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Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 40

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/374)

Draft resolution (A/73/L.44)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.44.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): It is my pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.44, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan". As members of the Assembly know, this text was first introduced in 1980 and has been reintroduced every year since then. Since 2002, Germany has served as the facilitator of the draft resolution. It has never been easy but, in the end, we have always been able to reach consensus, which we believe is extremely important because it shows the international community's consensus view of Afghanistan and its population, which is suffering under the conflict taking place there. That suffering is the reason that it is very important for the international community to be united.

The substance of draft resolution A/73/L.44 reflects the dynamics in Afghanistan over the years, the changes on the ground and international support. The most important events to take place this year were

the parliamentary elections in October and the Geneva Ministerial Conference in November, which was successful. The text of the draft resolution reflects the positions of Member States as they were communicated to us, and we did everything possible to accommodate all of them. Of course, attaining 100 per cent is never possible; compromise is necessary, and we strove to achieve it. Of course, in the end, the text must reflect the facts on the ground.

The draft resolution's main purpose is to express support for Afghanistan and its people. I would therefore like to thank all delegations that have showed flexibility in upholding the draft's show of support for the people of Afghanistan.

Turning to the substance of the draft resolution, our most important concern remains the fragile security situation. We are all aware of the number of high-profile attacks, the most recent being the attack on 20 November that targeted religious scholars and left 55 people dead. We call on all people in Afghanistan to stand together.

We also wish pay tribute to the members of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces for their patriotism and sacrifices. Together with its international partners, Germany will continue to be present in Afghanistan security-wise, through the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in support of the Afghan security forces. Our aim is to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. There can be no improvement in the situation in Afghanistan without support for the security sector, but that support is viable only if by improving the security sector there

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is also support for social development, the stabilization of society and the building of functioning institutions in the country.

With regard to the peace process, it is very important that it be inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, and involve both the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. That is the only pathway towards a sustainable resolution. We saw some very positive signs in the Eid al-Fitr ceasefire this summer. We also saw new initiatives being launched at the Geneva Conference. The draft resolution before us reiterates the call on the parties to the conflict to recognize their responsibilities in achieving peace and to enter into direct talks without preconditions. That aspect is directed at the Taliban. All countries of the regions have to exert their best efforts in support the peace process.

Although Afghanistan has come a long way, numerous challenges remain, including the fight against corruption and the fight for good governance and institution-building. Each is of crucial importance. I also wish to highlight the importance of women's empowerment in the country, including their participation in Government and their education, specifically their ability to attend school and university. I would encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue to make efforts in those areas and implement the announced political and economic reforms.

Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan, and to trying to build an international consensus that the Afghan population can see. We continue to work closely with the Government of Afghanistan and our international partners.

In conclusion, Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union later in today's debate.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting on the situation in Afghanistan as we adopt this year's draft resolution on our country (A/73/L.44).

To begin, let me convey my gratitude to Mr. Christoph Heusgen, Mr. Friedrich Schröder and the rest of the team at the German Mission for ably facilitating negotiations on the draft resolution. We also convey our thanks to all delegations for their proactive engagement and flexibility during the course of the deliberations. As a result of their efforts, this year's

draft resolution reflects the important developments that took place during the course of the past year, covering the security situation, developments in the area of peace and reconciliation, the recent Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan and, above all, the enduring partnership between Afghanistan and the international community on common goals that are imperative to us all.

As we take stock of the situation in Afghanistan, a glimpse at the past will benefit our course of action on the way forward towards consolidating gains and guaranteeing stability and security in the country. Afghanistan's geostrategic location in the heart of Asia has led to vested interests trying to meddle and interfere in ways that serve no benefit to anyone. The ensuing violence has brought with it untold suffering and devastation for our people, resulting in a humanitarian crisis and leading to instability in the wider region. In the process, our people have resisted and risen up in defence of the dignity and territorial integrity of their country. Following the end of the former Soviet occupation and the collapse of the communist regime, we witnessed a new era of meddling, which involved the use of proxy groups for strategic gains. The challenges that we faced then remain evident even today, requiring a new approach designed to change the calculus for the benefit of security, not only in Afghanistan but the wider region.

Looking at where we stand, despite all the prevailing challenges, Afghanistan has crossed a threshold and turned the corner in achieving our goals for security and self-reliance. This year's draft resolution exemplifies the international community's commitment to that imperative, for which we are grateful.

In the area of security, our national forces are valiantly defending our dignity and freedom and, in the broader context, fighting to defend global security. They have engaged the Taliban and other elements of the transnational terrorist network, while adopting an offensive posture and inflicting heavy losses on those elements in the battlefield. Despite repeated attempts, the Taliban have failed to capture a single province or city, or to otherwise assert control anywhere in the country. That progress also relates to efforts aimed at countering such foreign terrorist fighters as Da'esh, whose presence and capacity have been reduced, including in the northern provinces. The Taliban and other affiliated groups have shifted their focus to attacking population centres and other soft targets,

including religious sites and gatherings, with a view to stoking internal tensions.

The latest such attack was against a group of religious scholars last month, where more than 55 were killed and over 80 wounded, some severely. Let me state once again that such attacks can never undermine our unity or commitment to a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. The sheer number of Afghans who, in defiance of terror, came out in waves to stand in lines for hours to cast their vote in the recent parliamentary elections is proof of that.

We thank all international partners, including those in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, and other partner nations providing support to further strengthen the operational capabilities of our national security forces. Those investments are for the security of Afghanistan, the region and beyond.

The past few months have seen developments in our peace efforts, which have given a glimmer of hope for the course of action we will undertake in future. Following Afghanistan's submission of a peace plan with unconditional talks with the Taliban, in February, and the Ulema Conferences for Peace and Security in Afghanistan, held in Kabul and Jakarta, a three-day ceasefire was observed in June. Further progress was seen in July, when the Organization of Islamic Cooperation hosted an International Ulema Conference in Saudi Arabia that denounced the war in Afghanistan, thereby leaving no grounds for a religious justification for the war. Nevertheless, the Taliban have continued their violence and terror.

Domestically, a national consultative process has been undertaken to ensure that peace efforts have the full support across the spectrum of society — political parties, civil society, tribal elders, religious figures, and women and youth groups. Less than two weeks ago in Geneva, our road map for achieving peace was presented. The document aims for a peace agreement that will uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, especially women. Moreover, no armed groups with ties to transnational terrorist networks or criminal organizations and no State or non-State actors seeking influence in Afghanistan will be allowed to join the process. In addition, to make progress on the peace agenda, an authoritative negotiating team will conduct direct negotiations with the Taliban, and we expect the same from the Taliban, so that we have a united negotiating team.

Regional consensus is imperative for the success of that process. We have long asserted that peace is most achievable when neighbours in the region are on board and engaged constructively in support of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. While we continue to lead peace efforts, we also welcome the current efforts of the United States Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Khalilzad, aimed at reaching out to regional players to strengthen consensus and facilitate direct peace talks with the Taliban. We welcome those mechanisms as well as other initiatives that conform, with and help to reinforce, our Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace efforts in line with the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation.

Moreover, in the context of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, this year's draft resolution highlights the signing in April of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity. That mechanism is aimed at improving cooperation in addressing outstanding concerns related to combating terrorism and outlining clear measures to advance peace efforts. The effective implementation of commitments under the Action Plan is a crucial imperative. No country can benefit more from a peaceful and stable Afghanistan than Pakistan itself.

Last week in Geneva, the international community and Afghanistan came together to assess our joint progress on a wide spectrum of issues that are pivotal for my country's stability. For our part, we spoke about the progress we have made in meeting benchmarks set forth in the national priority programmes of the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We have focused on security-sector, civil-service and fiscal reform and improved governance and anti-corruption. Those measures aim to strengthen governance and the rule of law, subjects at the core of our reform agenda. To that end, we have implemented new judicial measures so as to ensure a society where all individuals — both in and outside of Government — operate in accordance with the laws of the land.

In the coming years we will remain closely engaged with international partners to meet reciprocal commitments under the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework. Mutual progress on those commitments will be reviewed through the annual meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in 2019, which is made up of senior officials, and our next ministerial meeting, to be held in 2020. As Afghanistan remains

fully engaged in fulfilling its share of commitments, we will strive to maintain continued focus in the alignment, efficiency and coordination of development aid from international partners.

