development of Central Asia and Afghanistan. In particular, we support the implementation of the Central Asia-South Asia 1000 project. We are also ready to contribute to the successful implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. We have consistently and respectfully supported the efforts of the Afghan Government to create the conditions needed for the long-term stabilization of the country and the region. Friendly partnership with Afghanistan is in the national interest of our countries and in the interest of ensuring stability and development for the region and the world at large.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): The Kyrgyz Republic supports the adoption of draft resolution A/68/L.11 on Afghanistan, and we align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). I would, however, like to make a statement in my national capacity.

The Kyrgyz Republic has always supported peace and security in Afghanistan and the stable development and prosperity of the brotherly Afghan people. Therefore, during its presidency of the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2012-2013,

Kyrgyzstan gave priority to enhancing cooperation with Afghanistan. In that connection, President Karzai participated in the SCO summit in Bishkek on 13 September and had productive meetings with President Atambaev. In addition, this year, Kyrgyzstan opened its embassy in Kabul, which will help to facilitate its bilateral cooperation.

Today, we are witnessing the beginning of the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the transfer of responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces. We believe that the transfer of responsibility for security should be gradual and orderly so as to ensure stability. We must ensure that the withdrawal of ISAF does not lead to Afghanistan being taken over by extremist groups.

With regard to the withdrawal of the main contingent of ISAF at the end of 2014, it is necessary to ensure that there is a functioning transit centre at Manas airport in Kyrgyzstan. We have fulfilled our obligations with a view to ensuring support for anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan. For 12 years, we have made it possible to supply military and humanitarian goods to Afghanistan through the transit centre, which has helped to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and combat terrorism and extremism.

Kyrgyzstan, together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, is currently planning to establish a regional investigation centre in Bishkek, which will develop ideas for the development of the Central Asian region and Afghanistan. In that regard, we would like to call upon all interested parties to take an active part in that process and to help finance it.

On 10 October, an international conference was held in Bishkek, entitled "Afghanistan 2014: Prospects for development of the situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, challenges and threats to security in Central Asia in the context of the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force". More than 130 representatives of international organizations participated, including ministers for foreign affairs, diplomatic representatives and experts from 24 countries. We call upon all States to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, from using it for geopolitical purposes and from invading its territory.

We are particularly concerned by the ongoing problem of narcotic drugs and the increased threat that

represents in Afghanistan. It is a serious threat to the national security of both Afghanistan and the countries of the Eurasian continent as a whole, including Kyrgyzstan, as one of the branches of the so-called northern route, one of the main drug trade routes in the region.

Despite Kyrgyzstan's consistent anti-drug policy, we have not yet been able to fully stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. That situation is aggravated by the fact that the revenues from drug production and trade are a major source of funding for terrorist and extremist groups, which, in turn, poses a threat to the overall peace and security in the country and the region as a whole. Therefore, one of the most important challenges is to step up joint efforts to counteract the production and black market sales of drugs, both in Afghanistan and around it, by establishing, with the United Nations acting as a coordinator, an integrated system to establish anti-drug belts.

Efforts to achieve national reconciliation are among the main preconditions for ensuring lasting peace in Afghanistan. We suggest that the process of reconciliation should be implemented by the Afghan people themselves and in the interest of all Afghans. A comprehensive peace process should be open to all interested parties that are ready to reject violence and break off their links with international terrorism, and respect the Constitution of Afghanistan.

In order to establish stability in the country, it is extremely important to implement a decisive political step, namely, to successfully hold the presidential and regional elections in 2014. It is our hope that the election of the President will, for the first time in the history of the country, lead to a transfer of power through a peaceful democratic process. It is important that the elections take place in a transparent manner and meet the interests of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. That will provide a solid foundation for the further stable and sustainable development of the country.

As experience has shown, without the support of the international community Afghanistan will find it difficult to address its social and economic problems. We believe that involving Afghanistan in regional cooperation and broadening its trade and economic relations with neighbouring States is key to ensuring the stable development of the country, as well as sustainable peace and trust in the region. The Kyrgyz Republic is a participant in such regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the

Collective Security Treaty Organization and is ready to make its contribution to that process.

We support the Istanbul Process and the Heart of Asia conferences. We participate in working groups on confidence-building measures and are ready to help to implement regional projects. It is important to carry out large-scale joint projects in the export of electrical power and the building of transport infrastructure in the form of roads and railways. We are ready to expand trade and economic cooperation and develop infrastructure projects, including the export of electricity from Afghanistan as part of the electricity transmission line project between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, known as CASA-1000, and through the trilateral agricultural consortium Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan with the support of the United Nations.

We support Afghanistan's joining the agreement on cross-border transport within the framework of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation. We are supporting the construction of an international railroad connecting China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. We believe that Iran and Pakistan could also take part in that project to build an international transport corridor that would extend into Iran and Pakistan.

In conclusion, allow me once again to assure the Assembly of the determined support of the Kyrgyz Republic to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan, in the interest of establishing peace and stability in that brotherly country.

Mr. Waheed (Maldives): First of all, we would like to express our appreciation to the President for convening today's important debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We also commend the Secretary-General on the recent comprehensive update provided in his report (A/68/609) and on his activities and those of his Special Representative, Mr. Ján Kubiš, conducted both in person and through his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The situation in Afghanistan is one that concerns the entire region. To remain in a constant state of civil war, to lack productive capacity and to be confronted with one of the world's most extensive and debilitating narcotic production operations is to face seemingly insurmountable odds. The Maldives stands here today to reiterate our brotherly affection and call upon the international community to maintain its support and

commitments to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

Like other speakers before me, my delegation commends the major milestone reached on 18 June of this year towards attaining a sustainable peace with the final step of having Afghanistan's security forces assume full responsibility for their own nation's security. That and next year's presidential elections present two occasions of the utmost importance to efforts to ensure the success of the democratic transition and the country's long-term, peaceful future. We believe that it is vital that both processes be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led, and that both be transparent and inclusive.

In that light, the Maldives welcomes efforts aimed at strengthening Afghanistan's security forces, while noting the shortage of some vital resources. We further note with concern the increase in incidents that threaten security. We hope that the continued assistance of the international community will be forthcoming at this vital time, ensuring that the Afghan forces are fully equipped to fulfil their responsibility after the gradual withdrawal of foreign troops. We further commend the continued capacity-building of the Afghan National Police, including Afghanistan's first community policing conference, to be held on 25 June, where they will discuss how to strengthen the relationship between the Afghan Police and local communities.

The work of the United Nations aimed at delivering services and developing capacity in Afghanistan is and will continue to be very important. The Maldives commends UNAMA's efforts to increase its efficiency and maintain its work despite an 18.7 per cent reduction in funding in 2014. We also congratulate the United Nations Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan, which, according to its most recent report, will have cleared over 1,900 minefields in the country. We take note of the Programme's call stressing that the recent funding cuts endanger Afghanistan's commitment to becoming mine-free by 2023. We again express our hope that international assistance to Afghanistan at this critical time does not continue to waver.

The Maldives believes that increased regional integration is of the utmost importance and contributes to confidence-building, which greatly benefits the stability and prosperity of the country. In that regard, the Heart of Asia conferences and the Istanbul Process, supported by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), represent vital initiatives.

Afghanistan joined SAARC in 2007, which was one of its first steps towards larger regional integration, and we are happy to see that it is continuing along that path.

