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Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Thomson (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 38

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/369)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.10)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.10.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): It is an honour for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution (A/66/L.10) on the situation in Afghanistan.

The past year has seen important milestones for Afghanistan. Germany, as the facilitator, would like to take this opportunity to highlight the five key messages of the draft resolution.

First, this year's draft resolution is about transition in the field of security. We note with satisfaction that the transition is unfolding progressively. Since the announcement of the first tranche of the transition in July, the Afghan Government has been taking over security responsibility for areas covering 25 per cent of the Afghan population. Details on the second tranche will be announced soon — 50 per cent of the Afghan population will then live in transition areas. As we stay

mindful of the continuing volatility of the security environment — and the many challenges connected to it — 10 years after the end of the Taliban rule, there is, for the first time, a clear timeline and a clear international strategy for the phased but complete transition of lead security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces, based on clear criteria.

The focus of the draft resolution is on improving the operational capabilities of the Security Forces, with an increasing emphasis on training. In the security sector and elsewhere, one of the keys to sustainable progress lies in the empowerment of the Afghan people and institutions. This is where our priority rightly belongs.

In line with the Kabul commitments, the goal of the international community remains firmly to continue to enable such progress in other fields, including governance, reconstruction and development. It is ample illustration of Afghan leadership that Afghanistan will be chairing alone the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, two weeks from today.

Secondly, this year's draft resolution is about long-term commitment by the international community. Today, the General Assembly will send more than a renewed message of solidarity. We underline the fact that Afghanistan can count on the long-term support of the United Nations and its Member States, much beyond the target date for transition, at the end of 2014. The core of this year's draft resolution is therefore about linking the past 10 years to the next 10

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years. International support will be required even after that. The theme of the Bonn Conference, "From Transition to Transformation", underlines that international resolve.

As the transition proceeds, and for some considerable time thereafter, the role of the United Nations in support of Afghanistan will remain pivotal. My delegation is therefore grateful that the Secretary-General has accepted the invitation to lead the United Nations delegation at the Bonn Conference.

A rapidly changing environment requires flexibility and constant adaptation, including from the United Nations. In the draft resolution, the General Assembly looks forward to the results of the upcoming review of the mandated activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and of United Nations support, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1974 (2011). The review will be complex. But my delegation is certain that it will contribute to further improving the way we support Afghanistan, in line with United Nations best practice and in line with Afghan priorities.

Security considerations will remain one important aspect of the review. In the light of this year's fatal attacks, including against the United Nations, which we condemn in the strongest terms, the draft resolution urgently recalls that ensuring the best possible protection for the women and men working for the United Nations and for other development and humanitarian workers must remain our absolute priority.

It must also be a priority for us not to allow the transition to divert our attention from our long-term objectives, be it with regard to democratization, the rule of law and human rights, or with regard to fighting poverty or supporting socio-economic development. The list could go on. It is not a coincidence that, over the years, the Afghanistan resolution has developed into a comprehensive, long-term development agenda.

Two important steps have recently been taken. In the draft resolution, the General Assembly welcomes both the settlement of the impasse over last year's elections and last week's announcement of an important new three-year International Monetary Fund programme. The draft resolution also rightly emphasizes the role of women. Much has been achieved. Germany considers it a further strong signal that the Afghan Government has given assurances that

25 per cent of the members of the Afghan delegation at the Bonn Conference will be women. Also, civil society as a whole must be heard. After a comprehensive domestic process led by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, two elected civil society representatives, a woman and a man, will be given a prominent opportunity to directly address the Conference.

Thirdly, this year's draft resolution is about support for the peace and reconciliation process. Progress in both security and development will not be achievable — and certainly not be sustainable — without a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led process of political reconciliation and reintegration.

Following the murder of the head of the High Peace Council, Professor Rabbani, the draft resolution stresses the need for calm and solidarity in Afghanistan and the need for all parties to reduce tensions. The draft also welcomes the important decision by the Council to split the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, and underlines the procedural innovations of the regime pursuant to Security Council resolution 1988 (2011), particularly consultations with the Government of Afghanistan, to underline the fact that the United Nations is acting in support of an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, leaving no doubt about the conditions any participant in the reconciliation process must abide by.

Fourthly, this year's draft resolution is about placing additional emphasis on the regional dimension. The General Assembly would welcome the recent Istanbul Conference, where Afghanistan and its regional partners affirmed their commitment to promote regional security and cooperation through a first set of confidence-building measures. In that context, we look forward to the first follow-up at the ministerial conference scheduled to be held in Kabul in June 2012.

The draft resolution before the Assembly complements regional political cooperation efforts and places significant emphasis on making better use of the considerable economic potential of the region. Among other things, it underlines the benefits of reviving historic trade routes — with the historic Silk Road as a potential source of inspiration.

Fifthly and finally, the draft resolution reiterates the interconnected nature of the challenges in Afghanistan. Justice and the fight against impunity and corruption remain of systemic importance for the country's successful development. The production of, and trafficking in, illicit drugs continue to undermine the development of the formal economic sector and remain an important source of financing for terrorism and extremism. Strategies to create better prospects for employment and to reduce poverty are needed more urgently than ever.

Let me end by emphasizing that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and parts of the region continues to require our strong international attention and generous support. The General Assembly recognizes with particular appreciation the heavy burden that neighbouring countries are continuing to shoulder by hosting considerable numbers of refugees, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, and acknowledges their adherence, over decades, to humanitarian principles.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the many delegations from all regions that participated actively in the informal consultations. Their sense of shared responsibility is among the most important ingredients of this draft resolution. We therefore suggest to the General Assembly that it adopt, once again, a consensual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan.

The special appreciation of the German delegation goes to my distinguished colleague, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, his deputy, Zahir Faqiri, Counsellor Youssouf Ghafoorzai and their colleagues for their wonderful cooperation, trust and friendship. Germany also extends its wholehearted thanks to the entire United Nations family in Afghanistan and at Headquarters for their outstanding work.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Once more in this Hall, we are discussing the situation in Afghanistan: the cycle of suffering, the immensity of new challenges and, certainly, the progress we have made thus far. For the past decade, the world has been extensively engaged in Afghanistan and in our ongoing struggle for peace and stability. We come together today to adopt a draft resolution that will again affirm the support of the international community for ending a continuing crisis that has long shaken the world, and also our

commitment to help the Afghan people in their difficult struggle to finally achieve peace and stability.

I thank all who have contributed to shaping the draft resolution, in particular the German delegation, headed by His Excellency Ambassador Peter Wittig, for their leadership and hard work throughout the process. We appreciate the work of all of his colleagues, including Ambassador Miguel Berger, and are grateful to Mr. Elmar Eich for his role in facilitating the negotiations.

We are leaving behind another year of national trauma. Regrettably, violence has remained a constant in the lives of many Afghans, resulting in a significant loss of life. We have seen indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians, targeted assassinations and attempts to shatter what we have worked so hard to build. In fact, the terrorist attacks are aimed at breaking our determination and undermining our national unity and historical integrity.

Afghans have been the prime victims of terrorism, but we are not alone. Our friends and partners have also been hurt and are losing their lives alongside our people. As the threat of terrorism originating from our region has become global in character, the international community has intervened to stop it. But we have not yet succeeded in ending the threat. The Taliban, who hijacked Afghanistan for years, kept their heads down for some time but are now reappearing with a barbaric and brutal face. Resuscitated by the continued existence of safe havens in the region, they continue to hold Afghanistan hostage, killing our people, destroying the country and threatening our gains, freedom and way of life.

Despite the recent increase in violent activities, the Afghan people are determined to continue their progress. Fragile as the country may seem, substantial improvements have been made over the past decade. Afghanistan has risen from the ashes of a State shattered by decades of conflict, and millions of Afghans have rebuilt their lives and are moving forward. Thousands of new schools and universities have been built, with millions of students enrolled, nearly half of whom are female. Hundreds of clinics and hospitals have been established and thousands of doctors and nurses have been trained. New roads have been constructed, benefiting travel within Afghanistan and enhancing partnerships and trade with those in our region and beyond.

Our achievements are not confined to the economic and social spheres. Good and democratic governance is being extended to areas where previously there was none. The rule of law is being strengthened, and we are working to rid our society of the cancer of corruption. With the wider participation of its people in political and social life and a greater focus on human rights, including women's rights, Afghanistan is becoming a home for all.

Not far from the burning memories of the bloody and destructive power struggle of the 1990s, we drafted our new Constitution, held two presidential and two parliamentary elections and now have our national and local administrations in place. Those achievements have helped Afghanistan to regain its legitimate place on the world stage as a responsible member of the international community.

However, that progress has not been easy. It is a constant struggle. Terrorism remains the primary threat and exacerbates all other challenges. The terrorists and their insolent supporters continue to destroy the country and prevent us from living in peace and prosperity. Afghanistan's enemies wanted to convince the world that success was not possible and that all efforts were doomed to failure, but they must understand that we are not in the Afghanistan of the 1990s. Terrorist acts undermine our daily work, but they will not force us back to where we were a decade ago.

As we begin a new decade of international involvement in Afghanistan, 10 years into the post-Taliban era, we are confronted with many questions. Where do we go from here? More specifically, how can Afghans stand on their own feet and maintain a stable society through the transition process, as international forces continue their withdrawal?

This year marked the historic start of the transition process by which all Afghans will assume full responsibility, ownership and leadership. Transition is about transforming the country from one that is suffering from violence and instability into a fully functioning State and a viable society. A comprehensive transition includes at least six interlinked issues.

The first is security. Security transition is on track. We are working with our international partners to assume full responsibility in all provinces by 2014,

or possibly earlier. The gradual drawdown of the international forces through 2014 is strongly linked to the training and equipping of Afghan forces and to an ongoing strategic partnership over the next decade or more. While the numbers, capabilities and self-confidence of the Afghan National Security Forces are growing, transition is not happening in a vacuum; continued international engagement through recruiting, training and equipping Afghan forces will be essential through transition and beyond.

The second key issue is good governance and the rule of law. Building a better future for Afghanistan will require a stable, functioning and clean Government that is capable of turning opportunities into successes. Actions such as the release of the National Priority Programme on Law and Justice, which outlines the justice sector reform strategy for the next three years, highlight the important focus of strengthening the rule of law in all provinces and districts. For transition to be successful, the Government of Afghanistan must and will continue to enhance its efforts to improve services for the Afghan people, strengthen justice and the rule of law and fight corruption at all levels.

