



# General Assembly

Seventieth session

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Official Records

*President:* Mr. Lykketoft . . . . . (Denmark)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 39

### The situation in Afghanistan

#### Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/359)

**Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan): At the outset, I would like to thank all Member States for their unanimous support for the draft resolution entitled “The situation in Afghanistan” (A/70/L.23). We are particularly grateful to Ambassador Harald Braun of Germany and his team for their hard work as penholder and their generous facilitation of the negotiations. Given the current global context, with Afghanistan at the forefront of the war against terrorism, unanimous global consensus and support are crucial to the triumph of the universal values of tolerance and coexistence over terror and violent extremism. We hope this important draft resolution will guide Member States as they address the difficult challenges facing Afghanistan.

Before I elaborate on the situation in Afghanistan today, I would like to invite everyone here to think back to Afghanistan in 2001. Decades of foreign invasions and meddling had resulted in political instability that left behind it a country in ruins. The long road we have travelled together since 2001, with a focus on reconstructing and transforming the country, is incredible. Despite continued challenges, Afghanistan’s overall progress in the past 15 years stands as a symbol

of international cooperation, for which the Afghans are truly grateful. Indeed, we should all be proud of the gains we have made — gains unprecedented in Afghanistan’s history that would not have been possible without the continued support and sacrifice of the United Nations. Right now, it is essential that we work together and focus on the consolidation and sustainability of those gains. Today I stand before the Assembly as the representative of a transformed Afghanistan with a strong popular mandate and high expectations from this world body, the United Nations.

This post-transition year of 2015 has been eventful in every respect for Afghanistan, with enormous challenges, few opportunities and some glimpses of hope for a better future. Security, political stability and the peace process in Afghanistan are interlinked and have a huge impact on national, regional and global stability as well as on the geopolitical architecture generally.

This year has been the bloodiest in Afghanistan since 2001, with a sharp increase in civilian and military casualties. We have come under a high level of attacks from foreign-based Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, better known as Daesh, Hekmatyar’s faction and other extremist groups. This reached its peak in late September with the Taliban’s temporary capture of the city of Kunduz, where they and hundreds of international terrorists unleashed a reign of terror on the population. The foreign orchestrators of this year’s ferocious attacks had taken advantage of three factors — first, the withdrawal of the international

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forces and the terrorists' strong belief that their attacks could bring about the collapse of the political system; secondly, delays and a lack of coordination in Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations with Afghanistan, which allowed some international terrorists to enter our territory; and, thirdly, Afghanistan's preoccupation with its 2014 political transition, involving two rounds of elections, which disrupted governance to some extent.

Along with those threats, in 2015 Afghanistan continued to face regular attacks from Pakistani security forces across the Durand Line, in clear violation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a result of heavy artillery shelling in our eastern provinces, many civilians and border police have lost their lives and our citizens live in fear. With reference to Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, we have discussed these issues with the Government of Pakistan, but so far no action has been taken to rectify the situation.

This year, the Afghan National Security Forces have been dealing with those challenges on their own, with international partners playing only a supporting role. Given the magnitude of the challenges, however, our forces are overstretched, with our law enforcement officers and police heavily engaged in the war on terror. We have had good success when provided with air cover, but our lack of effective air forces and other enablers has led to high casualties. Thanks to the arrival of cold weather, the fighting season has to some extent come to a temporary halt.

The Afghan National Security Forces have managed to keep Afghanistan mostly intact and have repelled almost all attacks with courage, competence and resilience. Our national resolve was tested by the Kunduz incident, but it has only strengthened the bond between civilians and our brave defence forces. While the terrorist groups may have made some gains in the short term, they have no chance of holding their ground and sustaining those gains. Naturally, the Afghan National Security Forces need sustainability and the right enablers in order to confront the enemy. In that regard, we welcome the announcement by the United States in October of its willingness to support our security forces and counter-terrorism operations beyond 2016, and we hope that other NATO members will add their support during the forthcoming meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels, helping to further prevent safe havens for terrorist groups and

enhance NATO's enduring security partnership with Afghanistan.