The Maldives is greatly concerned by the recent data from the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on Afghanistan's opium production. Published the week before last, it reflects a new record in opium production in Afghanistan. The drug trade and related transnational organized crime presents a major challenge to stability, not only for Afghanistan, of course, but for the entire region.

The 2014 presidential and provincial elections in Afghanistan remain key for a fair, peaceful and sustainable transition process. The Maldives continues to stress that we believe that the process must be fully Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. We therefore commend the Afghan Government for adopting a legal framework for the upcoming elections, although it should be noted that holding democratic elections does not automatically instil democratic values and that it will take time to nourish those values. Ownership of the process and broad participation are important to the achievement of those goals.

We believe that another part of democratic values is ensuring the rights of minorities and the rights of women. In that regard, we welcome Afghanistan's first progress report on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Although the current situation with respect to violence against women remains deeply concerning, the newly found accountability will give rise to further intensive efforts to implement that important Convention.

The Maldives, through our regional and multilateral support mechanisms, remains committed to ensuring the peaceful development of a safe, secure, prosperous and peaceful Afghan nation. We hope that the international community will learn from the mistakes of the past and will continue to support Afghanistan in its efforts to build resilience for a brighter future.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and other international agencies and civil society for playing vital roles in building a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

The country is now at a critical juncture as it undertakes the steps for security and political transition. A significant milestone was reached with the launch of the final phase of the security transition in June. The Afghan National Security Forces are now taking full responsibility for all security operations throughout the country. At the same time, we are witnessing worrisome trends. The number of terrorist attacks has risen, causing heavy civilian casualties and underscoring the fact that continued international support for the Afghan armed forces and the police will be vital as the transition moves forward.

My delegation recognizes that the transition is not only a security process, but also requires the full assumption of Afghan leadership and ownership in the area of governance. In that regard, the presidential and provincial elections in 2014 will be an important landmark in the country's political transition. We believe that the recent adoption of key electoral laws will facilitate the establishment of a firm legal framework for fair and credible elections.

We also welcome the timely appointments of the members of the two electoral commissions. With only five months remaining until the elections, the continued support of UNAMA will be crucial in consolidating the legitimacy and integrity of the process.

National reconciliation, owned by Afghans and led by Afghans, will be another important step in moving the political transition forward. We hope that further progress will be made in the peace negotiations with all the relevant stakeholders, with the aim of achieving sustainable and lasting peace in Afghanistan.

The long-term support of the international community is dependent upon the Afghan Government's progress in key areas under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, such as the promotion of human rights, especially those of women. In that regard, we urge the Afghan Government to enhance its efforts by fully implementing the law on the elimination of violence against women and ensuring the independence of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, among other measures.

The sustained support of the international community will be vital to Afghanistan's long-term stability. Furthermore, it is important that UNAMA continue to play a central role in the coordination of international efforts as Afghanistan moves forward with its transition. Today's draft resolution (A/68/L.11),

to be adopted by consensus, embodies the political will of all Member States to support the Afghan people in their political and national reconstruction process. In conclusion, the Korean Government will continue to support capacity-building efforts for Afghanistan. By pledging to provide \$500 million to that end over the period of 2011 to 2015, we are working closely with the Afghan Government and its people in realizing a prosperous, stable and democratic Afghanistan.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Pakistan is pleased to sponsor this year's draft resolution (A/68/L.11) on Afghanistan. We thank Germany for steering the negotiations on this important draft resolution, which comes at a defining moment as Afghanistan negotiates momentous political, security and economic transitions in 2014. The draft resolution is the international community's expression of support for Afghanistan as it intensifies its national endeavours to move towards peace, stability and prosperity.

The year 2014 marks a watershed for Afghanistan. While Afghanistan's real progress over the past decade is indeed something to celebrate, it is also time for reflection. The gains must not be wasted or reversed. Military withdrawal should not be a synonym for reduced focus. Afghanistan must not be abandoned again. History has taught us that abandonment will be bad for Afghanistan, the region and the world. This time, abandonment is not even an option. Strenuous efforts are being made to ensure that the planned transitions lead to a stronger and stable Afghanistan and that the neighbours and friends of Afghanistan play a constructive role to achieve that goal.

In order to ensure success, it is important that the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan succeed, that Afghan security forces fully shoulder their responsibilities and that economic reconstruction takes off. There should be no vacuums in the political, strategic, security or economic spheres. The war should come to an end, terrorism must be defeated and national unity should create conditions for internal stability and regional cooperation. There are some encouraging signs in that direction.

The elections planned for next year are an important milestone. A peaceful, inclusive and participatory electoral process would consolidate democracy, reinforce the rule of law and strengthen norms of broad representation and accountability. We welcome the announcement made today about the final list of candidates by the Independent Election Commission.

The most crucial ingredient in Afghan consensus is an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and national reconciliation process. An all-inclusive, broad-based dialogue should strive to bring together and reflect the interests of all groups, political forces and segments of society.

We know that a military solution is not a panacea for Afghanistan or a guarantor of long-term stability. The Doha initiative, regrettably, did not succeed. But we must not lose hope. That thread must be picked up again to resume talks — but talks that are conducted in good faith and lead to results.

The transfer of security responsibility to Afghan forces earlier this year paves the way for the Afghan Government to exercise its writ and control over its territory. Recent independent reports suggest that Afghan security forces have enhanced their occupational and operational capability and that NATO and the United States will continue to play a supportive role in the post-2014 period. That also reinforces public confidence in the Afghan security and institutional structures designed to ensure stabilization.

There is apprehension about the possibility that the Afghan economy may suffer after the withdrawal of troops. So far, the economy has been largely run as or perceived as a war economy, which has been bolstered by a massive international presence. Pledges for investment and reconstruction have either not materialized or the available funding has not been assimilated.

The international community and the people of Afghanistan have the means and an opportunity to avert an economic downturn. Economic reconstruction needs to be stepped up. Pledges of support must be fulfilled. Capital, know-how and international entrepreneurs and businesses must be locked in to maintain economic momentum for growth.

Our worst fear is that an economic slowdown in Afghanistan post-2014 may result in more refugees wanting to move to Pakistan. We would not be able to absorb them. Afghanistan has done a commendable job in receiving and assimilating millions of refugees in the past 10 years, but we still have nearly 3 million registered and undocumented refugees on Pakistani soil. In the past 33 years, we have hosted more than 5 million refugees.

Our decision to extend the refugees' legal authorization until the end of 2015 is a clear indication

of Pakistan's commitment to supporting Afghans in distress. However, the early, honourable, voluntary and sustainable return of refugees must continue. The support of the United Nations system and the international community is critical in that regard. We strongly urge donor countries and Afghanistan to make the return and rehabilitation of refugees part of the planned economic reconstruction.

One of the primary objectives of our Afghan policy is peace and stability in Afghanistan. We are convinced that without sustainable peace and stability in the country, there would be no peace and stability in Pakistan and in the region. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a symbiotic relationship, and their destinies are intertwined, irrevocably and for all time. Our Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, is making conscious and resolute efforts to forge closer ties with Afghanistan, oppose immediate security threats, strengthen bilateral economic cooperation and shape an environment for regional connectivity.

In the peace and reconciliation process, Pakistan has no favourites. We will only play a facilitating role. The people of Afghanistan should be in the driver's seat and be the masters of their own destiny. We earnestly hope that Afghans will unite for the peace, prosperity and development of their great country.