The third issue is social and economic development. Afghanistan is on its way to a sustainable, drug-free and fully functional economy. During the past year, we have been finalizing our national priority programme within the framework of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Agricultural development is the top priority, along with increasing investment in Afghanistan's rich mineral resources and rebuilding infrastructure. Social development is also reflected — for instance in the 10-year National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan — in a continuing focus on education and health. These programmes will effectively and efficiently address poverty and inequality, without duplication of efforts. We urge the international community to ensure that the provision of development aid is transparent and accountable and that it is coordinated with Afghanistan's priorities.

The fourth issue is reconciliation and reintegration. Transition is interlinked with the peace process, which can help put an end to violence and insecurity. This year, the peace process saw both significant steps forward and a major setback with the assassination of Professor Rabbani, head of the High

Peace Council. However, despite all attacks, the Afghan people want the peace process to continue.

That is just what the Loya Jirga — the traditional grand assembly, which ended this weekend in Kabul — calls for. The Loya Jirga brought together 2,200 representatives of Afghans from all ethnic groups, north and south, east and west, and from all segments of society — parliamentarians, politicians, tribal elders, scholars and Afghan refugees — to discuss the peace process and the strategic partnership agreement with the United States. It was an inclusive process that will inform the Government's position and ensure a unified Afghan voice. It marked a significant step in the peace and reconciliation process and was a clear display of the will of the Afghan people, reaffirming that Afghanistan is ready to accept and build on a strategic alliance with the United States as well as other real friends and partners.

The fifth key issue is regional cooperation. Through a number of initiatives, Afghanistan is reclaiming our historic role as a trade, transport and economic hub and, most importantly, as a catalyst for wider collaboration in the heart of Asia. Earlier this month, we saw the successful conclusion of the Istanbul Conference, generously hosted by our brother country, Turkey. Afghanistan sees the Istanbul process as a new beginning for comprehensive regional interconnectedness. We look forward to the first follow-up ministerial meeting in Kabul next June.

Before Istanbul, we saw the finalization and implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, after decades of negotiations. That Agreement represents a tremendous and historic step forward. In September, 30 high-level delegations from the region and beyond convened here in New York to endorse the New Silk Road Initiative. We believe that vision holds real promise for attracting greater investment and trade and will provide economic opportunities for all countries in our wider region.

Security is the basis of regional cooperation aimed at achieving regional and international peace and stability. The threat of terrorism comes from the region. In safe havens beyond our borders, terrorists find sanctuary, training, broadened logistical support and strategic guidance for preparing renewed attacks against Afghanistan and the international community. Unless the scourge of terrorism is eliminated, all our

efforts for economic development and for social and political progress will be in vain.

That brings us to the sixth element of transition, namely, strategic partnerships. We are now finalizing the strategic partnership document, which will involve United States support for training and assisting Afghan forces through 2014 and beyond. We have also signed a strategic partnership agreement with India, and negotiations for similar arrangements are under way with the United Kingdom, France, Australia and the European Union. The basis for a long-term partnership has also been established with NATO. Those partnerships will continue to build on and redefine the ties we have established with the international community to guarantee the country's future success.

In December, the Afghan leadership will join the international community in Bonn to assess progress and map out a long-term commitment for peace and security in Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference will mark a new beginning at the start of a new decade of the international community's partnership with Afghanistan. We thank Germany for its efforts and leadership in hosting what will certainly become a milestone in our history.

For Afghanistan, 2014 is not a solid end point carved in stone. Instead, it stands as a marker along the way to a new phase of the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, with Afghanistan as a fully sovereign partner. We need to be realistic in understanding why the peace and prosperity of Afghanistan is important in an increasingly interconnected world and a strategically crucial region. A successful transition that addresses the six interwoven elements I outlined today will lead us to a stable, reliable Afghanistan that partners with the international community in a mutually beneficial way.

We are often presented with a grim picture of Afghanistan, one of disappointment and disengagement. Such scenarios raise doubts about the possibility of successful transition in Afghanistan. But we Afghans and the international community share a different vision. We have a plan for a successful transition, with all elements and all partners acting in harmonious accord. We believe that with the support and goodwill of the Afghan people and the international community, that plan will succeed.

All of us are here not simply to see how the situation in Afghanistan will unfold, but to shape it and

craft future history. We have a responsibility to act for success. We cannot simply sit back and wait in fear of failure in Afghanistan — although there are some out there who prefer to do so. Let us not insult the future. Instead, on the basis of the real progress of the past decade, let us stick to making a successful present.

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

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I appreciate the invitation to the European Union to participate in today's debate.

The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/369). Our thanks also go to all delegations that have participated in the consultations on draft resolution A/66/L.10, introduced by the representative of Germany today. We look forward to once again adopting the draft resolution on Afghanistan by consensus. We have listened with great attention to the statement by the Ambassador of Afghanistan.

I would also like to express once more the European Union's firm condemnation of the fatal attack on Professor Rabbani, the Chairman of the High Peace Council. Professor Rabbani's legacy can best be honoured by redoubling reconciliation efforts. We applaud the Government for committing to precisely that.

At the outset, let me reiterate how much importance we attach to United Nations efforts in Afghanistan. The United Nations work will remain vital to Afghanistan's fate for years to come, and that is why we all have to continue to support it both politically and financially. The European Union itself is also in it for the long haul.

In July, a concrete transition began with the handover of security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force to Afghan forces in seven areas of the country. Results are

encouraging, and preparations will soon begin for the second tranche of security transfers announced by President Karzai last week at the Loya Jirga. That also confirms that the Afghan Security Forces continue to assume more and more responsibility, despite the difficult context. That should serve to strengthen the international community's resolve to contribute to the transition's success by effectively training those forces.

The security background will remain difficult for some time to come, but against it, it is all the more encouraging that the Kabul Process is in many respects gaining momentum, as we have seen with the resumption of the meetings of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and the progress on the national priority programmes. Ahead of the Bonn Conference, that momentum is crucial for bolstering the confidence of all donors as they seek to do their part in the context of the Kabul Process.

Still more needs to be done to ensure that public administration reform and reform of the justice institutions now receive the attention they deserve as the backbone of civilian transition. In particular, independent and professional justice institutions are indispensable. Afghanistan needs them for a better security climate, a better investment climate and a better human rights climate. Legislation will remain void without the institutions to implement it. Afghanistan's commitments to international human rights conventions are a case in point.

With regard to human rights, let me say that the rights of women deserve special attention during the transition and beyond. That is exactly why it is so important that the Afghan Government has assured that a representative delegation, including a strong voice for women, will be present at the conference.

Let me add that progress on some national priority programmes should not give rise to complacency. The transition process will be viable only if all national priority programmes move forward together. In the area of governance, positive steps such as the launch of the anticorruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee need to be backed up by structural measures that will bring down corruption and bring about more transparency and accountability with regard to public finances.

There can be no accountability without parliamentary control. It is encouraging that the Afghan parliament has now fully resumed its functions.

That means getting important legislative work done and providing the necessary checks and balances when it comes to State-building in Afghanistan. New legislation should therefore be submitted for parliamentary approval. There is room for improvement in this sphere. We note with satisfaction that the final authority of the Independent Electoral Commission in electoral questions has been reaffirmed, and it is in that context that the European Union stands ready to support Afghan commitments to further long-term electoral reform.

Of course, we need to look beyond Kabul to the provinces and districts, to subnational governance. We need to further strengthen the capacity and accountability of provincial and municipal institutions. Only then will the right services be delivered to the right people in the right way. Also, to get their fair share of aid, provinces and districts should have a better connection to the centre. After all, in a post-transition Afghanistan, funds will increasingly be channelled through the central Government, in line with the respective international commitments. That process needs to be transparent and accountable.

Before I conclude, allow me to reiterate the importance of the regional context. The neighbouring countries have a strong stake in and a special responsibility for a stable and secure Afghanistan. Building on our ongoing programmes, the European Union stands ready to throw its weight behind initiatives that promote regional integration and cooperation.

The recent Istanbul Conference was a good step forward towards a regional political process, owned by Afghanistan and its neighbours, to help bring an end to conflict in Afghanistan. We hope that the process will be given extra momentum at the Bonn Conference and we look forward to the ministerial meeting in Kabul next year as a follow-up to the Istanbul Conference. In addition, I would like to highlight the New Silk Road Initiative, as it offers a vision for promising economic cooperation from which Afghanistan and its neighbours could benefit greatly.

To end our statement, the Afghan people need to see concrete improvements in their lives and livelihoods, and we all need to play our part in that. With that in our minds and hearts, I can assure Afghanistan of the European Union's long-term commitment and partnership.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan. The member States of the CSTO support the rebuilding of Afghanistan as a peaceful, stable, independent and neutral State with a stable economy, free of terrorism and drug crime.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan today continues to face serious threats in the security sphere. Extremists from the Taliban and Al-Qaida are increasing their activities across the country. The number of murders and kidnappings of Afghan civil servants, ordinary people and international staff is increasing. We are particularly concerned that terrorist activity is spilling over from Afghanistan into neighbouring Central Asian States members of CSTO. Drug crime also continues to be a threat.

CSTO member States believe that effective settlement of the situation in Afghanistan and the resolution of the serious challenges facing the Government of the country will be impossible without an integrated approach on the part of the international community, under the auspices of the United Nations. We believe it is wise to delegate greater self-dependence to the Afghan Government in resolving internal issues, particularly through creating the conditions for the transfer to it of responsibility for security on the territory of their country. We welcome the gradual transfer to the Afghan Security Forces of responsibility for security in the country in the framework of the Kabul Process.

However, the withdrawal of international forces must be accompanied by adequate efforts to build the capacities of Afghan force structure and must correspond to the real situation in the country. In that connection, we believe that the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan will be possible only after it has submitted a report to the Security Council on the fulfilment of its mandate from the Council. We are disturbed by the possible consequences of implementing plans for long-term support for a military presence in Afghanistan after 2014.

Instead, we propose considering jointly how to establish neutral status for Afghanistan. Needless to

say, the initiative for this must come from the Afghan people themselves. Moreover, we are not talking about the immediate future but about a time when the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan are completed. If neutrality is established as a future objective now, however, it could facilitate the dialogue on reconciliation. We believe it is important to show a focused and balanced approach to arriving at a national reconciliation plan. It should be based on three well-known principles, namely, an end to armed resistance, recognition of the Afghan Constitution and the severance of ties to Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Meeting these criteria remains a prerequisite for delisting those on the sanctions regime's Taliban list.