This year's draft resolution highlights once again the direct link between regional economic cooperation and peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and the region. In the past year we witnessed ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening connectivity through various megaprojects designed to bring transformative change to the region by linking peoples, cultures, products and, above all, our economies, with the aim of achieving shared prosperity. Our commitment to that endeavour is manifested by the Afghan-led Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan process, under which progress continues to be made on such initiatives as the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline, the Lapis Lazuli corridor, the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan power project, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan 500 kilovolts Line, the Chabahar Port and the Five Nations Railway Corridor. Among the notable achievements made this year was the operationalization of air corridors with the addition of a number of countries since last year, leading to increased trade in goods and services.

More broadly, we look forward to working with other regional and international partners to advance regional cooperation in the areas of security and social and economic development under other regional initiatives, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia and others.

Afghanistan is a unique example whereby many countries from distinct regions and political blocs converged in 2001 to attain a common objective: to defeat international terrorism and promote a more secure and stable international landscape for all. That mission began with a strong consensus that cooperation and collaboration would serve everyone's interests. Experience has shown that progress is most tangible when countries of the region and beyond display effective cooperation in the context of international engagement in our country. At this critical stage, it is imperative to regenerate and solidify that consensus

for the achievement of the goals at hand. In that respect, this year's draft resolution calls for a closer and more coordinated approach among regional and international stakeholders in advancing peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I urge everyone present here — our allies and partners at the United Nations — to believe in the promise and potential of Afghanistan. Together we have travelled a long road full of challenges and sacrifices, yet we have witnessed gains on an unimaginable scale. As we advance along the road to sustainable peace, it is time to build on those gains. I thank our partners for their support for the draft resolution to be adopted today, as well as for their continued support for Afghanistan.

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

Mr. Vale de Almeida (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Georgia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to begin by praising the delegation of Germany and Ambassador Heusgen for their very good work in preparing and presenting this important draft resolution (A/73/L.44).

The European Union would like to commend the United Nations for the organization and outcome of the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan held on 27 and 28 November. Two years after the Brussels Conference, the international community once again reaffirmed its support to promoting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. The European Union welcomes the focus at the Conference on the peace dimension, an area in which the EU is particularly interested and willing to play a role and assume responsibilities. At the same time, it was important that participants took stock of the state of implementation of the Afghan reforms and agreed on concrete implementation benchmarks for reform to be met in the coming years.

Since the beginning of this year, we have witnessed important developments in Afghanistan that are

conducive to the start of a peace process. President Ghani's unprecedented peace offer at the Kabul Process meeting in February, the three-day successful ceasefire in June and the recent plan for peace presented during the Geneva Ministerial Conference are key moments that illustrate that positive momentum. The European Union recognizes the Afghan authorities' efforts and the steps taken towards a lasting political settlement and inclusive peace agreement based on national consensus. With the growing consensus among Afghan, regional and international stakeholders on the parameters of a potential peace process, it is now time to build on those positive elements and start a peace dialogue.

High Representative Federica Mogherini confirmed at the Geneva Conference the European Union's readiness to play a role in supporting peace talks, and she put forward several concrete offers in that regard. She also emphasized the fact that the European Union will always stand strong on the protection of fundamental rights, particularly women's full and equal enjoyment of such rights and the rights of children and minorities, which should not be sacrificed for the sake of rapid progress on peace, including on constitutional reforms. The European Union appreciates the fact that those elements were also emphasized in many other statements, including those of the Afghan representatives.

Afghanistan is at a crossroads, and many challenges still exist within the country. The security situation remains fragile, and Afghan civilians — innocent citizens — continue to be victims of terrorist attacks. There have been internal reforms in many areas, but more needs to be done so that they are translated into visible progress and made to contribute to building a solid, democratic and peaceful society where human rights and the rule of law are respected, and to make them conducive to economic development that offers increased opportunities for the Afghan people, in particular the younger generation.

For the European Union's part, in 2017 we approved the EU Strategy on Afghanistan. More recently, in November, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of our member States adopted conclusions on Afghanistan, thereby expressing their firm intention to continue and enhance the work on the four strands of the EU Strategy, namely, promoting peace, stability and regional security; reinforcing democracy, the rule of law and human rights and promoting good governance and women's empowerment; supporting economic and

human development; and addressing challenges related to migration and forced displacement. We are continuing our dialogue with our Afghan partners in each of those four areas. In coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the European Union and its member States will continue to support strengthening Afghan and regional efforts aimed at comprehensively fighting organized crime and reducing drug production, trafficking and demand.

The European Union continues to emphasize the importance of protecting human rights and promoting good governance, where the implementation of relevant legislation remains key, with a particular focus on such areas as eliminating violence against women, implementing the national action plan pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), protecting children and preventing torture and ill treatment.

We are pleased that discussions at the Geneva Ministerial Conference underlined the need for women to have a greater role in society. Although there has been progress, shortfalls in human rights and equal opportunity remain. The number of women participating in national institutions remains limited, and the implementation of the agenda set out in resolution 1325 (2000) should not be confined to the Afghan Government; it should also involve civil society. We salute the work being undertaken to achieve a national consensus by Afghan women on peace, while stressing the crucial role women and girls can play in conflict resolution and peace.

Increased efforts aimed at implementing reforms must continue, especially those related to, the fight against corruption, where there is a strong demand from the Afghan population. It will have a positive impact on the economy and the development of the private sector. Foreign investment and economic development are heavily dependent on both peace and the continued implementation of reforms.

In support of Afghan reforms, at the margins of the Geneva Ministerial Conference, the European Union signed a €474 million support package for Afghanistan, including more than €300 million for the State-Building and Resilience Contract for Afghanistan 2018-2021. That key initiative affirmed the engagement and reliability of the European Union as a partner of Afghanistan. A stable, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan that respects human dignity is in the interest of the European Union.

The holding of parliamentary elections on 20 and 21 October was also a positive signal, despite serious technical and logistical difficulties and security threats. Many Afghans, including women and young people, exercised their democratic right to vote. It is important to now start working on the lessons learned from these elections, in view of next year's presidential elections, which are expected to take place according to schedule. The coming months are essential, as strong and swift measures that will ensure and preserve the safety, transparency, accountability and credibility of the ballot need to be taken.

The European Union will continue to work alongside the United Nations and the international community in support of the Afghan electoral process. We have committed more than €15 million to assisting the presidential elections, with the coordination of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and continue to implement the EU-funded Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, which will help to reduce vulnerabilities in the electoral process, encourage internal monitoring by civil society organizations, inclusiveness among the political parties and women's participation in the process.

With regard to migration, in the framework of the EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward and through bilateral memorandums of understanding with other Member States, the European Union and Afghanistan continued their comprehensive dialogue, including on the regional dimension of migration. Very recently, in Brussels, we discussed cooperation in terms of the Joint Way Forward framework. At the same time, we are actively engaged in finding lasting solutions for the Afghan displacement and migration situation, taking into consideration, of course, the regional dimension as well. The latest trends showing decreases in returns from Pakistan are encouraging, as they will allow the proper reintegration of returnees into Afghanistan. At the Geneva Ministerial Conference side event on people on the move, which we co-organized, we also had an opportunity to discuss and raise awareness about the displacement and migration of Afghan nationals. We will continue to support the Afghan Government's actions and efforts aimed at reintegrating returned Afghan nationals, not only from Europe but also from neighbouring countries.

We remain deeply concerned about the high number of civilian casualties and the increasing number of displaced people, and we call on all parties to protect

the civilian population, especially women and children. Conflict-related violence must not be allowed to destroy another generation's livelihood, homes and property, displacing families and limiting access to education, health care and other services. We need to continue to protect the vital role that humanitarian agencies play and respect their impartiality and the humanitarian space in which the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable are addressed. Improving security remains a precondition for stability and development in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, much has been achieved, and the Afghanistan that we see today is different in so many ways from what it was several years ago. The European Union recognizes the progress and reforms made so far. We strongly support the Afghan authorities in their pursuit of long-term stability. Afghanistan needs to build on the current positive momentum, start peace talks and end the conflict that is harming many innocent people. The European Union recognizes the important work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and we will continue to work together with the United Nations, as well as regional and international partners, to support the people and the authorities of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Ms. Brink (Australia): Australia is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/73/L.44 today. We thank colleagues, particularly those from Germany and Afghanistan, for the leadership they showed in developing this year's draft resolution, which represents a resounding demonstration of continued international support for Afghanistan and its people as they seek to achieve peace and development. Together with its international partners, Australia remains committed to Afghanistan's security and development as it works towards self-reliance. We reaffirm Australia's commitment to NATO's Resolute Support Mission, which is building the capacity of the Afghan security forces to protect Afghanistan's future.