It is important to have realistic expectations about Pakistan's role. Pakistan can exercise influence, but it does not control the Taliban. We have released 46 Taliban prisoners, including Mullah Baradar, and have provided safe passage to those considered useful for the process by the parties. We are encouraging the Taliban to return to the negotiating table. We will continue to play our supportive and constructive role.

We are keen to develop and build a deeper and broader bilateral relationship with Afghanistan. Positive developments have taken place in that regard. President Karzai's visit to Islamabad in August this year and his wide-ranging and productive engagement with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif were a manifestation of the strong commitment of the two countries to strengthening their relations.

Our countries are bound by ties of kinship, faith and history. We are working to implement the vision of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for a peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood. That engagement was advanced through a trilateral summit in London last

month, which was attended by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, President Hâmid Karzai and Prime Minister David Cameron. We thank the United Kingdom for facilitating the dialogue. I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Afghanistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, for his warm words earlier today about the commitment and cooperation of Pakistan, which he said is vital to the advancement of the peace and reconciliation process.

We are working on a number of projects to reinforce regional trade and construct energy and communications corridors. We want early fruition of energy projects such as the electricity-transmission line between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan known as CASA-1000 and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, which have significant dividends for Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries. Similarly, the building of road and rail links and other infrastructure projects, which are either under completion or on the anvil, will boost our economies and create broader synergies for the region.

Pakistan is according importance to developing and strengthening the health and education sectors in Afghanistan. We have built colleges, universities and hospitals in Afghanistan and given scholarships to Afghan students to study in Pakistani educational institutions. We have contributed more than \$400 million to Afghanistan's reconstruction.

Insecurity is the bane of Afghanistan's and Pakistan's common dream of a prosperous future. In that context, securing borders is the most important step. Pakistan's legitimate security interests must be recognized and respected. We must not allow our sacred relationship to be manipulated by non-State actors. We need more aggressive policing and surveillance of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. That would deter terrorists and extremists and the masterminds behind organized crime, narcotics trafficking and illicit arms proliferation. A visit by the Afghan Interior Minister would help address the issue of border management.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has recorded a 36 per cent increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan this year. That is extremely disturbing. An integrated and comprehensive response to the drug issue is required. The United Nations system should continue to play its important role in that regard.

We believe that the United Nations should play an enhanced role in rebuilding Afghanistan. The visit of Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson to Kabul earlier this year underlined the need for United Nations support to strengthen Afghan capacity and resilience. While the Organization aligns its activities with Afghan Government priorities, United Nations support should be channelled to the political, security and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration fields. UNAMA's mandate should be carefully calibrated next year in order to adjust to the changing milieu.

As I said earlier, Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan are driven by a sense of shared destiny. Our cooperation spans the entire spectrum of relations. We are committed to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. No country has suffered more than Pakistan from instability in Afghanistan, and no country stands to gain more from peace and stability in that country. We are confident that the valiant people of Afghanistan will surmount the current challenges to usher in a brighter and more prosperous future for themselves and for the region. Pakistan will be there to celebrate that transformation with the brotherly people of Afghanistan.

Ms. Alowais (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates affirms its support for the draft resolution before the General Assembly today on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/L.11), particularly with respect to the completion of the transitional process and the advent of 2014, which symbolizes a new beginning for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its people, defined by the restoration of security and stability, the development of governmental institutions, the holding of elections and the achievement of sustainable economic development.

The United Arab Emirates commends the progress made in Afghanistan over the past decade. Despite this, there is still a dire need for the international community to stand by the Afghan people through the important stages ahead and to commit to the outcomes of the conferences held in Kabul, Bonn, Tokyo, Istanbul, Lisbon, Chicago and elsewhere. In that connection, we reaffirm our long-term commitment to Afghanistan, hoping that its security and stability will lead to security and stability in the region, including the United Arab Emirates. It is essential for the United Nations to continue working in Afghanistan through the commendable efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative at the head of the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The role of the United Nations in supporting an Afghan-led political process must continue.

Although Afghan security forces were given full responsibility five months ago, the bulk of the responsibility for assisting Afghan forces through training and funding lies with the international community. The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns the continuing terror attacks committed by extremist groups, which have claimed the lives of innocent civilians, including women and children. In the context of the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates is co-chairing, with the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a working group on the implementation of confidence-building measures to counter terrorism. In that framework, the United Arab Emirates has hosted fruitful discussions on ways to combat terrorism at the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi, the first international centre of excellence for countering violent extremism.

Moreover, let us not forget the impact of anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war on innocent civilians in Afghanistan. Since 2011, the United Arab Emirates has allocated \$25.8 million to support mine-clearance operations in Kandahar, one of the areas that are most affected by mines. Those operations, which have continued for the past two years, have cleared approximately 50 per cent of the hazardous mined areas, contributing to the employment of more than 1,000 people and providing access to land for agriculture and infrastructure development.

That demonstrates how security and stability in Afghanistan are key elements in advancing socioeconomic development, ensuring access to aid by all sectors of Afghan society. In 2011, the United Arab Emirates set up a standing committee for humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan, consolidating all the efforts of donors and charitable institutions in that country. The assistance provided by the United Arab Emirates amounted to \$267.3 million from 2009 to 2012, including projects such as building Kandahar Airport, completing a road leading to Helmand province, and providing food and aid to orphans and persons with special needs.

The United Arab Emirates is working with Member States and other institutions on joint projects for the development of the Afghan economy, such as a joint

venture with the United Kingdom to build a highway linking northern and southern Afghanistan and a joint venture with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to vaccinate children in Afghanistan, for which the United Arab Emirates has allocated \$33 million from 2011 to 2013.

Regional cooperation is one of the key pillars for ensuring security, stability, social and economic growth in Afghanistan by combating terrorism, fighting the drug trade and repatriating Afghan refugees. In that regard, Member States and regional organizations must redouble their efforts to accelerate the implementation of confidence-building measures and regional dialogue, particularly between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, since the security and stability of the two countries depend on both sides. The United Arab Emirates commends the positive efforts of both countries to strengthen cooperation, and attaches particular importance to that matter.

The United Arab Emirates supports the peace, reconciliation and reintegration process led by Afghanistan through the High Peace Council, which seeks to eliminate violence and to ensure respect for the rights of all Afghans, especially Afghan women. The United Arab Emirates condemns all attacks on women. To that end, at the Heart of Asia ministerial conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the United Arab Emirates announced a two-year, \$20-million project to train Afghan imams, which was launched in May. The objective of the project is to raise awareness of moderate Islam in order to safeguard respect for the rights of all Afghans.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): It gives me great pleasure to address agenda item 37 on the situation in Afghanistan, particularly because I served as the first Special Representative of Japan to Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009 and 2010. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Wittig of Germany and his colleagues, who ably led the consultations throughout its entire process. I also thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his constructive engagement towards achieving a consensus on draft resolution A/68/L.11. Japan is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us today.

I would like to pay tribute to all the men and women in Afghanistan who have devoted themselves to rebuilding their country in the most difficult circumstances. I also pay tribute to all the citizens of

States Members of the United Nations, including Japan, who have been working to enhance the stability and development of Afghanistan.