It is important to note that without foreign planning, logistical support, safe havens and an abundance of deadly weapons and suicide bombers, the Afghan elements of the Taliban would be just another political group whose grievances could be easily addressed by the Constitution and through legitimate political processes. External support for the Taliban and other terrorist groups is primarily motivated by regional rivalry, based on one State's excessive and unnecessary anxiety and suspicion about a rival's otherwise ordinary relations with Afghanistan. That has resulted in an unsavoury policy of using violent proxies to pursue political objectives, creating a significant lack of trust between Pakistan and Afghanistan and providing the oxygen that terror needs to breathe.

The peace process can bear fruit only if we see a paradigm shift and such issues are addressed. We appeal to Pakistan to increase its direct bilateral contacts with Afghanistan and away from the focus of tensions with other States. It is time to establish a special platform whereby genuine representatives of the two countries can address this trust deficit and move towards friendly, sustainable and neighbourly cooperation. Only then will we see progress on the peace process.

Afghanistan has taken a number of initiatives aimed at building trust with Pakistan. A year ago, President Ghani travelled to Pakistan during one of his first overseas visits. In an unprecedented move, we sent a small team of security officers to Pakistan for training. We were ready to negotiate standard operating procedures for security management of the Durand Line and to welcome coordination of military operations. We presented a white paper reflecting our views on improving relations between the two countries. In response, and facilitated by China and the United States, Pakistan offered to assist with the Murree talks between representatives of the Taliban leader and the Afghan Government. However, it soon became apparent that we were negotiating with the representatives of a leader who had died two years earlier in a hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. It is therefore clear that there has been a lack of reciprocity for our trust-building initiatives.

The National Unity Government of Afghanistan is currently following a two-track policy, first by pursuing the peace process through regional and international

efforts, and, secondly, by increasing Afghanistan's security capacity so as to enable us to defend our people and keep the region and the world safe. Implementing most of the provisions of the September 2014 agreement on the National Unity Government has already improved Afghanistan's political stability. As President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah make further progress with the agreement's implementation, we are seeing continued improvements in the security and development sectors.

Good governance, respect for the rule of law and promoting and protecting the human rights of all are key to enhancing our nation's internal capabilities. Restoring the credibility of the electoral process is integral to the cause of democratization. This year we established a Special Electoral Reform Commission and have already begun to implement its recommendations at the governmental level.

Fighting corruption and restoring the integrity of Afghanistan's justice system is important to our Government. A reliable judiciary that responds to the needs of its people, regardless of ethnicity, language or gender, is critical for any democracy. With that in mind, we have initiated a systematic performance review of the judiciary across the country. Already this year a significant number of female judges have taken the oath of office.

Promoting women to positions of leadership is especially important, given the grave human rights abuses they have suffered in Afghanistan. Our people have experienced some terrible brutalities this year, including citizens' beheadings by terrorist groups and women being stoned to death. Women need protection from the continuing violence they face, and that requires increased access to the necessary resources. We are committed to implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

We are also focused on reforming our delivery of services in the areas of preventive health care, quality education and water and electricity supplies, as well as our provision of services for returnees and internally displaced persons.

Our issues of social and economic development cannot be addressed if we do not tackle our fiscal gap, our 36 per cent poverty rate and our unemployment rate of around 50 per cent. They are the current top priorities for our self-reliance reform plan. Our economic

situation has deteriorated thanks to a shrinking wartime economy, the departure of foreign troops and reductions in foreign aid. We are asking Member States to renew their financial support so that we can continue to utilize funds in ways that can generate more income for our people and increase our national revenue. Streamlining procurement has already brought transparency. We have launched a comprehensive national employment programme focused on generating jobs through a series of agricultural, irrigation, livestock, energy, housing, environmental and rural development initiatives. We are encouraging the efforts of small and medium-sized enterprises and continuing to work to attract investment with the aim of boosting local productivity and ultimately transforming our import-consuming economy into a locally productive one.