A peaceful and democratic future for Afghanistan cannot be achieved without resolving the issue of the illegal production of, and trade in, drugs. It is evident to us that the drug traffic emanating from Afghanistan is a threat to international peace and stability, as stated in Security Council resolutions 1943 (2010), 1974 (2011) and 2011 (2011). In our view, the foreign military presence in Afghanistan, together with the Afghan army and police force, can and should be involved more actively in combating drug production there, particularly since they have assumed responsibility for security issues in Afghanistan. Our offers of real-time cooperation in that area with NATO partners still stand.

One of the most important issues for the Collective Security Treaty Organization in that area is implementing practical cooperation between partner nations in combating security challenges and threats emanating from Afghanistan, especially those related to drugs and terrorism. The question of Afghanistan is a perennial item for discussion at CSTO summits and at meetings of its governing bodies. The CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers has a working group on Afghanistan, within which it analyses the progress and prospects of the Afghanistan situation, discusses issues relating to how to promote a settlement in Afghanistan and develops appropriate recommendations for the CSTO governing bodies. A testament to the importance of such efforts by CSTO was the declaration adopted in February by the heads of CSTO member States on the issue of the drug threat from Afghanistan. That document was CSTO's first major initiative on Afghanistan during Belarus's chairmanship.

The importance for the United Nations of developing practical coordination with CSTO in the fight against drug trafficking was cited as one of the main priorities for cooperation between the two organizations by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his statement at an expanded meeting of the CSTO Permanent Council on 22 April. The subject was further developed during consultations between the Secretary-General of CSTO and the United Nations leadership held in New York in September.

We believe that success in combating illicit Afghan drug trafficking, which represents a threat to international peace and stability, can be achieved in a truly effective manner only through the combined efforts of every State and relevant international organization. It is precisely for that reason that CSTO has established, and continues to maintain, close working ties in that area with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is taking steps to work with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community and is actively looking for ways to cooperate in an operational manner with NATO. A good example of such effective cooperation on security issues in the Central Asian region within that framework of support is CSTO member States' provision of transit rights for supplies for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan passing through their territories.

An important element of our joint work in halting Afghan drug trafficking has been the implementation of the 2008-2011 plan adopted in 2008 by CSTO member States on collective action to combat the illegal trade in narcotic and psychotropic substances and their precursors. The organization's chief coordinating centre for anti-drug efforts is the CSTO member States' Coordinating Council for combating illicit drug trafficking. That body's genuine contribution to the fight against the drug threat was affirmed by the signing of a memorandum of coordination and cooperation with the committee of the heads of the law enforcement divisions of the Council of Heads of Customs Services of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism.

The most effective instrument within the CSTO for closing off channels through which drugs can enter the territory of CSTO member States and of preventing their transit is the regional anti-drug Operation Kanal,

which by a decision of the CSTO Collective Security Council in 2008 was given permanent operational status. Its operations are conducted regularly, cover all CSTO States and have enabled the accumulation of valuable experience in organizing the collective fight against drug trafficking.

During the active phase of Kanal's operations in 2010, more than 90,000 employees of such bodies were involved. Representatives of a range of interested States and international organizations regularly participate in Kanal operations as observers. These include the appropriate bodies from Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Venezuela, Italy, Iran, China, Latvia, Lithuania, Pakistan, Poland, Syria, the United States, Turkey, Ukraine and Estonia, as well as the OSCE, the European Police Office, the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, and the Committee of the heads of the law enforcement divisions of the CIS Council of Heads of Customs Services. In 2010 alone, during two phases of the operation against illegal trafficking, we seized about eight tons of drugs, more than 40 tons of precursors and about 1,600 firearms. In June, as part of Operation Kanal 2011, coordinated by Belarusian special organs, we carried out a local anti-drug operation, Kanal West, in which corresponding bodies from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine took part. The operation resulted in the confiscation of more than three tons of drugs, the investigation of more than 3,000 drug crimes and the seizure of more than 300 firearms. CSTO member States are now preparing for the Kanal 2011 regional drug operation in December.

The role of the United Nations in resolving the situation in Afghanistan, in the context of a drawdown of international forces there, will clearly grow. We believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should continue to coordinate international civilian efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. We expect that UNAMA will keep its central coordinating role in international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, with an emphasis on increasing the effectiveness of international assistance; that the peacebuilding component will be strengthened, with an emphasis on assisting Afghan institution-building; and that the Mission will continue to use its good offices in the reconciliation process, but only at the request of the Afghan Government.

We have a positive view of the results of the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, which affirmed the priority role played in the region by organizations such as CSTO in regional efforts to resolve the situation in Afghanistan, and the counterproductiveness of attempts to establish new bodies or mechanisms in that area.

Mr. de Laiglesia (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The year 2011 marks the tenth anniversary of the commitment of the international community with Afghanistan. From the beginning, Spain has been part of that commitment, and for a number of years has been making a significant military and civil contribution to the stabilization and reconstruction of that country.

We are paying a high price for that. Ninety-eight Spanish soldiers have lost their lives in Afghanistan. The most recent of them, Sergeant Joaquín Moya Espejo, died 15 days ago during a training mission with the Afghanistan National Army. I would like to pay my deepest homage to those Spanish soldiers and to those of the Afghan Security Forces and from other countries who also have lost their lives.

In spite of those sad events, Spain is firmly committed to the promotion of development in Afghanistan. We have already disbursed €195 million of the total €220 million we committed to for the period 2006-2011. Our development cooperation has been focused on the province of Badghis, the country's second poorest province, which lacks the most basic infrastructure, namely, running water, sanitation, electricity and roads. Infrastructure, basic services and the protection and empowerment of women have been the priority areas of our cooperation. We have built 160 kilometres of roads, an airfield, seven rural clinics, three institutes of secondary education — one of them for girls — and six elementary schools.

We have placed priority on the principle of Afghanization in managing cooperation programmes and projects. Since the beginning, we have worked with national and provincial authorities, taking into account their strategies and priorities. We have tried, as much as possible, to support the transfer of knowledge to local personnel employed in projects. The results have been good. Virtually all projects are being managed by Afghans.

Spain also contributes to the military efforts of the international community in Afghanistan by

participating in NATO's International Security Assistance Force in accordance with the Security Council mandate. At present, more than 1,500 Spanish soldiers are deployed in Afghanistan, assigned mainly to the provinces of Badghis and Herat, at the Regional Command West headquarters. We are responsible for the provincial reconstruction team in Qala-e-Naw, the capital of Badghis. Furthermore, there are approximately 50 Spanish Civil Guards training the Afghan National Police in the provinces of Badghis and Mazar-e-Sharif.

Spain supports the efforts of the Afghan Government in the transition, both in terms of security and of the civilian, governance and development efforts that underpin it. Our common objective is for the transition to be irreversible and sustainable. To that end, additional efforts are needed in the area of the rule of law, including the fight against corruption and support for human rights, with special attention accorded to women and children.

We are satisfied with the way that the transition is progressing. We hope to start the transfer of security responsibility to Afghan authorities in two districts in the province of Badghis, namely, Qala-e-Naw and Ab-e Kamari, at the beginning of 2012. As is well known, the transition process will be completed by 2014. In any case, Spain's commitment to provide expert advice, training and support to the Afghan Security Forces will also continue after that date.

With regard to the civilian dimension of the transition, as I have just mentioned, we are ready to undertake the transfer of the projects we have developed in our area of responsibility as the provincial reconstruction team in Qala-e-Naw. We will do so in a coordinated manner in the transfer of responsibilities in the area of security. The vast majority of projects are already being managed by Afghan personnel. Once the transfer of projects is finalized, the form that our technical and financial assistance will take in the maintenance of the projects will have to be defined in concert with the Afghan authorities.

Without reconciliation there cannot be peace and stability in Afghanistan. We are aware of the difficulties and we pay homage to Professor Rabbani. But we must continue efforts along those lines. To do so, it is absolutely necessary that the collaboration

between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries be maintained.

Reintegration is equally essential. Spain is contributing €10 million to the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund. Baghdis province, where we lead the provincial reconstruction team in Qala-e-Naw, is one of the Afghan provinces with the best results. Almost 40 per cent of the country's ex-combatants have been reintegrated there. However, the process is still fragile, and could easily be reversed if the necessary resources are not allocated to maintain it.

It is obvious to everyone that the regional perspective is crucial for security and stability in Afghanistan, and therefore also for the country's development and prosperity.

We commend the results of the Istanbul Conference and are encouraged by the positive attitude shown by neighbouring and regional countries, expressed in the encouraging confidence-building measures adopted to reinforce security in the region. We trust that the Istanbul Process will continue successfully with the ministerial meeting to be held in Kabul next June.

The Bonn Conference was one of the most important meetings with regard to Afghanistan over the past decade. We should convey a clear message of long-term commitment to the people and the Government of Afghanistan. Afghanistan will continue to need assistance from the international community, but the future of Afghanistan depends on the Afghan people and Government. In that regard, it is essential that they too make progress in the full playing out of the so-called Kabul Process.

Of course, we also attach great importance to the role of the European Union in this entire process. We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the head of its delegation. In that regard, Spain firmly supports the mandate given last 14 November to High Representative Ashton to negotiate a broad partnership and development agreement between the European Union and Afghanistan, which will mark and guide the relationship between them in the years ahead.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Germany for having once again facilitated the negotiation of the annual General Assembly draft resolution on Afghanistan. We know that it has not been an easy task. For that reason, I also extend my

congratulations to all the delegations that have actively participated with a constructive spirit, and in particular to the delegation of Afghanistan for its high-mindedness.

We have become a sponsor of draft resolution A/66/L.10, which was introduced at the beginning of the debate. We are confident that it will once again be adopted by consensus, as it has been on past occasions.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity to again co-sponsor the General Assembly's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/66/L.10). We strongly support the pledge contained in the draft resolution that the United Nations community will continue to support the efforts of the Government and the people of Afghanistan as they rebuild a stable, self-sufficient State, free of terrorism. We recognize and support the growing Afghan ownership of the reconstruction and development efforts and welcome the draft resolution's endorsement of the Afghan Government's objective to have the Afghan National Security Forces themselves take over lead security responsibility by the end of 2014.

As the Australian Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions — most recently in a statement on Afghanistan to the Australian Parliament yesterday — Australia will remain engaged in the country through this decade at least. Following the conclusion of the transition in 2014, we will continue to provide civilian and development assistance as required and training and other defence cooperation, as part of an international strategy designed to ensure that a functioning Afghan State is able to assume responsibility for preventing the country from again becoming a safe haven for terrorists.