The year 2014 will be a critical juncture for the future sustainability of Afghanistan, since the country is expected to achieve concrete results through the presidential election and by transitioning towards security. In that regard, we all hope that the Organization, in particular the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, will play an increasingly important role in 2014 and beyond in supporting the Government's efforts to meet its development goals and achieve lasting peace. Japan will continue to lend its support to the work of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Today I would like to address some key issues and challenges that Japan believes the Government of Afghanistan must tackle.

First and foremost, the upcoming presidential and provincial elections must give strong legitimacy to the new Government that is to be established. The next President will take over the heavy duties of President Karzai, who has tirelessly led the country towards lasting peace and stability for more than 11 years. In order to achieve strong legitimacy for the Government, it is first imperative for Afghanistan to ensure a fair and transparent election process, starting from the preparations stage. Secondly, the election results should be a reflection of the will of the entire population. To that end, it is indispensable for the Government to encourage full participation by all eligible voters.

In that light, Japan commends the important progress made by Afghanistan regarding voter registration, the adoption of the electoral legal framework and the establishment of key electoral institutions, to name a few. However, security still remains key to ensuring wider participation. Also crucial are the processes and logistics, such as the voting process itself and the counting and announcement of final results. Those are also important challenges.

Last but not least, Afghanistan must hold the elections in April 2014, as currently scheduled according to its Constitution. Japan, as a long-term partner of Afghanistan, is ready to assist with the Government's endeavours. We support the work of the Independent Election Commission through the second phase of the Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow project. We also look into joining the election observer

mission in order to have a constructive impact on the election process.

Now I would like to touch upon what we expect from Afghanistan, in particular from the future Government, on important challenges.

The Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan held in July 2012 demonstrated once again the strong will and commitments by both the Afghan Government and the international community. The reliable and timely implementation of the mutual commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is the key driving instrument towards a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. It is therefore critical that the duties for implementing the commitments by Afghanistan be properly handed over to the new Government. In that regard, I would like to renew the call for Afghanistan to take sustained and accelerated action to deliver on its commitments as agreed at the Conference, including those made in the areas of governance, the rule of law, human rights and public finances.

In order to help Afghanistan's efforts, Japan has been delivering assistance in a faithful and generous manner. Since January 2002, when Japan hosted the Tokyo International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, we have contributed a total of \$5 billion for the country's developments efforts. We look forward to seeing tangible progress in that regard at the ministerial meeting to be co-hosted by Afghanistan and the United Kingdom next year.

I would like to conclude my statement by emphasizing the importance of an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. Needless to say, Afghanistan bears full responsibility for advancing the peace process in order to make the dividends of the security transition irreversible. Japan calls for sustained political determination by the Afghan Government.

I would also like to point out that constructive engagement by neighbouring countries plays a vital role in the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. In that regard, it is very encouraging to see the intensive Afghanistan-Pakistan dialogue over the past year, as the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan and Pakistan mentioned today. At the Japan-Pakistan summit meeting held in September here in New York, Prime Minister Abe was assured by Prime Minister Sharif that Pakistan's positive involvement would continue.

We fervently hope to see the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process supported by mutual trust among its neighbouring countries. We also hope that it will bear concrete results in the near future and that all people of Afghanistan and the region will enjoy the dividends of peace.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join other Member States in sponsoring this draft resolution (A/68/L.11) on the situation in Afghanistan. The draft resolution reflects the international community's continuing commitment to supporting the Afghan people in building a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan through the 2014 transition and beyond.

Over the past 12 years, the livelihoods of the Afghan people have fundamentally improved. In 2001, there were only 900,000 Afghan children in school, and all of them were boys. Today nearly 8 million students are in school, and more than a third of them are girls. Maternal mortality was 1,600 per 100,000 births; today it is down by 80 per cent. Life expectancy for the average Afghan was 42 years; today it is 62 years and rising. Nine per cent of Afghans had access to basic health care; today 60 per cent of Afghans live within an hour of basic health services. There was only one television station, and it was owned by the Government; today there are 75 stations, and all but two are privately owned. There were virtually no cell phones in the country in 2001; today, there are 18 million, covering about 90 per cent of residential areas. That progress was only possible as a result of the sacrifices of the Afghan people and their international supporters.

We are now at a critical moment in Afghanistan's history. Last summer, the Afghan National Security Forces for the first time took the lead in providing security across the entire country. Afghanistan's military and law enforcement are growing stronger and more capable by the day. Even as the security transition reaches its final stages, the United States and our international partners remain committed to helping the Afghan National Security Forces become an independent force that is able to secure its own people and the public trust. That is a commitment that will extend well beyond 2014.

The single most important milestone in Afghanistan's political transition during the next year will be the peaceful transfer of power from President Karzai to a democratically elected successor. It is

imperative that the elections be held on time and result in an outcome that is perceived as legitimate by all segments of Afghan society. While legitimate elections by necessity entail competition and debate, we hope that the upcoming elections in Afghanistan will represent a unifying moment for the country. Afghans also recognize that continued international assistance is contingent upon credible, inclusive and transparent elections that reflect the will and aspirations of the Afghan people.

We are encouraged by the hundreds of Afghan women who are running for positions on the provincial councils throughout the country, and we welcome the support of the United Nations and our international partners in strengthening the rights and the role of Afghan women. Societies where women are safe and empowered to exercise their rights and to move their communities forward are more prosperous and more stable, not occasionally but always. Protecting the gains made for Afghan women is not up to women alone; it requires engaging civil society, including men, women and minorities.

While the success of the political transition next year is essential to the future stability of Afghanistan, it alone is not sufficient to end the conflict. The United States firmly believes that an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation effort is the surest way to end the violence and to bring lasting stability to Afghanistan and the region.

The security and political transitions that I have described will succeed only if they are matched by the broader commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to reform its economy and unlock the economic potential of the Afghan people. Those reforms should include a comprehensive approach to combating the narcotics trade that is integrated into the broader efforts to support governance, the rule of law and economic development.

Furthermore, unlocking Afghanistan's potential as a waypoint in regional trade between Central and South Asia will also unlock new economic opportunities across the region. That is the crux of the new Silk Road vision, which is based on the premise that greater economic cooperation is critical to achieving stability and peace across the region.

Finally, the United Nations has played and will continue to play a critical role in Afghanistan. In particular, we commend United Nations support for

Afghanistan's 2014 elections. United Nations support for regional diplomacy, the political process and coordination between the Government of Afghanistan and donors in implementing the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework will also be essential as Afghanistan looks towards 2014 and beyond.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, let me thank the President for organizing this discussion. I also avail myself of this opportunity to commend the German delegation, and Ambassador Wittig personally, for coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations in an excellent manner, which has brought us to the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. As in the past several years, India is happy to sponsor draft resolution A/68/L.11, which has traditionally been adopted by consensus.

Afghanistan is undergoing a significant period of transition, which includes the security, political and economic dimensions. The progress made on the technical preparations for the presidential elections is a testimony to the resolve of the people of Afghanistan to ensure a smooth political transition. The key to successful elections in 2014 is an election whose outcome is acceptable to the people of Afghanistan.

The presidential elections will be yet another significant step towards the political reconstruction effort in Afghanistan and must continue to be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and, let me add, Afghan-managed. The rationale behind our addition of the word Afghan-managed is that we want to stress that the destiny of Afghanistan is in the hands of the Afghan people. It also symbolizes the distance that the people of Afghanistan have covered in the process of transition and transformation. It will be the third democratic election in Afghanistan, which is a significant achievement for Afghanistan and a sign of the maturity of its new political system. The international community must strongly support the Afghan authorities' preparations in that endeavour and, at the same time, resist any outside effort to derail the process.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile. The number of civilian casualties and targeted killings has risen. The condemnable attack on the Indian Consulate in Jalalabad on 3 August, which led to the injury of several Afghan security personnel who were guarding the Consulate and to the killing of several innocent Afghan citizens, including 10 children, is another example of the tenuous security environment in Afghanistan.