The Australian Government strongly condemns violence in Afghanistan, which has continued unabated in 2018. This year's increasing toll on civilians is a stark reminder of the suffering of the Afghan people. We offer our condolences for those tragic events, including the recent conflict in Ghazni and the shocking attacks in Kabul, which previous speakers have touched upon. We also honour the sacrifices of members of the Afghan security forces, as well as those of NATO and partner forces who -lost their lives in support of

their Afghan colleagues. Australia supports the Afghan Government's determined pursuit of peace in 2018, from its February offer to the Taliban of negotiations without preconditions, to its announcement in November of the formation of a negotiating team together with the drafting of negotiating principles. We also welcome the outcomes from the November Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, in which the Afghan Government renewed its commitment to reform and which enhanced momentum for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

We call on the Taliban to commit to a ceasefire and join their fellow Afghans, especially the Government of Afghanistan, at the negotiating table. We reaffirm Australia's support for the Kabul Process and encourage all parties to use that mechanism to focus their efforts on achieving an inclusive and durable political settlement. Durable peace will mean finding ways to preserve progress, protect rights, provide economic opportunities and include all of Afghanistan's people in its future. Afghanistan's neighbours have an especially important role to play.

We welcome the positive steps taken by Afghanistan and its neighbours through the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process to facilitate regional cooperation and encourage sustainable trade and investment. We encourage enhanced engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan and urge that priority be given to strengthening this bilateral relationship so as to ensure regional stability. As partners in peace, the international community continues to support Afghanistan's efforts to establish the conditions that can sustain a negotiated settlement. We look forward to Afghans' further expressing their commitment to democracy in the 2019 presidential elections, as Afghanistan progresses towards self-reliance.

Australia has provided approximately \$1.4 billion in development assistance since 2001, including a \$5 million contribution for emergency assistance to the more than 1 million Afghans who are on the verge of acute famine. We are meeting our Brussels Ministerial Conference commitments to providing \$320 million from 2016 to 2020 and will continue to invest in a secure and stable Afghanistan beyond 2020. Together with its international partners, Australia stands with Afghanistan as it charts a course towards a more secure and prosperous future. We encourage all Member States to do the same and support the draft resolution.

Ms. Gambhir (India): I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing today's debate. We would also like to thank the delegation of Germany for facilitating the very important draft resolution contained in document A/73/L.44. My delegation attaches great importance to the consensual adoption of the General Assembly's annual draft resolution on Afghanistan, as it is an important opportunity for the international community as a whole to express its solidarity for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Many Member States attended the recently concluded Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan last month, thereby reaffirming the international community's commitment — as well as that of the United Nations — to Afghanistan. As stated by President Ghani at the Geneva Conference, this year reflects how Afghanistan is gaining control of its destiny and how Afghans are taking ownership of their own problems and demonstrating leadership in finding solutions. Despite mounting challenges involving security, peace and development, there was also considerable progress in the past 17 years, especially in promoting education and health care, protecting the rights of women, children and the marginalized, safeguarding lives, improving governance and reforms, generating livelihood and moving Afghanistan towards self-reliance. Democracy in Afghanistan is taking deeper roots.

The enthusiastic participation of the people of Afghanistan in the parliamentary elections held last month, despite terrorist violence, reflects their desire for, and faith in, democratic governance and the rejection of forces that foment and spread terror and violence. The presidential elections scheduled for next year should further strengthen democratic institutions. Those gains, achieved in the face extreme adversity and violence, demonstrate the indomitable courage and determination of our Afghan friends.

While the people of Afghanistan strive for better lives and a peaceful future, the challenges they face only increased in the recent past. According to the latest statistics from the Global Terrorism Index, which were released this week, Afghanistan is now the world's deadliest country when it comes to terrorism. Sadly, one quarter of terrorism-related deaths throughout the world in 2017 occurred in Afghanistan. It is indeed sad that we, as the international community, saw it coming. The relevant reports of the Secretary-General — year after year, month after month — have demonstrated that the

violence and terror in Afghanistan have shown no signs of abating. We have witnessed the increased frequency of attacks in places where they were never imagined to be possible before. Even the sick and wounded in hospitals, young boys and girls in schools, praying devotees in mosques and mourners at funerals have not been spared from the forces of terror and violence.

It is clear that terrorists and those who plan such attacks are not interested in peace. The goalposts for them have changed. Terrorists and their supporters have now created among themselves industries involving narcotics and illegal mining in the territories that they control, and are stealing the resources of the Afghan people to fund more violence and terrorism. Despite those challenges, however, the United Nations has not demonstrated the necessary resolve to deal with the source of the problem. The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), which refuses to designate new leaders of the Taliban or freeze the assets of its slain leader, is falling short of what is expected of it by Afghans and the international community. From lessons learned in the past, we who are situated in New York have become aware that peace in Afghanistan is linked with the peace and security situation of the entire world.

While all of us advocate that there is no military solution to the issue, the Taliban — aided by its supporters — continues to pursue military operations, perpetrating violence and destruction, such as the recent attack in Kabul and similar ones across other parts of Afghanistan. Those offensives were planned and launched by those who have been harboured in safe havens in Afghanistan's neighbourhood. Those sanctuaries have for years provided safety for the dark agendas of ideologically and operationally fused terror networks, such as the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Da'esh and Al-Qaida, and its proscribed affiliates such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

We support an inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace and reconciliation process that promotes and protects the unity, sovereignty, democracy, inclusiveness and prosperity of Afghanistan. Any meaningful progress towards sustainable peace requires a cessation of terrorist violence, the renunciation of links with international terrorism and respect for the rights of common Afghan people, especially women, children and minorities.

India has always stood shoulder to shoulder with our Afghan friends, and it will continue to do so in this transformation decade by providing the assistance that Afghanistan needs and seeks. Building reliable connectivity for landlocked Afghanistan is a key component of our regional partnership. In undertaking those endeavours, we are mindful of how important it is that all such projects respect State sovereignty and territorial integrity and be based on universally recognized international norms, transparency and the principles of financial responsibility, ecological and environmental protection and preservation standards. It is in that spirit that we are engaged in various connectivity projects in the region, including the Chabahar Port project and the direct India-Afghanistan air-freight corridor, which were successfully made operational in the recent past, and we will continue to build on the gains achieved. We will continue to work with all those who share in the spirit of helping Afghanistan without conditions.

From a young age, Indians are familiar with the tales of Afghan courage, resilience and determination, which have long been a source admiration and inspiration in our region. We only hope that the courage of Afghans can be matched by that of the international community in doing, for its part, what needs to be done to bring peace to this war-torn country.

Ms. Zahir (Maldives): The Maldives is encouraged to see the positive steps that Afghanistan is taking towards peace and development, despite terrorist attacks and the continued threat of such attacks. The Government and the people of Maldives support and share the vision of a prosperous Afghanistan that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

The people of Afghanistan have shown extraordinary resilience and determination in rebuilding their country. President Ashraf Ghani has shown extraordinary leadership and courage in promoting democratic values in the country. The general election held in October was one of the most important steps taken in this, Afghanistan's transformation decade. Through the ballot box, the people of Afghanistan have consistently chosen the path of peace, of tolerance over extremism and of cooperation over confrontation. We especially welcome the continued implementation of overlapping ceasefires between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, which also helps to maintain the peace process in the country. It is further encouraging to note that the process is supported by the increasingly active

engagement of civil society and religious leaders. Such engagement of civil society is evidence of signs of flexibility among the main parties to the conflict.

The Maldives Government congratulates President Ghani on his announcement of a unilateral cessation of hostilities with the Taliban, which was followed by the Taliban issuing its own ceasefire declaration. Those positive developments require the support of the international community. Accordingly, the Maldives reiterates its call on the United Nations and its Member States to support Afghanistan in rebuilding the country, consolidating the authority of its State and institutions and helping the Government maintain law and order.

The progress Afghanistan is making in promoting human rights values in the country, especially for women and girls, is quite remarkable. With an increased focus on reducing sexual and gender-based violence, the people of Afghanistan can achieve an even more stable, secure and equal society. The relatively high level of participation by women in the October general election was an encouraging sign. We would like to see that upward trajectory continue. We would also like to see a greater participation by women in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention so as to better sustain peace in the country.