Since last October's resolution 65/8, we have seen real progress in the implementation of the transition process. We welcome the resolution's highlighting of the significance of that process and its recognition of the important work that remains to be done by the international community and the Afghan Government in supporting responsible transition.

In March, President Karzai announced the first tranche of Afghan districts and provinces that will start transition to Afghan-led security responsibility. As security conditions improve, 2012 will see Afghan authorities take on lead responsibility in more provinces and districts. The Afghan Government is expected to announce the second tranche of provinces

for transition soon. By the time transition in the second tranche is completed, Afghan National Security Forces will have lead responsibility for about half of the country's people. Australia will continue its mission of support for training and transition as that process unfolds.

In recent months, Australian Prime Minister Gillard, Defence Minister Smith and the Chief of our Defence Force all visited Afghanistan. Their visits, which focused on Australia's area of engagement in Uruzgan province, where two thirds of our 1,550 military forces are located, reconfirmed the Australian Government's view that the international community is basically on track to achieve nationwide transition to national security-led responsibility by the end of 2014. In that connection, security conditions on the ground obviously remain critical. For its part, Australia will keep under consideration a continued Australian Special Forces presence beyond 2014 to assist Afghanistan's lead forces, should the country decide that that would be useful. We commend the Afghan Government for its leadership and pledge our continued support for a sustainable, credible and irreversible transition process.

The international community will shortly come together for the International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn, at which the Afghan Government will outline its vision for the future of Afghanistan. We welcome the draft resolution's recognition of the importance of that meeting to further define the key issues of the civilian aspects of the transition, serious long-term commitment by the international community, and support of the political process.

In Bonn, we need to demonstrate a robust and coordinated approach to building a stable and secure Afghanistan, an Afghanistan with positive economic opportunities. As security transition proceeds, now is the time for Afghanistan's supporters — all of us — to identify the ways in which we will provide practical, long-term support after the conclusion of transition. A clear and serious commitment by the international community to supporting Afghanistan's security and development beyond 2014 will represent a powerful message of solidarity. We call on all participants at the Bonn Conference to work towards that outcome.

Australia welcomes the draft resolution's recognition of the commitment made by the "Heart of Asia" Summit participants at the Istanbul Conference

to promote regional security and cooperation through confidence-building measures. Constructive engagement by Afghanistan's neighbours is obviously critical to the prospects of a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan and is indispensable, in turn, for the broader region.

We value Turkey's contribution. The effectiveness of the Istanbul Conference in delivering real security and cooperation gains for Afghanistan and its neighbours will depend on the continued commitment of those involved. We urge all "Heart of Asia" partners to build upon that positive foundation, and we look forward to an update on progress at the ministerial meeting in Kabul in mid-2012.

Amid that progress, Australia also welcomes the draft resolution's clear-eyed statement of the many challenges that remain ahead. One of the key challenges is improving standards of governance and development. This year, Australia's total development assistance to Afghanistan will be approximately \$165 million, a 34 per cent increase over last year. Afghanistan is now the fourth largest recipient of Australian aid, and a significant level of assistance will continue.

The goal of our assistance is to strengthen the capacity of Afghan institutions themselves to govern effectively and provide basic services. We are pleased to note the steady improvement in standards of governance and development, including through our efforts in Uruzgan province, where we lead the provincial reconstruction team. A key part of our strategy is to build stronger linkages between the provincial government in Uruzgan and the national Government, an essential means of ensuring that the modest gains in governance standards become entrenched and then advance as transition continues.

Good governance depends on the capacity of the women and men charged with the responsibility of building Afghanistan's future. To build that capacity, Australia provides targeted training and support, including scholarships, to key ministries, including agriculture, health, education, rural rehabilitation and development. That approach has led to the creation of an innovative programme where Australia enabled 60 Afghan master teacher trainers to train in Malaysia.

Improving the participation of women across all aspects of community and public life in Afghanistan remains vital. We also look forward to the Afghan

Government's continued efforts to combat corruption and improve governance, including at the subnational level.

We obviously recognize that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved by military means alone, although guaranteeing security remains fundamental. We welcome the draft resolution's call to all relevant States to remain engaged in the Afghan-led peace process. The assassination of Professor Rabbani, which was deeply shocking, was part of a terror campaign that is very worrying and is being deliberately designed to derail the transition; we must not let it do so. Australia takes this opportunity to reaffirm our ongoing support for the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process and for the successful reintegration of former fighters into Afghan society.

Supporting Afghanistan's fledgling democracy will also be a critical element of a successful transition. The next presidential elections, to be held in 2014, will be a test of Afghanistan's democratic institutions and processes. It is important that the role of the Independent Electoral Commission is being consolidated, but continued electoral reform remains vital. Australia will give increased priority to working with the Afghan Government and international partners to continue electoral reform and support successful and transparent presidential elections in 2014 and parliamentary elections in 2015. This support will include training of local Afghan female election observers, in order to increase women's participation in the electoral process.

The Australian Government welcomes the draft resolution's recognition of the key role of United Nations agencies in coordinating humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan. Fragmentation of efforts remains a problem, and Australia supports the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to improve aid coherence within the international community and to encourage longer-term commitment to development. We ourselves are committed to working closely with donors and the Afghan Government to improve the productive capacity of the Afghan economy, which includes support for capacity-building in the mining and agriculture sectors.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to express the Australian Government's appreciation for the ongoing

leadership demonstrated by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Staffan de Mistura, and the dedication and sacrifice of UNAMA personnel who work in Afghanistan. Australia supports all efforts to ensure that those who work in support of Afghanistan's future are able to do so with the necessary security to complete their difficult but indispensable tasks. We will continue to work with the Secretary-General and Member States to ensure that the transition to Afghan leadership in security is durable, credible and irreversible.

Mr. Ragolini (Italy): While Italy aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, I would like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

We welcome the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.10) and support its adoption by consensus. In doing so, we confirm our appreciation of the long-term commitment of the United Nations to working with the Government and people of Afghanistan, our full support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has been carried out in a difficult situation, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for promoting a more coherent civilian engagement.

Italy looks forward to the upcoming Bonn Conference, where the international community will reaffirm its partnership with Afghanistan on a basis of credible mutual commitment. Over the past 10 years, Afghanistan has improved its standards in several domains, from human rights to social services and from institutional capacity to its security forces. But the results achieved so far should not lead us into complacency, since the path to a stable and prosperous country still requires sustained common efforts and engagement. The international community must therefore not let Afghanistan down after 2014 in the areas of security and development.

I would like to make two comments. First, we remain persuaded of the link between long-term international engagement and better governance, including improved budget execution capacity and a more effective connection between the centre and the provinces. In fact, we believe that either they progress in parallel, consistent with the Kabul Process, or no advancement will be real or sustainable. Better governance and the transparent allocation of

international resources are necessary to allow our cooperation to progress, even after 2014.

Secondly, we agree that there is a need to enhance our common efforts to establish a fair, transparent and effective justice system by implementing the relevant national priority programmes in a timely and coordinated manner. The democratic fabric of the country has already showed encouraging signs of progress towards the consolidation of a rule-of-law system. Italy will continue to support Afghanistan in that endeavour.

An Afghan-led process of reconciliation remains key. It has to be based on national consensus, with the involvement of all ethnic minorities and civil society, as well as on agreed principles, with the support of the regional stakeholders. We stand ready to support that process, including through the reintegration programme.

The role of regional stakeholders in contributing to the stabilization of Afghanistan can hardly be overestimated. We hope that a new climate in the region will pave the way to enhanced dialogue and increased confidence-building. Trust is the basic value we need to build as the driving factor for a successful strategy of engagement and cooperation. Only a reinvigorated regional and comprehensive strategy can overcome the old zero-sum games and promote a new win-win approach for the benefit of Afghanistan and the entire region. We fully endorse regional ownership, and we therefore support the Istanbul Process of political cooperation inaugurated on 2 November. In that connection, we encourage the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures and look forward to the follow-up process.

Regional cooperation cannot be limited to the domains of politics and security, however. The economic dimension should also proceed in a synchronized way. That is why Italy supports the vision of a New Silk Road to reconnect Eurasia along historical trade routes.

Let me conclude by simply reiterating how meaningful this draft resolution is. It underlines that we are not abandoning Afghanistan to its fate. Through it, we reaffirm a long-term commitment to peace and prosperity for its people.

Mr. Raza Tarar (Pakistan): The Pakistan delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for convening

this important meeting, which provides an annual opportunity for the General Assembly to review the progress towards peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. The multiple challenges in Afghanistan require collective efforts. Neither Afghanistan nor any of its neighbours can address those challenges alone. The active engagement of the United Nations and its Member States is essential for Afghanistan's peace and prosperity. We hope that today's annual debate and the adoption of draft resolution A/66/L.10 will make it easier for us all to navigate the difficult path before us.

The international community has now been engaged in a collective endeavour for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan for a decade. Last year, important conferences in London and Kabul generated the optimism associated with having a destination in sight by charting a way forward. The process of transition envisaged at those conferences is critical for Afghanistan's future. As the Afghan Government assumes greater responsibilities in the areas of security, governance and economic and social development, it will need all possible support and assistance. The implementation of the Kabul Process will require the positive and sustained engagement of the international community, with appropriate sequencing and coordination. It is our sincere hope that all parties will fulfil their respective roles.

The Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan, contained in document A/66/369, highlights many positive developments in the context of transition. The report points out, rightly, that development, governance and the rule of law are crucial for an irreversible transition process. The report stresses the need for maintaining the current political and financial interest in transition in order to set the country on a sustainable course. It also underlines the value of long-term international support and private-sector investment in facilitating the transition. Those are valid observations, which merit serious attention. The report, while noting security challenges in Afghanistan, rightly underlines the importance of peace, reconciliation and reintegration in the context of security.

In a country suffering from four decades of war, the vexing question of security cannot be resolved by imposing another war. Military action alone cannot solve Afghanistan's problems. A more comprehensive approach, under complete Afghan ownership, is essential. Pakistan supports an inclusive and Afghan-

led reconciliation process to bring the opposition groups into the political mainstream.

As underlined in the Secretary-General's report, a reconciliation process requires constructive dialogue, and not politics distorted by mistrust, intimidation, fear or revenge. Reconciliation under threat of coercion or retribution is ephemeral at best. The process must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. As the brave and resilient people of Afghanistan move forward in reconciliation, it is our hope that the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and other relevant international organizations will continue to be their willing partners.

Pakistan has always emphasized the importance of regional unity in dealing with challenges of security and development in Afghanistan. In that regard, the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan have a special role in its stability. Pakistan is engaged with other countries in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan. Our initiatives aim at greater regional connectivity, so as to promote economic and commercial cooperation and root out narcotics, terrorism and extremism.

Bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan spans the entire spectrum of political, economic and cultural relations. There is continuous dialogue and a regular exchange of visits at the highest levels. Pakistan is engaged in several reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan, including the construction of hospitals, roads and educational institutions. Last year, Pakistan doubled the number of scholarships offered to Afghan students for higher education. With new enrolments under the extended scholarships programme, the number of Afghan students in our colleges and universities has increased appreciably. Their fields of study include medicine, engineering, business, agriculture, information technology and social sciences.

In the area of security, Pakistan has always sought closer engagement with Afghanistan and its international partners on real issues, those that lie beyond polemics. A viable institutional forum for our security and intelligence cooperation is the Tripartite Commission, which also includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force. We expect the Tripartite Commission to become a solid channel for security and intelligence cooperation. We must avoid the blame game and use the Tripartite

Commission and other bilateral forums for meaningful exchanges. For our part, we avoid the blame game, even when militants cross over from the other side and attack our troops and innocent civilians. The interdiction of illegal cross-border movement is vital to efforts to counter terrorism, drug trafficking and commercial smuggling. That is a joint responsibility that needs to be discharged more vigorously. Pakistan has established over 1,000 posts along our border with Afghanistan. More than 120,000 Pakistani troops are deployed on our side of the border, at considerable financial cost. That needs to be matched on the other side of the international border.

The cultivation and production of narcotics and illicit drugs, as well as their trade, are a menace, not only for Afghanistan but also for the rest of the world. The nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism is mutually reinforcing. We need to pay more attention to that disease, which ironically has worsened recently despite strong international presence.

Pakistan has housed millions of Afghan refugees for more than 30 years. We still host 1.7 million registered and nearly 1 million unregistered refugees inside Pakistan. The economic, social and security costs incurred by Pakistan are incalculable. During the past 10 years, Pakistan's average annual budget for Afghan refugees has nearly doubled in proportion to international assistance, despite a decrease in the number of refugees. After 10 years of internationally assisted State- and institution-building in Afghanistan, that trend should be reversed and more refugees should be repatriated. We are highlighting this issue in order to focus greater attention of the international community on Afghan refugees and on their sustenance.

For Pakistanis, all Afghan refugees are brothers and sisters. We remain committed to their safe and dignified return. We can say with some justifiable pride that not a single Afghan refugee has ever been forced to return to Afghanistan.

Pakistan greatly values the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The United Nations has an important role in coordinating a comprehensive international effort in Afghanistan. We hope that UNAMA will be able to play a more meaningful role after the ongoing review of its mandate.

I will conclude by highlighting Pakistan's commitment to and support for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. No other country has suffered more than Pakistan from the conflict and instability in Afghanistan. It has impacted our social and economic fibre. The people of Pakistan share the sorrow and grief of their Afghan brethren. More than anyone else, we want this sad chapter of Afghan history to end, for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say that despite the great efforts made by the international community over the past years to achieve security and stability in Afghanistan, that country still faces challenges resulting from the continued violence and insecurity that have inflicted severe damage on all aspects of life in Afghanistan as well as on its infrastructure, including transport, communications, electricity, water, education, health and other services. The United Arab Emirates, which supports the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.10), is concerned about the ongoing insecurity and instability in Afghanistan and the ensuing increasing loss of life among civilians, including international humanitarian aid workers.

We affirm that the primary responsibility for putting an end to that violence lies with the Afghan parties, who must take concrete steps to incorporate universal human rights in their policies and practices, as well as provide the necessary protection to civilians. In that context, we renew our support for international efforts aimed at establishing security, peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also extend our support to the Kabul Process on handing over power to the Afghan leadership in order to enable the Government of Afghanistan to shoulder its national responsibilities, particularly in the areas of governance, territorial sovereignty and security and in achieving economic and social development. We also affirm that long-term stability, progress and development in Afghanistan can be achieved only through dialogue and inclusive reconciliation among all parties in the country.

In that regard, we support the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Mission of Norway and the Joint Afghan-Pakistan Committee for reconciliation and peace.

Events in Afghanistan have proved that regional efforts play a vital and permanent role in promoting

peace, security, reintegration and stability in Afghanistan. We therefore welcome the positive outcome of the Istanbul Conference held on 2 November, including the agreement reached on a comprehensive package of confidence-building measures and multilateral cooperation in areas such as security, reconstruction and health and in countering terrorism, extremism and the production and trafficking of drugs in Afghanistan. We also look forward to a successful outcome for the international Conference on Afghanistan scheduled to be held in Bonn this coming December.

My country has stood by the Afghan people from the very onset of their crisis and has provided distinct political and economic support towards efforts aimed at rebuilding that country and strengthening its security and stability. We are keen on furthering our contributions to Afghanistan, reinforced over the past 10 years within the framework of the efforts of the international community aimed at implementing relief and humanitarian assistance programmes in Afghanistan.

The United Arab Emirates will also continue its support for the implementation of infrastructure projects and other vital development projects and programmes, including the reconstruction and rehabilitation of its institutional, health, agricultural, social and security sectors. We also extend our support for the projects to revitalize Afghanistan's national economy in order to restore security and stability in all parts of that country, to reduce the suffering of its people and improve all aspects of their life.

The total contributions of my Government to Afghanistan to advance its economy amounts to approximately \$1.5 billion, in addition to private assistance from humanitarian organizations such as the Sheikh Khalifa Foundation, which provided, in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, an estimated contribution of \$50 million earmarked for the immunization programme for Afghani children. My country also announced in August a grant of \$250 million to be managed by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development for development projects in Afghanistan, particularly in the areas of providing housing for widows, orphans and the disabled, as well as the rehabilitation of Kabul and other provinces. That is in addition to the other contributions made directly by the United Arab Emirates since 2007 to support international efforts

aimed at reconstruction and providing development assistance to the Afghani people. We also participated in the implementation of Government and non-governmental projects, including the construction of roads, the establishment of training centres and the removal of landmines in Kandahar, which is expected to be completed within four years at a cost of \$28 million.

The United Arab Emirates, which believes that security and stability in Afghanistan is closely linked to regional security, especially that of the Arab Gulf region, strongly condemns all terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, including those that targeted elements from international forces and humanitarian and diplomatic missions. We affirm that we will continue our efforts, in cooperation with other State partners, to support Afghanistan's national programmes in order to implement a comprehensive strategy of reforms and security training to combat the activities of armed groups, acts of terrorism, extremism and militancy and the production and trafficking of drugs.

In conclusion, we call for a stronger role for the United Nations in Afghanistan, including through efforts to support all development sectors in that country, so as to enable it to consolidate peace, development and stability in all regions and to restore its natural standing at the regional and international levels.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Turkey is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution before us today on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.10). The draft resolution recognizes the progress made by Afghanistan and emphasizes the remaining challenges ahead of us. We believe that its adoption by consensus will reflect the international community's continuing commitment to Afghanistan.

Let me also take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for the dedicated and outstanding work carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Turkey shares the views expressed by the observer of the European Union. Afghanistan has come a long way since the General Assembly last debated this topic. The Afghan Government is showing strong political will in taking forward Afghan ownership. We support its efforts. Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity are of the utmost importance for the

country to plan its future. In that respect, we are pleased to see that the Afghan National Security Forces continue to assume increasing responsibility and accountability for the sovereignty and long-term stability of their country.

Despite the progress, however, the remaining challenges are enormous and complex. Lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan ultimately require unity and political reconciliation at home and solidarity and sound cooperation in the region. To that effect, Turkey actively supports regional cooperation with a view to helping Afghanistan achieve a long-term political, security and economic vision. In the interest of time, I will confine my remarks to Turkey's recent initiatives.

On 2 November, Turkey hosted an important regional conference on Afghanistan, namely, the Istanbul Conference for Afghanistan: Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia. The Istanbul Conference provided a unique opportunity for regional countries to recognize Afghanistan's role as the land bridge in the heart of Asia, connecting South Asia, Central Asia, Eurasia and the Middle East, and to reaffirm their strong commitment to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan in a secure and stable region.

In Istanbul, parties adopted a comprehensive document, entitled "Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan", which goes well beyond previous documents by setting out regional ownership. It constitutes a welcome milestone. The document stipulates a set of applicable principles and confidence-building measures as an expression of solidarity and support for Afghanistan. The confidence-building measures range from security to reconstruction and from health to the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

Regional ownership played a crucial role in the success of the Conference. In Istanbul, regional countries reiterated their resolve to combat common challenges facing the region and to subscribe to a new mindset of regional cooperation in the heart of Asia. Now it is equally important that Afghanistan and its regional partners actively work to implement the confidence-building measures within the framework set out in the Istanbul Process. We therefore look forward to the ministerial-level follow-up meeting that will take place in Kabul in June 2012.

Right before the Istanbul Conference, Turkey hosted the sixth trilateral meeting between Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan in Istanbul. The meeting welcomed the joint statement of the three Presidents, which underscored the crucial importance of the Trilateral Ankara Summit Process as a comprehensive platform for dialogue and cooperation and reiterated their determination to elaborate on that cooperation in all relevant fields of joint interest.

Before the end of the year, we have yet another important event on our calendar. On 5 December, we will meet in Bonn to discuss and to define the long-term commitment of the international community to Afghanistan. Afghanistan's long-term stability and sustainable development require the support and cooperation of the international community well beyond 2014. Therefore, the Bonn meeting will be an opportunity for the international community to assure Afghanistan that 2014 is not the date of its exit and the end of its commitment.

We recognize that significant challenges and threats remain in Afghanistan. However, we are confident that Afghanistan's stability and social and political harmony will grow stronger in the future. For its part, Turkey will continue to provide assistance for the peace, prosperity and security of the brotherly Afghan people.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude for this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan. We are pleased to sponsor the draft resolution before us (A/66/L.10). Given the challenging situation that Afghanistan faces today, it is of particular importance to demonstrate the unity of the international community in supporting Afghanistan by adopting the draft resolution by consensus. Sincere appreciation is due to our colleagues of the German delegation, who ably led the consultations on the draft resolution.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for his statement this morning.

The draft resolution comprehensively addresses the situation in Afghanistan. The issues expressed in it are mutually interlinked and must be addressed through determined efforts under Afghan ownership and leadership, with the continuing support of the international community.