As we stated previously, India does not have an exit policy in Afghanistan. India will not be deterred by such attacks. We do not see that attack as aimed only against India but also against the efforts of the Afghan people to overcome the tragic consequences of the past several decades of war and conflict. I would like to reiterate our commitment to stand by the Afghan people and their security personnel, who have shown exemplary courage in protecting them.

It has been seen that most terrorist attacks in Afghanistan originate from beyond its borders by groups closely allied to Al-Qaida and its affiliates. We would like to reiterate that we must be continuously watchful of the designs of such terrorist organizations. The Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee must remain proactive and attentive in its listing and delisting process of individuals and entities for targeted measures. The role of the international community in that regard is critical, not only in providing input to the Sanctions Committee and other related counter-terrorism entities but also in continuing to support the efforts of the Afghan people to address the security and terrorist challenges that they face.

In that regard, concerted action is also needed to isolate and to destroy the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups. It is therefore extremely important that the transition security plan take into account the threats posed by those terrorist organizations and complement the security architecture in Afghanistan. The drawdown of troops and its implication for the security arrangements need to be carefully assessed and appropriate measures must be taken to ensure the safety and security of the Afghan people.

The time has come for the international community to reassess the role that it wishes to play in Afghanistan's internal political process. In that regard, the issue of the renewed mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should be discussed. Afghanistan has reached a considerable level of political maturity with the huge political reconstruction effort in that country. We applaud the role played by UNAMA, along with other agencies of the United Nations system, in the political, humanitarian and development spheres in Afghanistan over the past decade. However, we believe that we should take note of the maturity of the political process in Afghanistan. We should therefore define UNAMA's political mandate to ensure that it

keeps its focus on supporting the institutions of politics rather than the political process itself, which must be left to Afghanistan's own leaders.

We also believe that UNAMA must expand its humanitarian and developmental role through better delivery of assistance in Afghanistan, since the United Nations is uniquely placed in its access to the remotest and most isolated communities in the country. Improving infrastructure, along with access to basic services, such as health care, education and nutrition, on a regular basis for all Afghans would create a vital space for the new Afghan political system to mature and take firm root in Afghan society. That must complement and supplement Afghan State institutions and their initiatives in those spheres, since it is not capacity substitution but capacity-building that we seek to achieve in Afghanistan. It would also be useful if we undertake a serious assessment of the future role of UNAMA by learning from its experiences and from the views of other Member States. The objective should be to see how best the international community can realistically assist the Afghan people in a fast-changing political scenario. The assessment of issues facing UNAMA must take into account the problems of coherence in performing its mandated activities and the related duplication of resources and a higher cost of programmes.

Mr. Touré (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As Afghanistan moves towards 2014, it would be entering a new era of development and progress. Needless to say, the international community's support and constant encouragement for Afghanistan will be critical in that transition. We would like to offer assurances that India will remain steadfast in its support to Afghanistan during the period of transition and thereafter. India once again reiterates its support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled process of transition and development.

Mr. Cardì (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union and would like to make a few remarks in a national capacity.

We welcome the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/L.11) and support its adoption by consensus. In doing so, we confirm our appreciation for the substantial contribution the United Nations is making to the stabilization of the country. Italy values the continued efforts that the Secretary-General

and his Special Representative are promoting in that aim and reiterates its full and convinced support for their work. We also commend the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in leading and coordinating the civilian efforts of the international community, whose importance will grow as the military commitment gradually diminishes.

The term "countdown" epitomizes the current international debate on Afghanistan, expressing not only the concerns but especially the expectations and confidence we partners have with regard to the crucial deadlines Afghanistan must face between now and the end of 2014. In that period, the country must complete the transition process, the decade of transformation begins, and the International Security Assistance Force will turn into a resolute support mission. First, however, come the presidential elections of April 2014, which will mark, for the first time in Afghan history, a handoff from one Head of State to another through a democratic process. Those critical junctures will outline the features of domestic balances in Afghanistan and the nature of the country's future relationship with the international community.

In the lead-up to the elections, the United Nations needs to strengthen its support for the Afghan institutions to enable them to gradually take ownership of the civil and economic development of the country. It is Italy's hope that until the new Head of State has been proclaimed, the Kabul authorities will undertake every action needed to guarantee an inclusive, transparent and credible electoral process and that there will be common rules of the game that protect and represent the many facets of civil society, as well as the various political parties present in the country.

The gradual definition of an institutional framework to oversee the elections, thanks to the approval of the new election law and the forthcoming publication of the final list of presidential candidates, indicates that the Afghan authorities are moving in the right direction. A prerequisite for the proper and orderly conduct of the presidential and provincial elections is security, a responsibility of the Afghan National Security Forces, which have made steady progress in the challenging daily task of controlling the territory.

Italy reiterates its conviction that there can be no stabilization of Afghanistan without domestic reconciliation, nor can this stability be lasting without the genuine and heartfelt contribution of regional stakeholders. Italy thus confirms its support for the

peace process, recognizing the full ownership of the Afghan authorities, and expects that there will be no backsliding from gains that have been made in the areas of democracy, civil rights and gender equality or concessions to terrorism.

Italy is confident that the recent establishment of a more cordial climate between Afghanistan and Pakistan portends positive developments in the inter-Afghan dialogue and in regional cooperation as a whole. In the latter regard, implementation of the confidence-building measures of the Istanbul “Heart of Asia” process, which Italy supports and encourages, could make a significant contribution.

In closing, Italy wishes to express its appreciation of the important space that the Afghanistan draft resolution dedicates to respect for human rights, particularly the rights of women and children. For Italy, that protection is an absolute priority.

We intend to dedicate our efforts and our support to Afghanistan and its people. At the same time, from our Afghan friends we are expecting — in the logic of conditionality, pursuant to the legacy of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework — the achievement of definite, measurable results not only in human rights, but also in areas such as the democratic and electoral process, the fight against corruption and administrative and economic governance.

Mr. Khazaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, let me begin by thanking the President for convening this annual meeting of the General Assembly to review the progress made in building a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/68/609) and to express my appreciation to Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his comprehensive assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. We had several rounds of discussion with him, and I really appreciate his efforts.

A short look at the developments in Afghanistan during the past several years is indicative of the following facts. First, significant progress has been made in the political, economic, social and development areas in Afghanistan. Secondly, the general trend for construction and reconciliation in Afghanistan is positive, and efforts are on the right track. Thirdly, the United Nations and the international community

of States, in particular the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, are resolute in their strong long-term commitment to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity. Fourthly, a number of remaining challenges in Afghanistan and the interconnected nature of those challenges require more efforts of the Afghan Government, coupled with the strong support of the international community.

In the year 2014, two significant events, namely the presidential and provincial council elections, and the announced withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, are crucial in shaping the future of that country. Successful elections in 2014 are indeed essential in enhancing the political stability and national unity of Afghanistan and its advancement in all other areas. While we support the efforts of the Afghan Government in organizing those elections well, we hope that the active participation of all Afghans in the elections will help enhance the unity and harmony of all segments of the Afghan population.