As we approach the fifth year of the Afghanistan transformation decade, the Maldives recognizes the progress being made thanks to the successful implementation of some of the key components of the action plan and hopes that the country continues to tackle the significant and complex challenges related to insecurity, poverty and corruption. With greater economic integration in the region, Afghanistan will be able to ensure safety and welfare for its people. That requires the full commitment of all partners in the region, including the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. The Maldives acknowledges the important steps taken by Afghanistan towards enhancing regional cooperation.

A stable, safe, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan will not only benefit the hard-working people of Afghanistan, but is also of interest to the entire region, its economic partners and the international community as a whole. We therefore once again issue a call: let us strengthen our efforts to support Afghanistan and make it the place it deserves to be.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): For the past several decades, the people of Afghanistan have experienced epic

suffering caused by war, internecine conflicts and foreign interventions in their country. Violence and turmoil in Afghanistan have not only undermined peace and security and development in the country and the region; they also pose a continuing threat to international peace and security. Through Afghanistan's travails and tragedy, the global community has remained steadfast in its support for the Afghan people.

Apart from Afghanistan itself, it is Pakistan that has endured the greatest suffering and damage from the strife, violence and instability in Afghanistan and in our neighbourhood. Despite the many burdens that the situation has imposed on my country, our support for our Afghan brothers and sisters has remained consistent and resolute. We opened our hearts and homes to millions of Afghan refugees and have sustained them for almost four decades, with less than adequate support from the international community. Even today, Pakistan continues to host more than 2 million Afghans — the largest protracted presence of refugees anywhere in the world.

Pakistan has a vital interest in a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan. We are working to strengthen bilateral relations through the recently agreed Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity, which aims at establishing closer engagement on political, economic, military, intelligence and refugee issues. We have undertaken a number of initiatives to support Afghanistan's economic development. Over the past decade, Pakistan has extended financial assistance for various infrastructure and development projects in Afghanistan. Last year's waiver of regulatory duties resulted in a significant increase in the country's exports to Pakistan, which remains Afghanistan's largest market.

We have also taken steps to improve the transit of Afghan trade through our ports. We look forward to the day when transit trade from Central Asia can flow through Afghanistan and Pakistan, the shortest route to the Arabian Sea. My country is also committed to several regional projects, including Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India energy and natural-gas initiatives and the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, which will contribute to the economic integration of the entire region and promote South-South cooperation.

The level of violence has escalated sharply in Afghanistan over the past several months. According

to independent reports, the areas under Taliban control or influence have become further enlarged. Civilian and military casualties have mounted owing to insurgent attacks and coalition air strikes. The conflict in Afghanistan is clearly expanding, but it has also reached a stalemate. It is evident that neither the coalition nor the Taliban will be able to impose its will on the other. A negotiated political settlement is the only way to end the violence and bloodshed and realize peace in Afghanistan.

Despite the bleak picture, there are several positive developments, the most important of which is the now-clear international consensus that durable peace can be achieved only through a political settlement. For over two decades, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, has repeatedly declared that the war in Afghanistan can be brought to an end only through a negotiated political settlement. We are gratified that is now the universal position.

The second positive development is the willingness expressed by President Ashraf Ghani and the Government of National Unity to pursue a negotiated settlement in any available modality or format. We welcome the nomination of the Government's negotiating team.

The third positive development is the decision of the United States to play an active role in promoting a political settlement and engaging in direct talks with the Taliban. A third round of talks about talks is being conducted by the United States Special Envoy through direct dialogue with the Taliban's representatives in Doha. In response to President Trump's request, my country's Prime Minister has promised to do all we can to support the process.

The efforts being made by Russia, China and other States of the region to promote engagement and dialogue with and among the Afghan parties represent a fourth positive development. Sustainable peace will require the endorsement of every State in the region.

The Moscow-format dialogue last month brought representatives of the Taliban, the Afghanistan High Peace Council, the United States and key countries of the region around the same table to discuss the path to peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Taliban representatives outlined their known position there. We hope that, in subsequent talks in various formats, the positions of the principal parties will move closer to convergence.

It is obvious that the people of Afghanistan desperately desire peace and an end to this long war. The brief ceasefire observed over the Eid al-Fitr holidays, the peace marches and the recent parliamentary elections in Afghanistan are all signs that embody the people's yearning for peace. Peace will be realized by building on that palpable desire for peace and putting an end to the nightmare of war.

But the challenge ahead lies in translating that sentiment and the recent positive developments into a serious, sustained and structured peace process. A diplomatic surge is needed to seize this unique opportunity. While the onus for seizing this opportunity rests on the parties directly involved in the Afghan conflict, Pakistan, for its part, will do whatever it can to support all efforts to launch a sustained peace process.

Finally, let me say that Afghanistan and our region are at a crucial, critical juncture. The path to peace in Afghanistan is onerous, but it appears to be achievable. It is now for the parties concerned to commit themselves to working seriously towards a negotiated solution to the conflict. That approach offers the best chance to end the suffering of the Afghan people and restore peace to Afghanistan, and stability to the region as a whole.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I commend the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/73/374). The United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan have a vital role to play in the efforts to promote peace and development. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the way ahead for Afghanistan.

There is broad international agreement that the conflict in Afghanistan can be resolved only by political means. We commend President Ghani's brave offer to the Taliban of peace negotiations without preconditions, in February. We were encouraged by the fact that during the Eid al-Fitr celebrations in June the two Afghan parties declared unilateral, partly overlapping ceasefires. The ceasefires reduced the suffering of the Afghan people and were largely welcomed by them.

We have noted with great interest the efforts by the United States to engage the Taliban in exploratory talks about a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. We have also noted the efforts by partners in the region to support a negotiated solution. Countries in the region have a vital role to play in securing long-term stability and development.

Norway will continue its efforts to bring the different parties and other relevant actors together to find a political solution. However, nothing will succeed unless the Afghan parties dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to reaching a peaceful settlement. We urge the Taliban to engage the Afghan Government in negotiations. If a settlement is achieved, the international community must be ready to offer the necessary assistance, financially and otherwise, to support its implementation.

Women play a vital role in efforts to reach a peaceful solution. We trust that the protection of women's rights will be a priority in any settlement. Women must be included in all efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement and in its eventual implementation. We note with satisfaction the activism for peace among an increasing number of Afghan women, from the grass-roots level all the way up to First Lady Rula Ghani.

At present the security situation remains precarious. The Taliban has gained ground. The recent drought has brought about great hardship, misery and displacement. We condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks that have caused the loss of so many civilian lives, in Kabul and elsewhere. International military and civilian assistance remains essential to provide stability and prevent the spread of violent extremism, which also poses a threat to international security.

The Geneva Ministerial Conference last week recognized that some important progress has been made in terms of good governance, the fight against corruption, women's rights and other important areas. The Conference also brought attention to the vast challenges that remain and noted room for progress.

Norway commends the brave people who went to the polling stations during the recent parliamentary elections, as well as the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which worked hard to provide security. However, we cannot disregard the fact that there were significant shortcomings. The large number of complaints and the recent news that the Electoral Complaints Commission had invalidated the election results for the city of Kabul are disturbing. Significant improvements must be made before the presidential elections in April 2019.

Our focus should be on securing a sovereign, independent Afghanistan, as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. Afghanistan must be able to take care of its own security and defend itself with its own

defence forces, without the need for a continued foreign military presence.

The Afghan people deserve to live in peace. Let us all contribute towards that goal.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): Turkey is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us today (A/73/L.44). We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

We deem this comprehensive draft resolution to be very important, as it highlights the achievements and responsibilities of both Afghanistan and the international community. It constitutes a solid manifestation of our joint support for the people and the Government of Afghanistan in addressing ongoing challenges.

Afghanistan is continuing its journey of political and economic transformation. The achievements over the past decade, including in the areas of security, democracy, governance and economic development, are praiseworthy. The holding of parliamentary elections on 20 October was an important step forward.

Afghanistan's security and stability remain a key priority. Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation efforts are crucial to lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. Long-term strategies and consolidated reforms are essential both for maintaining progress and addressing challenges in areas such as education, health and displacement.

The region has demonstrated, on various occasions, its readiness to resolve its own problems and transform common problems into areas of mutual benefit. We fully support the regional connectivity projects that centre around Afghanistan, such as the Lapis Lazuli Transit, Trade and Transport Route Agreement as well as the development of air corridors.

