

Statement by Ambassador Asoke Kumar Mukerji, Permanent Representative at the United Nations Security Council Debate on United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) held on 16 March, 2015

Mr. President,

Thank you for organizing this debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan [UNAMA]. I thank the Secretary General for his quarterly report A/69/801, and our briefers this morning.

2. This is a critical decade of transformation for Afghanistan. India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner. We share the Afghan people's vision of a strong, independent, united and prosperous state, for which so many Afghans have sacrificed so much. India stands ready to do all that is possible within our capacities and our means, to work with the Afghan Government and its people, to realize this great vision.

Mr. President,

3. Afghanistan's historic political transition remains on course. The patience, forbearance, courage and democratic aspiration of the people of Afghanistan have strengthened this process.

4. A priority is to complete the task of Government formation as rapidly as possible, so that all Government Ministries can start functioning normally. These Ministries have to deliver the public services that the Afghan people have been waiting for so long. In this context, we welcome the appointments of some of the key Ministers and express India's hope that the remaining process will be completed at the earliest.

5. We note that the National Unity Government has set itself two important political tasks - electoral reforms and the organization of a Constitutional Loya Jirga. We hope that these tasks will be completed soon, particularly the task of electoral reforms.

Mr. President,

6. We are concerned at what the latest report of the Secretary General tells us about the security situation inside Afghanistan. The Report states "In terms of incidents recorded over the past 13 years, 2014 was the second-highest, after 2011" – which was the year, of course, when Osama bin Laden was neutralized. These incidents are a matter of great concern.

7. The UNSG's report substantiates our view that it is terrorism, and not tribal differences or ethnic rivalries, which is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. These terrorist groups, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba or LeT, are active despite the efforts of the valiant personnel of the ANSF and the international coalition forces. It is obvious that their activity cannot be sustained without systematic state support from beyond Afghanistan's borders. Reports indicate these groups are mutating

into more virulent forms, in a region already impacted by terrorism. The Council must act against this threat with a sense of urgency.

Mr. President,

8. The UNSG's report has mentioned the London Conference on Afghanistan. In today's global economic situation when the sentiment of 'aid fatigue' exists in most traditional donor countries, Afghanistan's economic transition will have to be also supported by a private sector led process. President Ghani has taken a lead on issues of connectivity and we welcome and encourage all members of the international community to reciprocate in full measure.

9. As a lead country of the Trade Commerce and Investment CBM under the Heart of Asia process, India has gained appropriate experience on this issue. Both Afghanistan's lack of connectivity to sea ports, as well as to the faster growing economic regions of Asia, are major constraints for private sector investment in Afghanistan.

10. India, Afghanistan and Iran are examining how the existing port of Chabahar in Iran can be developed to help Afghanistan connect with the outside world.

11. India has unilaterally offered Afghanistan access to Attari on our side of the India-Pakistan international border for Afghan trucks and goods that till now have transit rights only up to Wagah on the Pakistan side. Implementation of this offer would provide Afghanistan significant access to one of the fastest growing economic markets in its region. The proposed Motor Vehicles Agreement of our regional organization, SAARC, would further facilitate the movement of goods and people from Afghanistan.

Mr President,

12. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan must continue to play a leading role in shaping and coordinating the international community's efforts to assist Afghanistan's political and economic reconstruction process. UNAMA must also focus on the important role it plays in ensuring delivery of valuable humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan. The recent avalanches in the northern regions of Afghanistan only underscore the importance of this point.

13. We reiterate our commitment to “stay the course” in Afghanistan.

Thank You.