For the long-term stability of Afghanistan, we must accelerate regional cooperation among its neighbours. In that regard, Japan welcomes the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan of 2 November. It is essential that Afghanistan and the international community, in particular regional partners, establish a stable and cooperative relationship based on mutual trust, with an eye towards the sustainable development of the country.

We expect further progress during the Bonn Conference in December, where the civil aspects of the transition, the long-term commitment of the international community in Afghanistan and within the region, and support of the political process will be further defined.

Japan welcomes the transition of the security responsibility that officially started in July, and looks forward to further progress in that process. For peace and security in Afghanistan, it is indispensable that a smooth transition be conducted by strengthening the capacity of the Afghan security forces. Japan continues to play its role in achieving that objective through its assistance to the Afghan police.

Transition and sustainable security are interlinked with the political process. In that regard, continuing efforts towards reconciliation and reintegration are critical, even after the tragic loss of Professor Rabbani, who spearheaded that process. It is important that all of Afghanistan's leaders stand together in solidarity and demonstrate their resolve to work in support of peace, reconciliation and national unity.

Supporting the Afghan-led political process must remain a priority of international and regional partners. Japan is determined to continue its support to advance the country's reintegration programme.

Coordination and prioritization are important as we address the various challenges confronting Afghanistan, as expressed in the draft resolution. We welcome the central role played by the Joint Coordination and Management Board in coordinating international assistance and reconstruction programmes. We look forward to the next round of the Board prior to the Bonn Conference. We also underline the need for the continued development and implementation of the national priority programmes and look forward to the presentation of the remaining programmes.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our determination to exert our fullest efforts, together with all international partners, towards the reconstruction and stability of Afghanistan.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): Over the past decade, we have witnessed a number of significant advances in Afghanistan. My delegation attributes Afghanistan's achievements to the steadfastness of the Afghan people as well as the sustained commitment of the international community to the Afghan peace process. In that regard, my delegation pays tribute to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, participating members of the International Security Assistance Force and other international agencies, as well as civil society, all of which are playing indispensable roles in building a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

Despite some encouraging developments, a host of daunting challenges lie ahead on the path to building a durable and sustainable peace in Afghanistan. I would like to elaborate on those challenges that deserve the highest priority and the most urgent response from the United Nations and the international community.

First, at the forefront of our concerns is the continuing insecurity caused by violence and terrorism, as well as the associated rise in civilian deaths and injuries. In that regard, we are deeply saddened and disheartened by the tragic assassination in September of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was head of the High Peace Council. Continued violence is not only a threat to Afghanistan's overall national security, but also has a serious negative impact on regional peace and security. In particular, for a successful and smooth transition process leading up to 2014 and beyond, this problem needs to be effectively and urgently addressed.

To deal with this insecurity, the Afghan National Security Forces should be further strengthened, and coordination between the central and provincial levels of Government should be enhanced. In addition, close working cooperation between Afghanistan and its bordering countries is indispensable to the lasting stability of Afghanistan. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, adopted at the Istanbul Conference earlier this month. In addition, we are eager to see further progress in

reconciliation and reintegration efforts. My delegation looks forward to the Bonn Conference in December, which we believe will be a timely opportunity to assess the transition and further facilitate the reconciliation process.

Secondly, another serious concern is criminal drug trafficking and the associated corruption. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the efforts made by Afghan authorities to reduce the production of narcotics. However, we are concerned that Afghanistan remains by far the largest source of illicit opium and heroin traded globally, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/369). We call on the Afghan Government, in cooperation with the international community, and in particular with its neighbours, to strengthen its efforts to eradicate narcotics. At the same time, rural development projects are needed so that people in rural areas have viable economic alternatives to the cultivation of opium.

Thirdly, we remain deeply concerned about the violations and abuses against children and women, such as the use of children for terrorist attacks, coordinated attacks against girls and schools to prevent access to education, and sexual violence against children. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, including its country-specific conclusion on Afghanistan, contained in document S/AC.51/2011/3, and looks forward to the full implementation of the Working Group's recommendations.

The Republic of Korea has been a staunch supporter of the reconstruction, development and stability of Afghanistan. Since 2002, the Korean Government has provided military personnel to support stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan. In particular, Korea has been actively supporting Afghanistan's capacity-building since setting up a provincial reconstruction team base in Parwan province last year. Moreover, the Korean Government will continue to support the capacity-building of the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as Afghanistan's economic and social development, in the years to come.

Against that backdrop, my delegation welcomes today's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, which represents the political will of all Member States that support the Afghan people in their political and

national reconstruction process. In this vein, the Republic of Korea became a sponsor of the draft resolution to add its resounding support to this international collaboration to stabilize and strengthen Afghanistan and its people.

The transition process should not mean the end of the international engagement in Afghanistan. The stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the long-term engagement of the international community beyond 2014. As such, the sustained support of the international community is vital to the success of the Afghan peace process and reconstruction. My delegation reiterates its firm willingness to engage in close cooperation with the international community and Afghanistan. We are convinced that Afghanistan, with its brilliant historical and cultural heritage, will, and must, persevere in facing its multiple current domestic and foreign challenges and transform itself into a prosperous, secure and democratic country in all respects.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I should like to thank you for having convened this meeting of the General Assembly. Tajikistan endorses the statement made earlier in this meeting by the representative of the Republic of Belarus on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Tajikistan was pleased to become a sponsor of draft resolution A/66/L.10 on the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that today, as in previous years, the General Assembly will adopt it by consensus. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany for its role and mediation during discussions on the draft resolution.

Tajikistan cannot but be concerned about the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan, to which it is linked by multiple historical and cultural ties. Our Governments are committed to further strengthening our good-neighbourly relations and to developing and deepening mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in various areas.

Today Afghanistan is going through a fateful stage in its modern history. While on the one hand we have seen a certain degree of success in antiterrorist activity on the part of Government and international security forces, on the other hand the forces of destruction are seeking to undermine the establishment

of peace and stability and to plunge the country back into full-scale civil war.

Tajikistan supports the international strategy for a comprehensive settlement and post-conflict recovery in Afghanistan. In that context, we fully support the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve the goal of national reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of the international community, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, to establish durable peace and stability in this long-suffering country.

We believe an important factor in that regard is to involve Afghanistan in the regional integration process through economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring States. In that connection, I would like to highlight the role of the Dushanbe quartet, which consists of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan and which is increasing its efforts to improve regional commercial and economic cooperation, combat the threats posed by terrorism, drugs and organized crime, and to develop human resources for Afghanistan's military and civilian needs. The third quadrilateral meeting of heads of Government was held in Dushanbe on 2 September.

My country has done its part in the process of establishing sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. In view of the need to develop human resources for Afghanistan's law enforcement and military structures and to train professional specialists, we have provided opportunities in Tajikistan's training centres for border guards and law enforcement and security personnel, in particular at the regional college of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In addition, Tajikistan is contributing actively to training professionals for Afghanistan's civilian needs. Today, we propose to establish in our country a multi-purpose vocational training centre for training specialists for Afghanistan's economic needs. We hope that the international community will provide the support needed to carry out that project. There is no question that our shared language will help in the process of training Afghan specialists in Tajikistan.

While the fight against drugs, terrorism and organized crime requires the use of armed force, such threats cannot be addressed through force alone. To achieve a peaceful society, it is essential to restore the

country's economy, agriculture and infrastructure. In that regard, Tajikistan emphasizes the importance of exploiting Afghanistan's economic potential and enormous natural resources. That will be an important factor in resolving the multiple problems of a country that has been ravaged by war for so many years.

An important factor in ensuring Afghanistan's sustainable social and economic development will be to involve it in the regional integration process through economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring States. The issue of Afghanistan's future post-conflict economic recovery has been included on the agenda of the forthcoming fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 26 and 27 March 2012 in Dushanbe. We are certain that the Conference will make a significant contribution in that area.

Tajikistan believes strongly in the importance of implementing commercial and communications projects that can promote the development of interregional economic ties. Tajikistan supports the development and implementation of infrastructure projects in the areas of communication and transport, both in Afghanistan and the region in general. Today Tajikistan and Afghanistan are connected by five automobile bridges crossing the border along the Panj River. Construction began not long ago on a new bridge in the Shurabad district, and two other bridges at Kokul and Aivadzh are in the planning stage.

A railway project — between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, with a connection to an existing branch between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, as well as two prospective branches between Iran and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan and Afghanistan — has been evaluated by international experts and is awaiting implementation. The railroad will become a transit trunk route of regional significance that should promote regional trade and economic development in our neighbour Afghanistan.

In the current circumstances, energy will be of key importance in restoring Afghanistan's ruined economy. The existing hydroelectric power stations in my country, as well as those under construction, are capable not only of satisfying Afghanistan's needs for environmentally clean and inexpensive electrical power but also of supporting broad-scale development of its agriculture through the restoration and improvement of the country's irrigation system. In that

context, I would like to note the particular significance of the construction of electrical power lines across Afghanistan. At the end of October, we put into operation a 220-kilovolt transmission line from the Tajik Sangtuda 1 hydroelectric plant to the Afghan city of Puli Khumri. The KASA-1000 project is aimed at addressing the problem of energy shortages in Afghanistan and Pakistan through exploitation of the hydroelectric energy potential of the countries of Central Asia.

We support the laying of a gas pipeline across Afghanistan from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan and Pakistan. In addition to supplying the natural gas needs of countries in the region, it will create a stable source of revenue for Afghanistan. Thanks to its favourable geographical location, Afghanistan is capable of playing an important role in regional integration processes. In today's globalized world, the importance of Afghanistan's geographical position as a crossroads between the various regions of the Asian continent can only grow.

Establishing peace and security in Afghanistan will depend to a significant degree on broad and effective international and regional cooperation and on the genuine and unwavering efforts of the international community to achieve goals that meet the hopes and aspirations of the Afghan people. We hope that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Assembly today will serve those worthy goals.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join other Member States in sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.10). The draft resolution recognizes the progress made by the Afghan people in building a stronger Afghanistan and acknowledges that much important work remains.

We commend the significant contributions of the United Nations to Afghanistan, noting especially the crucial roles played by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative Staffan de Mistura, and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other United Nations agencies on the ground. We also salute the brave and dedicated work of the Afghan security forces and the International Security Assistance Force in helping to build a more secure Afghanistan.

This year has been an important period of transition for Afghanistan, as the international

community looks to transfer lead security responsibility to the Government of Afghanistan by 2014. In the lead-up to 2014 we have seen that economic, political and security progress in the region will be mutually reinforcing, and that the international community has a stake in supporting ongoing efforts by Afghans and their neighbours to further that progress.