We value bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation efforts. We welcome the increased momentum that has been achieved through the Istanbul Process, which is an effective cooperation model capable of bringing practical solutions to current challenges in the Heart of Asia region. We will soon host the annual Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process. Besides our efforts aimed at consolidating regional ownership, we will also continue to lend our support to Afghanistan's security as a NATO Framework Nation and through NATO's Resolute Support Mission, among other efforts.

Turkey will continue its support for the Afghan Government in its endeavours towards peace, stability and development. Our programme of assistance to the Afghan people is the most comprehensive development aid we have directed to a single country in our history. As of September 2018, 1,056 development projects had been completed. Turkish development assistance to Afghanistan amounts to approximately \$1.1 billion.

The continued support of the international community will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for a bright future. We will always stand by our Afghan brothers and sisters as long as our help is needed.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Peace and stability in Afghanistan not only concern the immediate interests of the Afghan people but also affect regional security, stability, development and prosperity.

At present, the security situation in Afghanistan provides no grounds for optimism, and the humanitarian situation presents multiple challenges. The National Unity Government is committed to promoting socioeconomic development and maintaining peace and stability. The international community should continue to provide support and assistance to Afghanistan.

First, based on its commitments to promoting political dialogue and the reconciliation process, the international community should support an inclusive political process that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, support the efforts of the Afghan Government in promoting peace talks, urge the Taliban to return to the negotiation table without delay, and help to achieve continuous progress in the reconciliation process. International mechanisms, including the Quadrilateral Coordination Group — made up of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States of America — the Kabul process, the Moscow format consultations and the Istanbul Process, should continue to play their respective roles, with international support, in order to facilitate the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan and create a favourable international environment.

A second focus is to improve the security environment and maintain peace and stability in Afghanistan. Conflicts continued unabated in the country in the first half of this year, and drug-related crime remained a serious problem. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) bear the primary responsibility for maintaining the country's peace,

security and stability. The international community should enhance coordination and cooperation and continue to support the ANDSF in building its capacity to respond effectively to such threats as terrorism, transnational crimes and drug-trafficking.

Thirdly, priority must be given to achieving independent development and improving the lives of the Afghan people. The successful Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan held in late November adopted a series of outcome documents that will contribute to the prompt achievement of independent development in Afghanistan. The international community should sustain its attention directed at improving lives in the country, provide development assistance to the Government and the people of Afghanistan, respect the people's independent choice of a political system and development path and offer targeted assistance to the Government of Afghanistan so as to improve governance and development capacity based on the country's development strategy and specific needs.

Fourthly, we must provide the badly needed aid supplies and alleviate the humanitarian situation. The recent drought has affected the livelihoods of millions of Afghan people, exacerbating the already precarious humanitarian situation. The international community should provide the Afghan people with emergency humanitarian assistance in terms of production, water, food and medical supplies in order to mitigate the suffering of the drought-affected population.

Afghanistan and its neighbours need to address the issue of the return of 5 million refugees. The international community should continue to provide humanitarian support to Afghan refugees as well as their host countries.

China enjoys long-standing good-neighbourly relations with Afghanistan and has consistently supported the country's political process, reconstruction and development. China has provided bilateral assistance to help build Afghan capacity to fight terrorism and supported its national counter-terrorism efforts through multilateral mechanisms such as the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral initiative and the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism involving those three countries and Tajikistan.

The eighteenth Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), held in June in Qingdao, China,

adopted the Qingdao Declaration, reaffirming SCO support for Afghanistan in such areas as security, economic development and the fight against terrorism, extremism, drugs and crime. China has also provided ¥60 million for Afghan drought-relief efforts and an additional \$1 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to help the Afghan people get through this difficult period.

China and Afghanistan continue to actively promote the development of the Belt and Road Initiative. Our two countries are now connected by regular direct flights and freight trains. Afghanistan actively participated in the inaugural China International Import Expo, held last month in Shanghai. Chinese companies have engaged in the construction of highways and power-grid projects in Afghanistan. China will continue to work with Afghanistan to earnestly implement our bilateral memorandum of understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative and further boost Afghanistan's trade with regional partners, as well as the country's infrastructure, interconnectivity and socioeconomic development.

Afghanistan boasts geographical and resource advantages and broad prospects for regional economic cooperation. We hope that all relevant countries will demonstrate a spirit of participation in broad consultations, conscious of joint contributions and shared benefits, and scale up regional economic cooperation and interconnectivity to help Afghanistan benefit from regional development and build a community for the common future of humankind.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for having convened this important meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Germany for its efforts in facilitating consultations on draft resolution A/73/L.44, which stresses the importance of continued peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The United Arab Emirates strongly believes that conflict resolution depends on peaceful means, especially dialogue. We therefore fully support the political reconciliation led by the Government of Afghanistan and commend the efforts of President Ashraf Ghani to ensure the success of the process and launch peace talks. The United Arab Emirates believes that the positive participation of all strata of Afghan

society, particularly the Taliban, is essential for the success of those efforts.

The United Arab Emirates delegation is concerned by the deterioration in the security situation in Afghanistan over the past few years, especially in the light of the presence of Al-Qaida and Da'esh and the continued activities of other criminal and armed groups, which have affected the United Arab Emirates. Indeed, I recall the terrorist attack on a delegation of Emirati diplomats in Kandahar participating in Emirati philanthropic projects for the benefit of the Afghan people, which claimed the lives of six Emirati diplomat martyrs. That only strengthened our determination and commitment to fighting terrorism wherever it occurs. In that regard, we express our solidarity with the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to fight that scourge.

Ms. Shikongo (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Within the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates, in its capacity as co-chair for counterterrorism confidence-building measures, hosted in Abu Dhabi recently the seventh Regional Technical Group Meeting on Counter-terrorism Confidence-building Measures for the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, which sought to enhance regional security cooperation in order to address terrorist threats in the context of a security and counter-terrorism cooperative approach that contributes to developing an integrated strategy and implementation plan related to confidence-building measures in the area of counter-terrorism.

The United Arab Emirates is eager to help the Afghan people to achieve their vision of peace, stability and prosperity. We are therefore committed to supporting the Government of Afghanistan and its efforts to pursue large-scale economic, social and political reforms, especially by enhancing the role of women and youth in Afghanistan to achieve development and strengthen Afghan society's capacity to undertake those reforms.

The efforts of the United Arab Emirates to achieve development and stability in Afghanistan take the form of humanitarian and development initiatives. Emirati assistance between 2012 and 2017 totalled \$433 million. That assistance was used mainly for education, health care and women's empowerment. In the presence of the Afghan President, a housing project was also launched

in Kabul early this year at a cost of 710 million Emirati dirham. The United Arab Emirates has consistently provided financial assistance for the rebuilding of schools, medical facilities and roads, and for ensuring relief aid for those affected by disasters.

Based on our policy of respect for the nationals of countries afflicted by wars or disasters, my country's Government decided in June to grant the nationals of such countries one-year renewable residency while they are unable to return home. That demonstrates our solidarity with those people. We also support their living conditions so that they will eventually be able to go back to their countries. The United Arab Emirates continues to urge neighbouring countries hosting Afghan nationals not to exploit them in regional issues and conflicts that have nothing to do with them.

In conclusion, The United Arab Emirates enjoys strong relations with the people of Afghanistan, bound by history, traditions and common culture. We will continue to provide the necessary assistance to the Afghan people out of our human and Islamic duty through bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

Mr. Cooreman (Belgium): Like others, I would like to thank all delegations that participated in the consultations on draft resolution A/73/L.44, in particular my Afghan and German colleagues for having so ably facilitated the negotiations. We are proud to co-sponsor the draft resolution and look forward to its adoption.

Belgium associates itself fully with the statement of the European Union.

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

First, Afghanistan has had a momentous year, and an even more momentous year lies ahead of us. Belgium congratulates the Afghan authorities on the parliamentary elections held on 20 October, which marked another important step towards the consolidation of democracy in the country. At the same time, it is important to draw lessons from these elections. The Afghan Government and institutions owe it to the brave and courageous Afghan citizens to hold orderly, inclusive and credible presidential

elections in 2019. The election commissioners must retain their independence and carry out their crucial mandate autonomously, building on the experience they have acquired. Together with the serious security threat, logistical and technical difficulties must also be addressed.