We also call for continued international and regional support for holding free and fair elections in Afghanistan in 2014. In the political context, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the peace and national reconciliation efforts of the Afghan Government. We emphasize the importance of fully observing Afghanistan’s Constitution and the need to adhere to the principle of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process. Any effort towards that goal should be undertaken without any external pressure or interference and without appearing to reward either those who advocate extremist policies or the perpetrators of terrorist acts. I should also emphasize that the United Nations, including through its Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, should continue its active role in Afghanistan post-2014.

As in any other country, in Afghanistan security is a prerequisite for the success of efforts in all areas. Therefore, enhancing the security of Afghanistan should continue to be the highest priority. In our view, the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan in 2014 should be followed by the strong support of the international community in equipping Afghan forces at a level commensurate with existing security threats, in particular from terrorists, illegal armed groups and organized criminals.

In that context, I would like to stress that special attention should be paid to combating the interlinked

sources of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan, in particular the production of and trade in narcotic drugs as the source of financial support for terrorist, extremist and illegal armed groups. In addition to support for the Afghan Government in that regard, continued international support for the triangular counter-narcotics initiative among Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan is essential. That is vital, not only to strengthen the security and stability of Afghanistan, but also to alleviate the serious concerns of neighbouring States and of the drug-trafficking transit and destination countries.

To control its nearly 1,000-kilometre common border with Afghanistan, which is a major transit route for narcotic drugs from Afghanistan to Europe, the Islamic Republic of Iran spends over \$600 million annually. Moreover, as I have said before, more than 4,000 Iranian law-enforcement personnel have been martyred in fighting against drug smugglers. In view of the rise in opium poppy cultivation, as well as the advanced techniques used by drug traffickers, Iran cannot sustain this trend without the strong support of the international community, including through supplying adequate advanced border-control technologies.

As part of the regional efforts in combating drug trafficking and its associated challenges, a regional training workshop on anti-money-laundering, illegal financial flows and suspect cash transactions was held in Tehran in July, bringing together senior experts from Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. Moreover, Iran also hosted the Seventh Regional Financial Intelligence Unit meeting to enhance regional cooperation in tackling money-laundering and suspicious financial transactions. The aim is to facilitate a common instrument to improve information exchange with respect to suspicious transactions, as well as to tackle the profits of drug trafficking.

Unfortunately, millions of Afghan refugees continue to live in host countries, in part because of inadequate international support for improving the conditions for their return. Iran stresses the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan in order to enhance the trend of voluntary repatriation. Currently, there are over 3 million Afghan refugees in Iran, the majority of whom reside in urban areas and are assisted with their basic needs and essential services. Despite the unilateral economic and financial sanctions imposed on Iran, my country has continuously tried to improve the health status of the

refugee population across the country by offering them, among other things, access to free primary health care. At least 80 per cent of the refugee population benefit from health insurance.

With respect to education, currently 320,000 Afghan students are studying at schools and 8,000 are enrolled in universities in Iran, shoulder to shoulder with Iranian students. My country spends over \$400 million a year for educational programmes for Afghan refugees. As a result, the literacy rate of Afghan refugees has risen from 6 to 70 per cent over the years. While making every effort for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees, Iran calls on the international community to allocate the necessary and adequate funds for the development of the educational and health environments, facilities and equipment for Afghan refugees in Iran, pending their repatriation.

Sustained and comprehensive economic development in Afghanistan is critical, not only to provide grounds conducive to the repatriation of refugees and to combat challenges such as the production of and trade in narcotic drugs, but also to achieve long-term security and stability in that country. We stress the need to pay special attention to rebuilding Afghanistan's economic infrastructure. While considerable commitments for the reconstruction and economic development of Afghanistan have been made at the major international and regional conferences on Afghanistan during the past several years, they need to be fully implemented. As an active player in the reconstruction of Afghanistan's economy, the Islamic Republic of Iran has granted more than half a billion dollars for various projects in Afghanistan and has supported and implemented many projects in such areas as roads, railways, energy, mining and agriculture. I had the honour to chair the bureau concerned with those areas in Iran before taking up my position here.

Building a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is indeed crucial, not only for the future of the Afghan people, but also for enhancing peace and stability in the region and, of course, in the world in general. More coherent and better coordinated regional efforts are therefore needed to ensure the sustainable socioeconomic development of Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran is engaged in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan, including those promoting economic cooperation. As an active participant in the Heart of Asia and Istanbul processes, Iran welcomes the adoption of plans on

confidence-building measures between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. Regarding educational confidence-building measures within the Heart of Asia process this year, Iran hosted two meetings of the relevant working groups.

To conclude, I would like to stress that Afghanistan is passing through an important phase in its history. The Afghan people are inspired by the prospects of a future free from violence and war. That nation deserves our help in taking full charge of its destiny. We are looking forward to the adoption of draft resolution A/68/L.11 by consensus, which is indeed a good signal indicating that the international community of States is united in support of the Afghan people.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/609).

This meeting of the General Assembly is particularly significant, as Afghanistan is on the cusp of a milestone in its history. There will be two crucial developments in the year 2014, namely, the presidential elections and the complete withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Those developments will determine the trajectory of the country for years to come. The Government of Afghanistan has also laid out its vision for the future in its transition agenda up to 2014, which is to be followed by the ambitious transformation decade 2015-2024. Progress is firmly in the hands of the Government of Afghanistan and its people. Nonetheless, that does not mean the international community can merely hold its breath and expect a positive outcome. Rather, we must play an active role in providing assistance and support to Afghanistan to ensure that the objectives of the transformation decade can be achieved.

On the political front, Malaysia is heartened by the positive momentum reported by the Secretary-General on preparations for the 2014 presidential and provincial council elections in Afghanistan. We join the international community in expressing our firm support for those pivotal elections. Malaysia is convinced that a peaceful, democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan will provide the Government with the stability needed for the country's continued progress and development.

A smooth political transition in Afghanistan hinges upon a democratic process and outcome that has the confidence of both the people of Afghanistan and the

international community. We commend the Afghan Government for the various measures taken to ensure that the elections are free, fair and inclusive. Among those measures are the enactment of key legislation designed to strengthen the electoral process and the timely appointment of commissioners to the Independent Election Commission.

Political development in Afghanistan is taking place against a shifting security landscape, with ISAF scheduled to withdraw by the end of 2014. Malaysia joins other countries in expressing strong confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces, which have assumed full responsibility over security operations in the country in the final phase of the security transition. The transfer of responsibility from ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces is key to reclaiming and strengthening Afghan sovereignty. Nonetheless, it is also imperative that the international community continue to provide the necessary support to the Afghan National Security Forces to sustain security efforts before and after the complete withdrawal of ISAF in 2014.

On that note, we view with concern the security situation in Afghanistan: there is still an alarming number of civilian casualties due to terrorist and insurgent attacks. Malaysia condemns the continuing attacks on innocent civilians, particularly women and children, who can never be considered legitimate targets under international humanitarian law.

On a related note, Malaysia sees the ongoing reconciliation efforts as a vital component in securing lasting peace and stability. We support the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme and the progress it has made in rehabilitating and reintegrating former insurgents into the community. We stress that the national reconciliation and reintegration process must remain Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. At the same time, we encourage and support Afghanistan's close engagement with neighbouring countries, regional partners and the international community at large in order to tackle the root causes of insurgency, including discontent born from the lack of economic opportunity or inequitable development.