Four categories of our citizens are currently associated with the so-called refugee crisis — first, those who have recently arrived in Europe, where they make up the second largest group of refugees after Syrians; secondly, long-time Afghan refugees in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran; thirdly, those currently arranging to leave the country for security or economic reasons; and, fourthly, members of the Afghan diaspora settled in developed countries but living in fear of retribution for recent terrorist attacks and increasing Islamophobia. With regard to the first two categories, the obligation of host Governments with respect to the protection of refugees under the 1951 Convention is paramount. Concerning the third category, the international community needs to invest more in bringing peace, stability and economic prosperity to Afghanistan, because that will prevent the outflow of our nationals from the country. The fourth category requires building a united front among Member States in countering violent extremism and terrorism and denying the extremists' call for a clash between Islam and the West. President Ghani is currently in Europe, shoring up international coordination in the war against terror, in bilateral relations and in the proper treatment of the refugees.

Given Afghanistan's geopolitical location among regional and global Powers, regional cooperation through continued security, political, economic and social cooperation with the its neighbours and near-neighbouring States is of importance to us. Currently, Afghanistan is leading two regional dialogue processes, namely, the politically and security-oriented Istanbul Process — better known as the Heart of Asia

Process — with its fifth ministerial conference to be held in Islamabad next week, and the economically oriented Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which had its sixth successful ministerial conference in Kabul last September. We are also pursuing common regional objectives through existing regional organizations and programmes.

The connection linking criminality, terrorism, and opium production is obvious, as the Taliban and various international terrorist groups benefit from it. We recently adopted Afghanistan's National Drug Action Plan, which integrates alternative forms of development, eradication, drug treatment and prevention programmes within the context of the broader effort aimed at furthering good governance, economic development and security. However, I would like to recall that the narcotics issue is a global threat, and therefore increased cooperation among Afghanistan, its neighbours and international partners is essential for an effective drug eradication strategy.

In conclusion, at a time of heightened conflict, with daily assaults and casualties, it is difficult to have patience in the slow process of transformation. But it is clear that our country has travelled a long way since its days of darkness. Just as Afghanistan has stood since 2001 as a symbol of international cooperation, a failed Afghanistan could entail far-reaching repercussions globally. With that in mind, I want to reiterate my sincere gratitude to every Member State for supporting Afghanistan on its path to democracy, freedom and development. I want to remind everyone that our transformation decade has just begun. Peace in Afghanistan does not begin or end in Kabul, it requires sustained commitment on the part of regional and international partners to work collectively to achieve that objective.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Vrailas** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I also thank all the delegations that participated in the consultations on draft resolution A/70/L.23, in particular the German team for so ably facilitating the negotiations. We look forward to its adoption once again by consensus.

Afghanistan has made considerable political, security, economic and developmental progress over the past decade. The General Assembly draft resolution highlights many of those advances, for which the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people deserve much credit. But the gains made are fragile and major challenges remain. In our statement at the Security Council debate on Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.7526), we highlighted the role of institutions in Afghanistan and of the new self-reliance and mutual accountability framework, which provides important benchmarks and time lines for deliverables in key priority areas. That will allow for stepping up the pace of reforms, ensuring more effective implementation, and lead to greater aid effectiveness.

Continuous insecurity threatens the progress made in stabilizing the country and remains a real concern. The past months have seen a new spike in the exodus of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan. It is all the more urgent that the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community and all regional stakeholders, provide for a secure and stable environment. It is crucial that the Afghan people will be able to regain confidence in the future. Implementing reforms to create economic opportunities will be as important as improving the State's capacity to deliver basic services, to maintain human rights standards and to agree on credible and timely reforms of the electoral system.