The heinous attacks against schools and medical facilities during the run-up to the elections further reminded us of the importance of fully respecting international humanitarian law. In that regard, Belgium remains deeply concerned about the high number of civilian casualties and calls on all parties to protect the civilian population, especially women and children.

The momentous year ahead also applies to my second point, concerning the peace process. The draft resolution justly stresses the importance of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. The international community must be united in supporting those national efforts. There are different processes aiming to build peace in Afghanistan, but it remains essential for the international community to ensure that all efforts reinforce each other in a streamlined process. Only the Kabul Process can act as a central framework in that respect. Belgium calls on the Taliban leadership to respond to President Ghani's unprecedented peace offer and engage in direct peace talks. The impatience of the Afghan people for peace is ever clearer. The international community must heed its call and support the process by acting in unison. That will also require continued support from donors.

Thirdly, I want to add Belgium's voice to the choir of global support for Afghanistan. I believe that today is about coming together and uniting behind our support for progress, sustainable peace and development. That is the fundamental value of the draft resolution we will adopt today, and it was also visible at the Geneva Ministerial Conference last week, where we had an open and constructive dialogue with the Afghan Government and the international community confirmed its continuing support to the necessary reform and modernization of Afghanistan, including the strengthening of the rule of law.

Belgium is a steadfast ally of Afghanistan through our membership of the European Union and NATO. Both entities have longstanding cooperation agreements with Afghanistan, to which Belgium fully subscribes. Earlier this week, the Belgian Government decided to substantially increase its contribution to the NATO

Resolute Support Mission and to help train the Afghan national army. We are also supporting the humanitarian response to the drought through our contributions to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund. Belgium will substantially increase its support to the Fund over the next two years, in line with our commitment to humanitarian principles.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I am also proud to share a new Belgian contribution to the Afghanistan country office of UN-Women in support of its programme to help with the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security. Belgium attaches great importance to women's rights and women's empowerment. We welcome the strong emphasis the draft resolution places on those themes. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to redouble efforts towards greater participation by women in public institutions.

I also want to express my appreciation for the important work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Belgium will continue to work with the United Nations and regional and international partners to support the efforts of the Afghan authorities and people to achieve peace and prosperity.

Let me conclude by paying my respects to the victims of the violence in Afghanistan and paying tribute to the resilience of the Afghan people and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. The year 2018 holds the terrible record of being the most deadly year for civilians to date. Ten thousand lives have been lost since 2001, including those of many children. Having served in Afghanistan myself, that suffering is close to my heart. But peace is possible in Afghanistan, and Belgium will maintain its support not only for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace settlement but also for the journey after such a settlement. That is why we are here today.

Ms. Boucher (Canada): I would like to sincerely thank Germany for the continuing engagement and leadership it has demonstrated in preparing this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/73/L.44). I would also like to express my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations for his thoughtful statement outlining not only the important challenges facing his country but also its real potential.

As he has shown, now more than ever the international community must stand side-by-side with Afghanistan as it pursues its efforts to create a sustainable future and a country that is well-governed, respects human rights and is in control of its own destiny. In that regard, I want to highlight the important role of Afghanistan's neighbours in supporting peace efforts and improving interconnectivity and promoting economic development opportunities with Afghanistan.

The draft resolution before us today demonstrates the importance of international commitment and collaboration. It also emphasizes the leadership role of the Government of Afghanistan and its people in building a brighter future. That is why we are proud to co-sponsor this draft resolution, the precursors of which the Assembly has traditionally adopted by consensus.

The recent Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan provided further testament of the world's continuing support. It successfully highlighted the solidarity of the international community with the Afghan people and the Afghan Government in their efforts to bring peace and prosperity to their country. We were also pleased to learn of the Afghan Government's renewed commitment to ensuring progress on development and reform, which are crucial building blocks to enable stability and prosperity for the country.

(spoke in French)

Canada is proud of its longstanding security commitment to Afghanistan. We are proud of our support for the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. We are also proud of the significant efforts we have made for Afghan women and girls. That sense of pride is rooted in our belief that, by helping Afghanistan build a more stable, secure and democratic country that respects human rights, especially those of Afghan women and girls, not only are we contributing to the development of the Afghan people, but also helping to create a safer and more prosperous world.

(spoke in English)

Afghanistan recently went through an important democratic process with the October 2018 parliamentary elections. I commend the bravery of the Afghan people who, defying intimidation and threats of violence, went to the polls to cast their votes. I also want to recognize the courage of the Afghan electoral officials and security-sector personnel supporting the elections. We

now look forward to free and fair presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2019. That will be another major milestone for the country.

We hope that the lessons learned from the October 2018 parliamentary elections can be applied in 2019. In particular, Canada will continue to work together with its Afghan and international partners to ensure the meaningful participation of all Afghans, particularly Afghan women, in the electoral process. Canada supports an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in which Afghan women play a meaningful leadership role. We know that sustainable peace and security cannot be achieved without the active and substantive participation of all members of society, including women and girls.

Canada supports this draft resolution, and we stand with the Afghan people as they strive for a more secure, prosperous and peaceful future.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): To recover from decades of insecurity and instability, Afghanistan needs strong and sustained international support. In that context, we underline the importance of the recent Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan. It demonstrated the international community's unwavering support for, and strong solidarity with, the people and the Government of Afghanistan in their endeavour to achieve peace, stability and prosperity.

We have witnessed a number of promising developments in Afghanistan this year. The holding of the parliamentary elections, despite all security threats and plots, was a positive development. Indeed, it further consolidates the foundations of democracy and the rule of law in the country. We express our sincere congratulations to the people and the Government of Afghanistan for that achievement. It must be complemented by the upcoming presidential elections in April 2019. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to extend all possible assistance to the brotherly country of Afghanistan to hold that election in a free and fair manner.

Recent developments in Afghanistan include the renewed efforts for peace and reconciliation. As it stands, there is a strong national, regional and global consensus that there is no military solution in the country. The time is therefore ripe for national reconciliation and an inclusive political solution in Afghanistan. That should be owned and led by the Afghan Government and people. The complementary Kabul, Tashkent and

Moscow formats attest to that momentum, which must be seized.

The international community should facilitate intra-Afghan dialogue by helping to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table for inclusive and comprehensive talks with the Government. Genuine and strong international support as well as domestic and regional inclusion will be key to success.

Moreover, if they are to lead to a durable solution, such efforts must be inclusive and based on existing political foundations, such as the Constitution. More important, they should take into account the underlying causes of instability and insecurity in the country over the past four decades. One of those causes has been the presence of foreign forces, which have never brought stability to Afghanistan or our region; rather, historically, they have provided a recruiting ground for extremists. That is why we have never believed that such forces contribute to Afghanistan's peace and stability.

Our support to the annual General Assembly resolution on the situation in Afghanistan reflects our genuine and general support for a neighbouring country and should not be misinterpreted as according any sort of acknowledgement to, or support for, the continued presence or activities of foreign forces in that country. On the contrary, in our view, the best contribution that foreign forces could make towards peace and stability in Afghanistan would be to withdraw. We therefore continue to call strongly for a time-bound and responsible withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan, regardless of their mandate or structure.

Instead of deploying foreign forces, every effort should be made to support and strengthen Afghanistan's military and security forces. That is one of the main requirements for the long-term stability of Afghanistan, and should therefore be pursued as a high priority. It is essential in particular for combating terrorist groups, such as Da'esh, whose introduction into Afghanistan has led to more bloodshed and dangerous sectarian tendencies.

We have stated time and again that no one has gained from introducing and supporting Da'esh and other terrorists in Syria and Iraq. No one will gain from introducing them in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This alarming and horrific trend needs to be stopped before it reaches catastrophic proportions. One of the main factors in that regard should be a two-pronged strategy to fight both drug-trafficking and terrorism

simultaneously. That is crucial, since terrorism and drug trafficking have historically always been mutually reinforcing in Afghanistan.

At the same time, to fight the drug menace, we need a comprehensive strategy, which must include the economic development of Afghanistan's rich resources. To that end, the international community should continue to support the ongoing efforts of the people and the Government of Afghanistan to make optimal use of its existing economic opportunities.

As a brotherly country, Iran has offered unprecedented support to the Afghan people over the past 40 years, including by hosting almost 4 million Afghan refugees. We are ready to continue to help our Afghan brothers and sisters in their quest for peace and cooperation with all, based on our shared objectives.