Malaysia reiterates its view that Afghanistan would benefit enormously from the inclusion and contribution of women in the political, economic and social spheres. We support the ongoing efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen the protection, participation and empowerment of women. However, the continued

targeting of women in high-profile Government positions is a cause for great concern. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to take stringent measures to ensure the safety and protection of women serving the Government and enhance safeguards for women in the community.

We recognize that it takes time to change perceptions and entrenched stereotypical values, but we sincerely believe that the results are well worth the effort. We also understand the need to take into account religious, cultural and traditional sensitivities in furthering the rights of women, which is a balance that Malaysia has worked to achieve. Malaysia is willing to share our experience in enhancing the involvement and development of women in all facets of life in accordance with Islamic principles.

Malaysia appreciates the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable development and peace in the country.

Malaysia is also firmly supportive of the various regional and multilateral forums that focus on Afghanistan, which provide further avenues for engagement between Afghanistan and the international community. We participate actively in the triannual meetings of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan and Pakistan, the most recent of which was held in New York in September, at which the Group collectively underscored the importance of the roles played by the United Nations, regional partners and the larger international community in Afghanistan's future. We also recall the successful Tokyo conference of 2012, during which the international community made generous pledges in development aid for Afghanistan, and we welcome the follow-up meeting of senior officials in July 2013. My delegation hopes that all parties will honour their commitments under that framework in order to allow for the continued progress and development of the country.

For our part, Malaysia stands ready to support Afghanistan in its rebuilding efforts. The Malaysian armed forces medical contingent stationed in Bamian province provided much-needed medical, dentistry and health-care services to the Afghan people from July 2010 until April 2013. We are willing to explore further ways in which we can continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Malaysia will also continue

to provide opportunities for capacity-building and human resources development to Afghanistan through bilateral technical training programmes, such as the Malaysian technical cooperation programme in various fields. We are ready to work with the Afghan Government to identify areas where we can provide training, areas that are most relevant for the country's developmental needs.

The gains made in Afghanistan in the political, economic and social spheres must be further strengthened to ensure lasting peace, stability and growth. The international community has resoundingly united behind Afghanistan. We must sustain our efforts to ensure that it receives the backing it needs to achieve the noble aspirations it has set for itself as a nation. In that regard, Malaysia continues to stand with the international community in support of Afghanistan through 2014 and beyond.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Romania fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations. I would also like to express a few thoughts in my national capacity.

We take note of, and are grateful for, the Secretary-General's latest report on the activities undertaken by the United Nations in Afghanistan (A/68/609) during the three-month reporting period. We also express our appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Germany for admirably conducting the negotiations and introducing draft resolution A/68/L.11. Romania is a traditional sponsor of the resolution on this item.

Those documents, and the remarks delivered both by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and all previous speakers, represent a solid ground for further approaches and actions. If one could sum up one main, common idea from them all, it would be that during the past decade, despite so many challenges, the Afghan people, with the international community's support, have achieved considerable political, security, economic and developmental progress. My country is pleased to be part of that undertaking. During those years, Romania's contribution to the stabilization process followed the path of internal developments in Afghanistan. Thus, from our exclusively military engagement in 2002, we became involved in training Afghan military and police forces, in operational mentoring, in contributing to the European Union police mission, and in providing close protection for senior United Nations officials.

Let me illustrate that evolution with a few concrete examples that occurred this year that illustrate Romania's contribution to institution-building in Afghanistan. They are part of my country's commitments assumed at the NATO Summit in Chicago with regard to military matters and at the International Donors Conference in Tokyo with regard to civilian aspects, as well as in the framework of Romanian-Afghan bilateral relations. I wanted to give those examples because they reflect the path towards normality.

In March, Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, jointly with United Nations Development Programme, launched a pilot programme for Afghan diplomats. The purpose was to familiarize 10 young Afghan diplomats with Romania's and the region's foreign policy and perspectives. The training programme is financed through development assistance funds that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been allocating for Afghanistan since 2007.

Another example, which involved reflecting together on the future, was the Bucharest Forum 2013, entitled "Anchoring the New Silk Road, Linking Three Seas: Caspian, Black Sea and the Adriatic", organized last September by the Aspen Institute of Romania. The Minister of Economy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, was a guest. I could cite more examples, but I would like to underline my country's clear political commitment to maintain its military participation in the International Security Assistance Force until the end of 2014, and its availability to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces in the framework of the post-2014 NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. From that point of view, we welcome the recent developments in the United States-Afghan dialogue on the status of a future foreign presence.

Finally, I would like to point to a topic of particular interest for Romania that turned out to be a lesson learned from the engagement of the international community in Afghanistan, and that is the importance of the cooperation between the United Nations and the regional and subregional organizations. In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation for the collaboration and joint actions of the Special Representatives of the United Nations, European Union and NATO to support the Afghan authorities and people in their quest not only for peace, security and stability, but also for democracy, rule of law, human rights, and social and economic development. Romania will always

support the complex Afghan-led and Afghan-owned quest. We are confident that one day it will lead to the peaceful, stable and prosperous future that Afghanistan deserves.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Head of the European Union Delegation, Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting.

Like others, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/68/609) and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I also appreciate both the work and effort of the delegation of Germany, which convened constructive and fruitful consultations on the draft resolution (A/68/L.11), and of all the delegations that participated in the process.

In our view, the draft resolution reflects many of the challenges that lie ahead with regard to the role of institutions in Afghanistan in the transition process. I would like to single out the upcoming presidential and provincial elections, human rights and the rights of women and girls in particular. The expected consensual adoption of the draft resolution is significant in both formal and substantial terms. The international and regional actors, including the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, have expressed their willingness and readiness to assist the Afghan Government, and they remain strongly committed to progress in Afghanistan. Let me reiterate some elements that we deem to be important.

The first is national ownership. We welcome the recognition that all processes should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. The commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to continue in the process of transition, stabilization, peace and reconciliation in general and the active participation of Afghan representatives in consultations on the draft resolution in particular are promising political elements for future developments.

Second is the dynamics of the process and the need for good news. The measurability of progress in Afghanistan is the best evaluation criterion. In assessing the current situation there, we have in mind the challenges that remain and those that may appear on the stony road to stability. But we also need good news. We need positive stories and examples to encourage the Afghan people not to turn back from the road to stability, security and freedom. I am sure that over the past decade progress has been achieved in all areas of life and society.

Regrettably, most of the news coverage is related to the number of attacks, the fragile security situation or persistent non-military threats. By no means should we underestimate those challenges. It would be a mistake to bury our heads in the sand. However, it would also be a mistake if we did not properly promote good practices and progress. They are significant mobilization factors for many investors and politicians, but above all for the Afghan people. For instance, we can simply compare the text of this draft resolution with documents adopted 10 years ago to see what has been achieved and what remains.

The third element is economic development and sustainability. Afghanistan is a country with trillions of dollars' worth of mineral resources. That is both an opportunity and a challenge. It may be a temptation for many, as well as a vehicle for development for most. But our decisions must be right, fair and global. To make use of those resources, long-term financial resources and investments are needed for infrastructure, technology and transportation. And any long-term investment requires stability, transparency and an appropriate legal framework. Which road will we choose after 2014 — the road to years or maybe decades of conflict, or the way to stability and prosperity? That question is addressed not only to the international community and the Afghan leaders but to all the population. I am sure the Afghan people know what the right answer is.