The United States strongly supports Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and remains committed to a long-term partnership with Afghanistan. As part of that commitment, Secretary of State Clinton joined Afghan Foreign Minister Rassoul and German Foreign Minister Westerwelle to co-chair a ministerial meeting on the New Silk Road Initiative, in support of the creation of a web of economic and transit connections across South and Central Asia with a central hub in Afghanistan. The idea behind the New Silk Road vision is to support the development of a sustainable Afghan and regional economy that encourages economic development and the long-term stabilization of the region. It is a shared commitment to promote private-sector investment, to increase regional trade and transit and to foster a network of linkages throughout the region.

We commend the region for having the foresight to recognize that economic development takes root where there is security and stability. On 2 November, in Istanbul, Afghanistan and Turkey co-chaired a Conference on security and cooperation in the heart of Asia. That Conference produced a declaration of strong regional support for Afghanistan and was welcomed by key international supporters. Afghanistan's neighbours and near-neighbours have spoken in one voice to assure Afghanistan of their support for an Afghan-led reconciliation process and the ongoing transition of responsibility for security to Afghan national security forces. They endorse the principles that are needed to guide peace and reconciliation, including renouncing violence, cutting links with terrorist groups and abiding by the Afghan Constitution. They also recognize the importance of long-term and sustained international support to Afghanistan. The next series of meetings will be in Kabul, and we fully support the Istanbul Process.

Finally, we look forward to the Bonn meeting on 5 December. That meeting will be an opportunity for the international community to match the clarity of the regional commitments made at Istanbul by becoming

more concrete and specific about long-term international support for Afghanistan.

We know that there are great challenges ahead, but the work of the Afghan people, the international community and the United Nations can lay the foundation for a better, more stable and prosperous future.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to express India's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for scheduling this discussion on a subject of great significance for us, our region and the world. I also commend the German delegation for coordinating intergovernmental negotiations in an excellent manner, which has led us to the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.10). As we have been doing for the past several years, we are happy to sponsor this draft resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

There have been significant political developments during the past year. As the NATO International Security Assistance Force prepares to draw down its combat role in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, the efforts of the international community are increasingly focused on providing Afghanistan a helping hand to assist it in the transition and beyond.

It is important that the transition be Afghan-owned, that it be planned and implemented in a systematic manner that takes into account the realities on the ground, that it be multifaceted, that it ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans, and that it leads to strengthening the Afghan State and its institutions. We need concerted international and regional efforts aimed at laying the foundations of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. Sustained and tangible progress on security, governance and development issues is the key for peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan. We need accelerated progress on economic cooperation that is simultaneous with political, security and other confidence-building measures in order to ensure peace and stability for Afghanistan and through it for the entire region.

First and foremost, Afghanistan needs assistance and support to build its capacity to tackle the critical challenges of terrorism, including suicide terrorism, the religious extremism that fuels it, and the drug trafficking that sustains it. We are seriously concerned that there has been no let-up in terrorist violence. The

tragic assassination last September of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chairman of the High Peace Council and former President of Afghanistan, and that of other senior Afghan leaders, including President Karzai's brother, the late Ahmed Wali Karzai, are a grim reminder of the overall deteriorating security environment in the country.

The continuing resilience of insurgents and their ability to target areas otherwise considered safe and secure indicates that the security gains are still tenuous. The latest report of the Secretary-General (A/66/369) notes that the average monthly number of security incidents rose 39 per cent as compared to the same period in 2010.

As we have repeatedly highlighted, terrorism finds sustenance and support from a dangerous mix of ideologies and ambitions supported by training and operations across the region, with suicide terrorism as its main technique and targets that are not limited to Afghanistan. We need concerted action to isolate and root out that whole nexus of terrorism, which includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups that operate from within and beyond Afghan borders. Those groups are ideologically and operationally fused, and their bonds have strengthened over the years. We need resolute determination and political will to deal firmly with safe havens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders.

Our vision for the transition period must also take into account the conditions on the ground and the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces to preserve their sovereignty and independence and the integrity of their nation. We support further strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces, which must go hand-in-hand with enhancement of their operational capabilities along with sufficient additional enabling support.

India fully supports an inclusive and transparent Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process of reconciliation, accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue that promotes the renunciation of violence and severs ties to terrorist groups, while abiding by the Afghan Constitution with its protections for human rights, including the rights of women.

India has age-old historical, cultural and economic ties with neighbouring Afghanistan, as well as shared civilizational links. During the past decade,

our relationship has been renewed and consolidated by our contribution to the rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan. India believes in a strong, independent, sovereign, stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, at peace with itself and its neighbours. Recent history has shown that an end to Afghanistan's suffering requires an end to external interference in its internal affairs.

Besides security, we also need concomitant progress on the developmental front. That also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of development-related efforts by the international community, including the alignment of assistance with Afghan national priorities. It is for that reason that, as a developing neighbour itself, India has pledged up to \$2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance, and that we recently signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan looking at 2014 and beyond. The agreement creates an institutional framework for our future cooperation in the spheres of politics and security, trade and economics, capacity-building and education, along with social and cultural cooperation, as well as civil society and people-to-people relations.

Afghanistan's growth strategy is built upon the country's comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographic location. Those would have to be the building blocks of our vision for Afghanistan as a hub linking the Middle East, West Asia, Central Asia and South Asia through trade and transit routes, railways and highways, energy pipelines and electricity networks, and economic projects and cross-investments. Such cooperation would not be only between Governments but would have civil society and business as stakeholders.

Today our investments in Afghanistan require a framework of regional collaboration for their success. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), of which Afghanistan is a full member, is an important vehicle for regional economic cooperation within the South Asian region. From our vantage point in the SAARC region, we would like to highlight the potential of the dynamic SAARC market, which is over \$1.5 billion, and the Indian economy, which is over \$1.5 trillion, growing at a rate of 8 per cent per annum. Cooperation linking our region with Central Asia through Afghanistan could be a critical confidence-building measure.

The greatest need today is for the Afghan people to have peace and stability. They deserve to live in peace and to decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion or intimidation. All countries of the region must work to facilitate that. It is in that context that India participated in the recently held Istanbul Regional Conference and will participate in the forthcoming Conference in Bonn, so as to contribute to international and regional initiatives to support Afghanistan's efforts at nation-building. India calls upon the international community to make a long-term commitment to Afghanistan over the next decade.

India appreciates and supports the good work being done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. India will stand by the people of Afghanistan as they prepare to assume responsibility for their governance and security after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014. The international community as a whole needs to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose towards strengthening the efforts of the Afghan Government to find solutions that are inclusive and led by the Afghan people themselves.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to start by expressing our gratitude to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, whose service in Afghanistan will come to an end by the end of this year. His dedication to helping to strengthen peace and stability in Afghanistan is praiseworthy.

We are very glad for the progress achieved by our brotherly neighbour, Afghanistan, in all areas, including achievements on Afghan-led political and security issues. However, there are still clouds on the horizon. First and foremost, there are the whispers of a long-term presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan. We welcome the withdrawal of United States and other coalition forces. We strongly believe that any long-term military presence and the establishment of permanent military bases in Afghanistan are to be avoided.

Foreign forces entered Afghanistan in the name of countering terrorism and establishing peace and security. Ten years have passed since then. According to many official reports, there has been an increase in the degree of insecurity this year compared to the situation last year. That is a clear indication that the presence of foreign troops does not necessarily

contribute to solving the problem of security in Afghanistan. Rather, it may exacerbate the violence and further add to the disenchantment of the people. Therefore, a longer presence of foreign military forces, in whatever form and under whatever justification, would not bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Rather, it would provide a breeding ground for the terrorists and extremist groups to further continue their operations.

The other issue is the continued increase in the cultivation of narcotic drugs, which is still the most serious challenge, not only for Afghanistan but also for transit and destination countries. That menace has hindered Afghanistan's development and has put at risk Afghanistan's social cohesion and that of its neighbours. Moreover, narcotic drugs, as the financial source of terrorism in Afghanistan, nurture another breeding ground for terrorists, extremists and illegal groups that attempt to destabilize the Afghan Government.

According to the 2011 Afghanistan Opium Survey, released on 11 October by the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan reached 131,000 hectares in 2011, 7 per cent higher than in 2010, due to insecurity and high prices. The Survey sends a strong message that the international community cannot afford to be lethargic in the face of that problem. A strong commitment is needed from both Afghanistan and international partners to curb this menace.

For decades, Iran has been at the forefront of a full-scale war against narcotic drug smuggling. Thousands of Iranian law enforcement personnel have lost their lives or been injured, and billions of dollars have been spent to combat drug traffickers. We have shouldered a great burden in that fight, and we once again strongly call on the international community urgently to take firm and concrete steps in that regard.

Yet another issue is the long-standing problem of Afghan refugees. We have hosted on average 3 million Afghan nationals over the past three decades. At present, more than 1 million Afghan refugees are registered in Iran, and an even greater number of unregistered Afghans are also living in our country. For all these years, Afghan nationals have continued to enjoy Iran's educational and welfare facilities, among other things, and to benefit from the same subsidies

that our own people receive. We once again urge the international community to continue to strengthen and expedite its efforts to create conditions conducive to the sustainable repatriation of refugees and their full rehabilitation and reintegration into their homeland.

With regard to regional cooperation, we have continued our talks with Afghan authorities, on a bilateral, trilateral and regional basis, in order to further strengthen our cooperation. We have especially focused on increasing our coordination in security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, illegal immigration and the completion of developmental projects, including building roads and railways — and we have been able to show many good results. For example, in the matter of railroads, we will soon witness the completion of a railway network in the region, which will connect the landlocked Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to the port city of Bandar-Abbas on the Persian Gulf. Connecting Afghanistan to railway systems in Central Asia would greatly facilitate Afghan economic integration in the region.

In the trilateral summit meeting held in Tehran in June, the Presidents of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan agreed to join forces in combating militancy. All sides stressed their commitment to efforts aimed at eliminating extremism, militancy and terrorism and their rejection of foreign interference, which is in blatant opposition to the spirit of Islam, the peaceful cultural traditions of the region and its peoples' interests. The Iranian Defence Minister also visited Afghanistan during the same month. A number of projects have already been finished and some new agreements have been reached. We look forward to more agreements on a bilateral, trilateral and multilateral basis.