To support the sustainable socioeconomic development of Afghanistan, efforts are under way in my country to ensure that contributions are provided in a sustained and institutionalized manner. Connectivity is a vital element in that regard, and Iran's sea and rail links, including Chabahar, are essential for Afghanistan's development. Taking into account the unlawful unilateral sanctions against Iran, we would like to stress that any attempt to disrupt this vital project will only play into the hands of those who do not want peace and progress for Afghanistan.

We support the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and underline the need for a strong partnership between United Nations agencies and that country. We highlight the importance of the adoption of the annual General Assembly resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. As it represents the international community's strong support for Afghanistan, the resolution should be balanced, reflect the current situation on the ground and include the concerns of all. That is vital to ensuring that its content enjoys the unambiguous support of all Member States.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming the resolve of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue their support to the fraternal people and the Government of Afghanistan.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): The delegation of Bangladesh wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on Afghanistan (A/73/374).

Bangladesh remains encouraged by the international community's commitment of constant support for sustained peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Security Council's visit to the country from 13 to 15 January was an affirmation of the international community's continued support for a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

We followed with interest the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan held on 27 and 28 November, at which the Government of Afghanistan reaffirmed its commitment to reform, democratic processes and development for the Afghan people. Bangladesh welcomes the joint communiqué and the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework agreed in Geneva. We underscore the primacy of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process, supported by enhanced regional and international cooperation, for lasting peace and stability in the country.

Bangladesh welcomes the achievements of the National Unity Government in the political, governance, economic and social spheres. We commend initiatives to promote the enhanced participation of women and young people in addressing peace, security and development issues.

We congratulate the Afghan Government and people on the parliamentary elections held in October, in defiance of terrorist threats and attacks in various parts of the country. We, along with the international community, look forward to the holding of the presidential elections scheduled for April 2019.

Bangladesh attaches importance to demonstrable efforts by the United Nations to promote peace and security, development and human rights in Afghanistan. We express our support for the sustained engagement of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan. We appreciate the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan pursuant to Security Council resolution 2405 (2018). Bangladesh wishes to see the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Afghan refugees and encourages the continued implementation of the resolution, taking into consideration the realities on the ground.

Bangladesh unequivocally condemns all terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and expresses its steadfast solidarity with its Government and people. We share concerns at the presence of terrorist groups aiming to spread and consolidate their network across the region and beyond. We remain particularly alert to the

reported presence of foreign terrorist fighters and the involvement of terrorist groups in narcotics cultivation and trafficking. Bangladesh acknowledges the valiant role played by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in the face of such risks and urges the international community to maintain support for their capacity-building efforts. We stand ready to cooperate with the relevant Afghan authorities to share information and experience, including under relevant regional arrangements. As a matter of principle, Bangladesh remains committed not to allow its territory to be used for terrorist or otherwise hostile activities against any country, including those in our region.

Under the leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh continues to attach the highest priority to further strengthening and consolidating bilateral relations with its neighbours in South Asia. Considering that development in education, health and agriculture is vital in realizing peace, we are willing to share our development experiences with Afghanistan in various areas, namely, women's empowerment, non-formal education, community health care, water and sanitation, human resources development, judicial system reform and social and humanitarian programmes. We have offered to provide training to help Afghan professionals and officials develop the necessary skills in areas such as the financial, judicial and administrative sectors, disaster management, agricultural extension and youth development.

Bangladesh and Afghanistan are currently working to further their existing bilateral relations through institutional frameworks such as foreign office consultations, trade agreements, cultural exchanges, visa waivers for Government officials and air services agreements. Bangladesh also offers scholarships to students from Afghanistan to study medicine and other higher degree subjects.

Since we believe in the potential of regional connectivity as the key for ensuring growth and eliminating poverty, we feel encouraged by various initiatives of countries in the region to unlock the trade and transit potential that Afghanistan offers as a connectivity hub. Drawing on Bangladesh's recent initiatives at fostering subregional connectivity, we look forward to broadening this template to enter into beneficial regional connectivity arrangements with other South and Central Asian countries.

In 2002, Building Resources Across Communities, the largest non-governmental organization in Bangladesh, began its first international operation in Afghanistan. It has since continued to play a significant role by providing secondary, higher secondary, technical and vocational education and community health services, working with local authorities to build rural infrastructure and helping to implement social-development projects in many provinces and hard-to-reach communities. That development approach improves participation, raises awareness of gender equality and child rights and encourages ownership by the community.

We stress the importance of maintaining the unity of purpose of Member States in contributing to lasting peace and sustainable development in Afghanistan. The legitimate aspirations of the Afghan people must take precedence over external considerations. The draft resolution before us should reflect our collective commitment to that effect, and we thank the German delegation for facilitating its preparation.

Mr. Camp (United States of America): The United States welcomes draft resolution A/73/L.44, on Afghanistan, which we were happy to co-sponsor. My country seeks an inclusive peace that will benefit all Afghan men and women. We seek a peace in which Afghanistan plays its rightful and obligatory role, contributing to international security and ensuring that its territory is no longer exploited by terrorists. And we seek a peace that accelerates economic growth and prosperity for Afghanistan and its neighbours.

There are encouraging signs: the National Unity Government's invitation to the Taliban to enter peace talks without preconditions; the Government's establishment of an action plan and road map and appointment of an inclusive negotiating team; and the Eid al-Fitr ceasefire, the first of its kind in 17 years, although followed by the Taliban's disappointing failure to accept a second ceasefire during Eid al-Adha. A Taliban commitment to a peaceful outcome is long overdue. We call on the Taliban to commit to a ceasefire and appoint an authoritative negotiating team.

For our part, the United States continues its support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. Peace in Afghanistan is possible, and we must all seize this opportunity. Today we reaffirm our commitment to the Afghan people and welcome the progress that has been made and will be made in the future.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom urges the General Assembly to provide its full support to the Government of Afghanistan and to the draft resolution before us (A/73/L.44). We commend the efforts of our German colleagues as penholders on the draft resolution, which we believe should command broad agreement and consensus as in previous years. The United Kingdom remains committed in our support for the Government of Afghanistan along with the international community, as demonstrated at the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan last week.

The draft resolution recognizes the importance of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process, for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan. We agree with the Government of Afghanistan that that is the only way to deliver a just and lasting peace, and believe that all present today should give it their full support.

The bravery and determination of the Afghan people in participating in the parliamentary elections in October confirm the demand for a political environment in which all citizens have an equal opportunity to have their say on the future of their country. The elections also demonstrated yet again the resilience, tenacity and courage of the people of Afghanistan. We welcome the inclusion in the draft resolution of language that pays tribute to those who defied threats and intimidation to exercise their democratic rights.

Nevertheless, a number of technical and logistical problems arose in the elections that are of concern. It is vital that Afghanistan's electoral management bodies learn from the experience and implement reforms ahead of next year's presidential elections to ensure that such problems do not reoccur.

As Afghanistan continues to develop its institutions, we welcome the importance placed by the draft resolution on the successful efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to deliver on its reform agenda. As the international community discussed in Geneva, there have been notable successes, including on fiscal sustainability, improved budgeting and the progress this year against the ease-of-doing-business indicators. That will all help lead Afghanistan towards a collective vision of self-reliance. However, it is vital for the pace of reform to accelerate and continue through the upcoming election period.

For peace to be sustainable, it must be inclusive. As such, we are extremely encouraged by the multiple

references to the protection and empowerment of women and girls in the draft resolution. In particular, we welcome the inclusion of paragraph 35, which commends the Government of Afghanistan on its work towards ensuring the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life in Afghanistan. That vital work ranges from the implementation of Afghanistan's 2015 national action plan on women and peace and security to the representation of women on the High Peace Council and, most recently, to the inclusion of women on President Ghani's proposed negotiating team for peace talks.

In conclusion, we urge that the Assembly give its full support to the draft resolution and its endorsement of the importance of respect for human rights and of a political settlement to end the violence in Afghanistan.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/73/L.44.

Before giving the floor to delegations that wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches particular importance to the situation in Afghanistan and to the adoption by the General Assembly of draft resolution A/73/L.44, whose text must be based on a thorough analysis, take into account the current realities and reflect collective approaches by the international community to find effective and lasting solutions to the situation in Afghanistan.