The fourth is regional cooperation. Without any doubt, regional cooperation is among the promising examples of the improved situation. The unprecedented intensity of regional dialogue and confidence-building measures among Afghanistan and its neighbours should contribute to an enhanced ability to jointly combat non-military security threats, including illicit trafficking in humans and drugs. It should also promote trade and development in border regions. International and regional initiatives such as those led by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan process, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should play an important role.

In that regard, we welcome the outcome of the conferences on Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia held in Istanbul, Kabul and Almaty, which launched and further developed the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure

and Stable Afghanistan. We are looking forward to the fourth Heart of Asia ministerial conference, to be held in Tianjin, China, in 2014.

The Slovak Republic reiterates its commitments to continue assisting Afghanistan in the fields of security stabilization and social and economic development. The Slovak Armed Forces will continue to provide the required capabilities to the International Security Assistance Force led by NATO until the end of its mission in 2014. Slovakia intends to contribute to the new NATO post-2014 training, advisory and assistance mission as well. The Government of Afghanistan and the international community must ensure that the new mission has a sound legal basis and that the necessary conditions are met for the successful fulfilment of its mandate.

In addition to our military contribution, Afghanistan remains the priority of Slovakia's official development assistance. The nature of our development assistance reflects many issues that have already been mentioned in this statement and by many delegations. We note Afghanistan's progress, and we support institution-building that complements and contributes to the development of an economy characterized by sound macroeconomic policies. We encourage the development of a financial sector that provides services, inter alia, to microenterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises, and households.

We firmly believe that this is the way forward. We should speak less and do more in responding to current and future challenges. We definitely should speak more about the positive developments that have been achieved so far. We believe that assistance to Afghanistan in the field of security stabilization must be complemented by common projects focused on support for Afghan economic development and trade relations. We must continue to reiterate the importance of respecting the rule of law and human rights. They are connected to a transparent and stable business environment and improved accountability, which in turn attract international stakeholders and investors. We must encourage regional cooperation, which will provide the opportunity for border regions to be fully integrated in the stabilization processes.

Mrs. Hrdá (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic is pleased to join other Member States in co-sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/68/L.11). The draft resolution reflects the fact that

the international community remains committed to supporting the Afghan people in building a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan through the 2014 security and political transition and beyond. Let me thank the German delegation for the excellent work they have done in steering the negotiations on today's resolution, as well as the Government of Afghanistan for their constructive engagement.

The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

We recognize the remarkable transformation that Afghanistan has undergone over the past decade. Still, there will be many difficult months ahead, and many challenges will need to be faced and resolved before the country reaches the stability and prosperity that the Afghan people definitely deserve.

The Czech Republic has supported the efforts of the Afghan Government to provide security for Afghan citizens since 2002. From 2008 to 2013, we were involved in reconstruction and development assistance in Logar province, where we assisted with a local Afghan project to provide higher education in agriculture. Overall, the multifaceted engagement of Czech soldiers, policemen and civilian experts, as well as humanitarian non-governmental organizations, has been the most complex and most difficult in the history of the Czech Republic.

In the light of the ongoing security transition and the increased capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces, the Czech Republic has been gradually phasing its military personnel out of Afghanistan. However, that definitely does not mean that Afghanistan will no longer be given priority on our foreign policy agenda. We fully share the view that the international community must stay engaged in Afghanistan. The Czech Republic will continue its support beyond 2014 into the transformation decade. The Czech Government has already approved an on-budget financial contribution to support the Afghan National Security Forces and economic development. That assistance will complement existing funding under Czech development assistance and will be spread over the years 2014 to 2017.

It must be emphasized that the long-term success of the transition and the sustainability of the international assistance are entirely in Afghan hands. The implementation of commitments under the Tokyo

Mutual Accountability Framework remains a key aspect in that regard. In our view, it is very important that the Afghan reform effort be quickly restored and intensified after the elections. It is also of crucial importance that Afghanistan continue its efforts to safeguard basic human rights and principles, in particular the rights of women and girls.

The Afghan presidential elections of 2014 present an opportunity for the Afghan leadership to show its commitment to the principles of the Afghan Constitution. Conducted in a free, fair, inclusive and transparent manner, the elections would present a major step towards a vision of a peaceful future for all communities in Afghanistan.

During the previous presidential elections in 2009, the Czech military provided security for voters in the remote and volatile district of Azra in the Logar province. Almost 20,000 people out of the 29,000 voters registered at that time turned up to cast ballots. We hope that even more voters will participate in 2014 and that the Afghan security forces will succeed in keeping the elections safe.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Let me at the outset thank the delegation of Germany for the efforts that it has made to bring today's draft resolution (A/68/L.11) to the table. I also would like to thank all the delegations that participated in the consultations on the draft resolution. We are glad to co-sponsor the draft resolution and are looking forward to its adoption by consensus.

We welcome the positive signals coming from Afghanistan in the past year. The military has assumed a full leadership role in security matters for the entire country. Preparations for the 2014 elections are ongoing, with timelines, operational frameworks and proposed polling sites in place. More than a year after the Tokyo Conference, we are glad to see increased efforts being made within the Tokyo Framework to ensure the concrete implementation of mutual commitments, on the part of both the Afghan Government and the international community. We are also happy to see indications that the Afghan Government is taking its responsibilities towards its people seriously and is ready to move forward in terms of human rights, democratization and good governance.

Despite the positive signs, major political, economic and security challenges remain. The security situation remains volatile, and unacceptable human losses, especially in terms of civilian casualties, continue to

occur. Natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, epidemic diseases, chronic poverty and increasing internal displacement pose grave humanitarian threats. The most vulnerable segments of society, especially women, boys and girls, continue to be at risk.

As Afghanistan moves forward in its political and security transition, we must remain in touch with the realities on the ground. The ongoing display of will by the international community will strengthen the Afghan people's hopes for the future and will help ensure that a smooth transition is under way. As Afghanistan's regional and international partners, we should spare no effort to contribute to the vision of a secure, peaceful and self-sufficient Afghanistan. That is in the mutual interest of all of us.

As the international presence is being reduced, the importance of regional cooperation for achieving stability, security and prosperity is being increasingly recognized. In fact, regional ownership and sustainability are interlinked. The viability of Afghan structures and institutions will be significantly strengthened, if it is supported by regional cooperation and ownership.

From that perspective, we are glad to observe the increased momentum in the Istanbul Process, an element that is recognized in the draft resolution before us. The spirit of regional ownership and solidarity, the engagement and technical support of the United Nations and its agencies, and the interest and support of the international community have made that possible. We would like to take this opportunity to commend China once more for offering to host the next Istanbul Process ministerial meeting.

Trilateral and quadrilateral initiatives have also shown themselves to be important tools for fostering regional ownership in the heart of Asia. We welcome all such initiatives, as well as the constructive role played by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in support of Afghanistan. Further connectivity will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability and help create a more favourable business environment in Afghanistan.

We attach particular importance to the completion and maintenance of local railroad and land routes, the development of regional economic projects and the enhancement of civil aviation capabilities. We welcome all efforts to enhance regional connectivity and economic growth.

Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and will continue to contribute to a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for so many decades.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 37.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.11, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.11, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Afghanistan, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.11?

Draft resolution A/68/L.11 was adopted (resolution 68/11).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 37?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.