Earlier this month we held the Istanbul meeting, and we are expecting the Bonn meeting early next month. The Istanbul Conference was an opportunity for neighbouring countries and international partners to exchange views on how to move forward on creating a stable and prosperous Afghan-led process. We hope that the upcoming meeting in Bonn will be another occasion to discuss in a sincere manner ways to develop measures aimed at addressing common challenges in political and security issues and to elaborate further ways to eliminate extremism, militancy, terrorism and drug trafficking, as well as to pave the way for greater economic prosperity for Afghanistan, with the active participation of all the

neighbouring and regional countries, in line with the wishes of the Afghan people.

In order to be successful, any initiative that emerges from the Bonn Conference, including the New Silk Road Initiative, should strengthen trust between Afghanistan and its neighbours through active engagement, interaction and partnerships. Afghanistan's neighbours share critical interests in that country's security and long-term stability, and play their role in promoting Afghanistan's socio-economic development. Obviously, a stable and flourishing Afghanistan would be ideal for its neighbours and the wider region. The continuing engagement between Afghanistan and its neighbours and regional partners in the areas of trade, economic development and infrastructure development must therefore be supported. We should also emphasize the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan, which is of paramount importance and enjoys our full support.

Let me conclude by expressing our hope for a better and more prosperous future for Afghanistan. As in the past, we extend our full support to the people and Government of Afghanistan in achieving security, stability and comprehensive and sustainable development for the country.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the delegations of Germany and Afghanistan for their commitment and energy in steering the negotiations of today's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/66/L.10). The United Kingdom is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution.

I will focus on four issues today, namely, security transition, peace and reconciliation, the forthcoming Bonn Conference, and regional cooperation.

First, we look forward to the forthcoming announcement of the second set of provinces and cities to begin security transition. Our aim is for a gradual, condition-based transfer of security roles from the International Security Assistance Force to the Afghan National Security Forces. That will result in the Afghan National Security Forces assuming lead security responsibility in all provinces by the end of 2014. Already, transition is proving successful in the first tranche of areas, including in Lashkar Gah, where we have seen notable progress. The Afghan National Security Forces are getting stronger by the day and are already demonstrating their effectiveness in providing

security in transitioned areas. The second tranche of transition will mean an Afghan security lead over nearly half the population of the country.

The second issue is peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Last week we saw over 2,000 delegates attend the traditional Loya Jirga in Kabul. We welcome the inclusivity of the Loya Jirga and its strong support for Afghan-led reconciliation and the peace process. That is particularly important in the wake of Professor Rabbani's tragic assassination, which was condemned by the Jirga. We welcome efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to make clear that the work of the High Peace Council will not be stopped by violence. President Karzai has shown that he is ready to engage with those elements of the insurgency that are genuinely willing to work towards a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan. I emphasize the United Kingdom's readiness to support that work.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom looks forward to the Bonn Conference, which will provide an opportunity for the international community to once again align behind the security and development priorities of the Government of Afghanistan and to reinvigorate the Kabul Process. We continue to see that Process as the critical path to a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference will also be an opportunity for the international community to reiterate its support for an Afghan-led political process and to solidify its long-term commitment to Afghanistan. In that regard, we welcome the decision of the International Monetary Fund to approve a new three-year extended credit facility to the Government of Afghanistan.

The fourth issue is regional cooperation. Just as a successful political settlement in Afghanistan depends on the support of all sections of its people, Afghanistan's future stability requires the cooperation of its neighbours. The United Kingdom therefore commends the outcomes of the Istanbul Conference. It is crucial that Afghanistan and its regional partners actively work to maintain the momentum of the Istanbul Process, because a stable and secure Afghanistan is in the interest of the entire region.

Let me conclude by reiterating the importance that the United Kingdom attaches to its bilateral relationship with Afghanistan. That partnership will endure long after the completion of transition. We will continue to have a strong relationship with Afghanistan based on diplomacy, trade, aid and development. We

will continue to support the Afghan Government and the Afghan National Security Forces through training and mentoring. We are pleased that today's draft resolution is another signal of the international community's enduring commitment to Afghanistan.

Mr. Kethergany (Malaysia): Allow me, at the outset, to extend my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan contained in document A/66/369. The report provides a comprehensive description of the current situation in Afghanistan, and we take note of its valuable observations on possible courses of action. My delegation also extends its appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Staffan de Mistura, as well as to the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for their dedication in carrying out their duties under the challenging situation prevailing in the country.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its deep condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan on the passing of the High Peace Council Chairman and former President Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was assassinated in September in Kabul. My delegation would also like to share our thoughts and feelings with the families of those who perished in the attack on the UNAMA office in Mazar-e-Sharif in April.

Ten years ago, Afghanistan was at an important turning point when the Security Council authorized the creation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist the then Afghan Interim Authority. Today, Afghanistan is again at a turning point, with the transfer of security responsibilities from ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces against the backdrop of the precarious security situation in Afghanistan.

We are concerned about the increasing rate and number of civilian casualties in recent months. While we strongly condemn the deliberate targeting of civilians by anti-Government elements, we are equally disturbed by the incidents of Afghan civilians being killed in air strikes and night raids conducted by the NATO-led ISAF forces. Malaysia abhors such incidents, as they will only fuel anger in the Afghan people towards ISAF, making it more difficult to win their hearts and minds.

The battle to win hearts and minds is one that Malaysia is familiar with, given our own experience in

dealing with armed insurgencies during the formative years of our nationhood. In a genuine spirit of sharing our experiences, we accepted the invitation of the Afghan Government to participate in ISAF. In July 2010, Malaysia contributed a 40-member medical contingent to Bamyan province to provide medical and health-care services to the local population. The contribution of the Malaysian contingent has been recognized not only by its ISAF partners but also by the local populace as a provider of innovative health-care solutions that take into consideration local socio-religious sensitivities.

The Malaysian doctors successfully designed and constructed an inexpensive water filtration system in schools and villages, meeting local concerns that chlorination filtration methods might not be halal, or religiously permissible. The Malaysian medical team has also enlisted the assistance of provincial heads, or grand mullahs, to encourage locals to come forward in the blood donation drives to save lives.

The value that Malaysia places on winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people cannot be underestimated. Within the context of the utmost respect for the country's democracy and constitution, as well as for non-violence and the rights of all Afghan people, my delegation supports the reconciliation and reintegration process undertaken by the Afghan Government.

My delegation strongly believes that human capacity-building constitutes an important building block in the nation-building process. It is also the most practical way forward for Afghanistan to achieve greater and more sustainable growth and development. In that regard, Malaysia is committed to continuing to provide technical assistance to Afghanistan under our various technical cooperation programmes, including the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, and the Malaysian Defence Cooperation Programme. Under the Third Country Training Programme and the Malaysia-Australia Education Project for Afghanistan, we have facilitated the training of trainers for Afghan lecturers and teachers at the Language Institute in Kuala Lumpur.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation fully endorses the conclusions of the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Belarus on behalf of

the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

The Russian Federation actively participated in the negotiations on, and supports, draft resolution A/66/L.10, on the situation in Afghanistan. The draft focuses on comprehensively setting out the collective approach of the international community to finding an effective and long-term solution to the Afghan issue.

That task is receiving priority attention today. The international conferences in Istanbul and Bonn will develop the efforts to achieve the aims and tasks of the Kabul Process, in the interest of establishing a system for the transfer of responsibility for security to the Afghan authorities. In the long run, such efforts will provide a concrete basis for the development of a democratic process in Afghanistan, for its social and economic recovery and for the establishment of that friendly country as a peaceful, independent, prosperous and neutral State free of the threats of terrorism and drugs. We are ready to cooperate in that effort.

However, we face many difficulties. We need to eliminate the terrorist and extremist threats that continue in various regions of Afghanistan. Such threats seriously undermine efforts for national reconciliation, without which it will not be possible to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. We are far from completing the work of training functioning Afghan forces that can ensure the rule of law throughout the country, protect the State borders and prevent drug crimes. We call on the countries with a military presence to step up their efforts in that area, with the understanding that the United Nations has the central coordinating role for stabilization efforts.

National reconciliation is an important aspect of the settlement process. It must be achieved under the leadership of legally elected Afghan authorities. The insurgents must meet three important conditions, namely, recognizing the Constitution, breaking ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist and extremist organizations, and agreeing to disarm. Meeting those criteria is essential for delisting from the sanctions list. The Security Council sanctions are an important counter-terrorism instrument.

We are concerned about civilian deaths. We note the efforts of countries with a military presence to minimize civilian deaths, and we expect their greater effectiveness for overall progress and normalization of the situation.

We call on the Government of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to more resolutely fight the Afghan drug industry. No one can question the fact that the drug trade is one of the main sources of funding for terrorist activities on Afghan territory and has become a threat to international security. The danger of narcotics must be fought in all its aspects. We must eliminate cultivation, reduce consumption, and prevent drug barons from accessing precursors and place them on the sanctions list.

Taking into account the fact that ISAF carries out its duties in Afghanistan as mandated by the Security Council, we believe it important to deal with the threat of terrorist and extremist activities in neighbouring countries, guaranteeing the restoration of peace and ensuring stability in the entire region. We believe that the international military presence must be temporary. International troops must leave Afghanistan once ISAF has reported to the Security Council on the completion of the mandate that sanctioned their deployment to Afghanistan.

One of the main ways to normalize the situation in Afghanistan is through regional organizations, among which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has an essential role. Its unconditional priority is to ensure the necessary conditions for secure and stable development of participating States and to protect people from any threat or risk in the current context of resolving the situation in Afghanistan and its surrounding region.

In recent years, SCO has actively cooperated with Kabul. Representatives of Afghanistan regularly participate in SCO meetings at the head of State level and in political forums on regional security. An SCO-Afghanistan contact group has been set up to coordinate interaction. We are currently considering granting Kabul's request for observer status with SCO.

We are focusing on joint efforts to fight terrorism, illegal drug trafficking and organized crime. The States members of SCO are providing active support to the Afghan people in addressing their social and economic problems. SCO has shown that it is an effective forum for coordination and dialogue in seeking collective ways to normalize the situation in Afghanistan. Russia looks forward to continuing international cooperation with Afghanistan, including through the resources of SCO.

In conclusion, I would like to stress again that the long-term stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and a real resolution of the problems will be impossible without a comprehensive approach on the part of the international community and a gradual transfer of responsibilities to Afghan authorities. For our part, we will continue to do all we can to coordinate the efforts of all States and international organizations in the interests of the Afghan people and of building peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region as a whole, while preserving the central coordinating role of the United Nations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.10.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to inform the Assembly that since draft resolution A/66/L.10 was issued, the following countries have

become additional sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Chad, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malta, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.10?

Draft resolution A/66/L.10 was adopted (resolution 66/13).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.