Instead of that, for the first time in some years, the consultations on the draft text ignored not just regional dynamics but also a number of principled Russian concerns that it would have been no trouble to consider. Given the lack of consensus, we propose that the draft resolution be put to a vote, since we cannot support it. The text has a great deal to say about the progress that has been made in normalizing the situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, when the real situation in the country is actually quite different, as the Security Council mission to Kabul in particular confirmed. We have seen the situation deteriorate year after year,

and frankly we have a host of questions about who is responsible for the current situation in Afghanistan. We still have not received any objective reports on the concrete outcomes of the international coalition's 17-year battle against terrorism and drug trafficking. It is regrettable that during the work on the draft resolution a number of delegations simply ignored the objective reality of the growing threat that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses to security not just in Afghanistan but its neighbours, including States in Central Asia, despite the fact that the presence of ISIL's fighters is a harsh reality that must not be downplayed or merely ignored.

We were disappointed by a number of delegations' unwillingness to take objective account of the role and outcomes of the Moscow format consultations, which have become an important platform for launching focused negotiations to advance the national reconciliation process. Among other things, on 9 November an important meeting took place in Moscow between representatives of Kabul and the Taliban. In our view, that represents an unwillingness to genuinely help shift the efforts to mobilize the intra-Afghan dialogue to a practical level. We firmly believe that our common task, in agreeing on the kind of texts dealing with regional crises such as the conflict in Afghanistan, should first and foremost be to avoid gaps between United Nations decisions and the realities of a region. This unwillingness to reflect the real picture will lead to a dead end that will not only not promote a settlement but will undermine confidence in the General Assembly's decisions. For future consultations on draft resolutions, we would like to once again ask penholders to take objective account of the principled comments and concerns of all delegations, not just specific countries.

In conclusion, we should emphasize that the Russian delegation has actively and consistently supported the Afghan people's desire for lasting peace in their country. Russia and Afghanistan are bound by time-tested friendly relations that correspond to our countries' national interests and promote stable, multifaceted development in the whole region and the world in general.

We greatly appreciate the heroism and courage of Afghanistan's armed forces and pay due tribute to all who have died fighting terrorist threats. However, it will be impossible to stabilize Afghanistan and resolve its problems without a comprehensive approach on

the part of the international community. We are ready to continue to work to improve the coordination of all States' action in the interests of ensuring peace in Afghanistan.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan on a point of order.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): I take the floor to explain our position on the proposal of the Russian delegation. Our delegation would like to express its deep regret at the Russian delegation's request for a vote on this year's draft resolution (A/73/L.44) on the situation in Afghanistan.

The resolution on the situation in Afghanistan has been adopted by consensus every year since its inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly. In the past few years it has continued to garner strong consensus support in the General Assembly, reflecting the international community's commitment to assisting our people in overcoming decades of conflict and achieving a durable peace and stability.

As always, the negotiations on this year's draft resolution were inclusive and ably led by the delegation of Germany as facilitator. During the course of negotiations, delegations presented views and proposals that were carefully considered and deliberated on. The various stakeholders, particularly Afghanistan, demonstrated a great degree of flexibility in order to achieve consensus on related issues that conform to the needs and priorities of Afghanistan. As late as last night we did our best to reach out to our Russian colleagues. The main objective of the process was to maintain the essence of last year's resolution 72/10 while incorporating the many important developments that have transpired over the past year in Afghanistan.

This year's draft resolution reflects those developments, while reaffirming the international community's continued support. The Russian delegation expressed concern about three points. The first was the reference in the draft resolution to the Moscow format consultations, the second was about the threat posed by Da'esh and similar terrorist groups, and the third was the reference to NATO's continued support role in Afghanistan in helping to enhance the capacity of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through commitments made at the Brussels and

Warsaw conferences. I will touch briefly on each of those three points.

First, Afghanistan has been clear in welcoming all regional and international processes in support of our Afghan-owned and -led peace efforts. However, we have taken the clear position that all such initiatives should serve to reinforce the centrality of Afghan ownership and leadership of our peace efforts aimed at bringing an end to the current conflict.

This year's draft resolution includes a reference to the Moscow format consultations, based on agreed language in the Geneva communiqué endorsed a little less than two weeks ago in the presence of all delegations, including that of the Russian Federation. Along with a large group of countries, we were therefore not able to agree with language modifications on the Moscow format that deviated from the language agreed on in Geneva. Moreover, while the Moscow meeting represented a development, it took place in a way that contradicted the principle of transparency, since four of the five Taliban members who travelled to Moscow did so without a travel-ban exemption from the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

Secondly, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces are on the front line of the fight against various terrorist groups that have come from abroad, including Da'esh and its affiliates. The progress that our forces have made in combating such groups, particularly Da'esh, has reached new levels, and those groups have suffered heavy setbacks on the battlefield, resulting in a substantially diminished presence in various parts of the country, including the north. We therefore opted to retain agreed language from last year's resolution that reflected the threat of Da'esh without exaggerating the reality of the situation on the ground.

Thirdly, Afghanistan is engaged with various international partners for security and stability, including NATO, which provides a significant portion of security support and training for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. In that regard, various paragraphs of the draft resolution were streamlined to produce a more focused text, including some references to NATO, at the proposal of a number of delegations, including the Russian Federation. Any

additional changes would therefore not be acceptable to Afghanistan and our relevant international partners.

The representative of the Russian Federation reminded us of the Security Council's visit to Kabul in January, about 11 months ago, where I was present when the Russian delegation, seated at a dining table with our President, pledged to improve coordination and consensus among the members of the Security Council, with a focus on improving security and development in Afghanistan. We had been looking forward to seeing further cooperation with the Russian Federation reflected in the draft resolution.

We once again express our regret at the Russian Federation's request for a vote, which suggests an intention to play a non-constructive role with respect to the international community's consensus and support for Afghanistan. We therefore call on all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution, in keeping with the long-standing support of the General Assembly and the international community for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany on a point of order.

Mr. Licharz (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement on a point of order made by the representative of Afghanistan, who very ably described the process of preparing draft resolution A/73/L.44, which is before us today, and the substantive points that were incorporated during that long and inclusive process. Without repeating his points, I want only to reiterate Germany's regret about the Russian Federation's request that the draft resolution be put to a vote. We call on all Member States not only to support the draft resolution but in doing that to support the Afghan people and Government.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I just briefly want to ascertain the point of order on which the delegations of Afghanistan and Germany have just spoken. The Russian delegation made a statement explaining our vote before the voting and requesting a decision on that vote. There was no violation of the order of the meeting, which is why I assume that the delegations of Afghanistan and Germany were speaking in explanation of vote before

the voting and not on a point of order. Would you please clarify that, Sir?

The Acting President: In response to the question from the delegation of the Russian Federation, I refer the Assembly to rule 88 of its rules of procedure, which states that the President shall not permit the proposer of a proposal to explain his vote on his own proposal. The delegations of Afghanistan and Germany utilized that rule in making their statements.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/73/L.44, entitled “The situation in Afghanistan”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You, Sir, referred to rule 88 of the General Assembly’s rules of procedure, which states that after the President has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order. As I understand it, you had not announced the beginning of the voting, and we made our statement explaining our vote before the voting and asking for draft resolution A/73/L.44 to be put to a vote. It is therefore incorrect to say that the delegations of Afghanistan and Germany were speaking on a point of order in accordance with rule 88 of the rules of procedure. Those delegations were speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, because the vote had not yet been announced.

The Acting President: The statement of the Russian Federation is noted and will be included in the record of the meeting.

The Assembly will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/73/L.44, entitled “The situation in Afghanistan”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/73/L.44, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia,

Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and United Arab Emirates.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/73/L.44. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Libya, Russian Federation, Zimbabwe

Draft resolution A/73/L.44 was adopted by 124 votes to none, with 3 abstentions (resolution 73/88).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Lie Cheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The adoption of resolution 73/88, on the situation in Afghanistan, contributes to demonstrating the support of the international community for the people and the Government of Afghanistan and will help to encourage the National Unity Government to make continued efforts to promote socioeconomic development and national reconciliation. It will also contribute to enhancing economic cooperation and interconnectivity

in the region and helping Afghanistan to participate in the regional economic integration process.

China is not fully satisfied with parts of the text of the resolution just adopted, which, on a number of important issues, failed to maintain the consensus among Member States that had been reached in the past. During consultations on the draft resolution, the important concerns of a number of Member States were not accommodated and, as a result, a recorded vote was requested. China would like to express its disappointment in that regard. Nevertheless, on the basis of its support for the early achievement of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, China voted in favour of the resolution.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 40?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.