Insecurity and instability are also fuelled by the illicit production and trafficking of narcotics, which remain an important concern for the European Union and have severe consequences on Afghanistan itself, including high-consumption rates within the population, the broadening of the illicit economy, the corruption of institutions and the financing of international terrorism. The European Union welcomes the recent adoption of Afghanistan's National Drug Action Plan and encourages its swift and effective implementation. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue to pursue a balanced and integrated approach, with the full support of the international community, and in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime and other relevant regional frameworks, such as the Paris Pact initiative.

The European Union remains committed to Afghanistan and, as we have already announced, we are honoured to co-host the next ministerial conference in Brussels from 4 to 5 October 2016. Continued international engagement remains a prerequisite for Afghanistan's future. The Brussels 2016 conference will be an important catalyst for further mobilizing much-needed political and financial support from the wider region, as well as inside Afghanistan, with the help of international partners. That exceptional level of international support will need to be matched by an equally strong commitment to reform and change on the part of the Government of Afghanistan. The consequences of disengagement, as witnessed in other regions, are stark reminders of the costs that we otherwise face.

Respect for human rights, in particular with regard to the situation of women and girls, has advanced considerably over the past decade. That deserves praise. But much remains to be done, and that demands continued efforts. The European Union welcomes the launching of Afghanistan's national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, for the period 2015-2022, and fully supports the National Unity Government in that endeavour, having set in motion a special support programme for its implementation. We must protect the gains made by Afghan women since the fall of the Taliban regime, because their active involvement in rebuilding the State remains crucial. With a view towards enhanced women's empowerment and full and equal participation in all sectors of society, our wish is to see women actively involved in negotiations on the future of their country. It is also significant that the General Assembly draft resolution recognizes the risks faced by human rights defenders in Afghanistan. Those individuals, groups and civil society organizations play a central role in protecting and promoting the rights of others, often at great personal risk. The draft resolution rightly condemns violence used against them.

The economic outlook for Afghanistan remains mixed, after impressive progress over the past decade. The sources for aggregate demand will be scarcer in the future, and public investment and services will remain an important driver of growth, along with the related international transfers. It is all the more critical to further improve the business and investment climate

and to foster the development of intraregional trade and infrastructure, which will provide benefits for all countries in the region. We support all efforts towards maintaining and improving those regional relations.

In order to break the vicious circles of fragility, poverty, violence and extremism, there is no alternative to increased regional cooperation, from trade and energy cooperation to protecting minorities and enhancing human rights, as well as combating jointly the militant groups that murder indiscriminately with no respect for international borders. All stakeholders in the region will need to invest real political and financial capital to that end. The European Union will continue to fully support the Heart of Asia Process and looks forward to the ministerial meeting in Islamabad on 9 December.

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

**Mr. Samvelian** (Armenia) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia. The member States of the CSTO express their concern about the continued worsening of the situation in Afghanistan, in particular in its northern regions, with regard to the growing activities of groups affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in that country. Against the backdrop of a reduction in the number of foreign contingents, the armed conflict in Afghanistan is intensifying with renewed vigour, which is leading to many civilian casualties.

We call on the Afghan authorities, with the assistance of international donors and suppliers of military contingents, to step up their battle against the production and distribution of Afghan narcotics. We further encourage the promotion of the process of Afghan-led peace negotiations, in compliance with Security Council sanctions regimes and the triad of principles of national reconciliation. We expect to see the continued and progressive development of

cooperation between Afghanistan and the secretariat of the CSTO and the member States of the organization.

**Mr. Braun** (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union during this debate.

It has been an honour for Germany to act once more as the penholder of draft resolution A/70/L.23, which is a vivid expression of support for Afghanistan and its people by the entire membership of the United Nations.

The first year of the transformation decade has posed many challenges for the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan. The road to self-reliance will not be without setbacks, but the international community will stand by our Afghan partners on their way towards a stable and prosperous future. Together we have achieved many positive steps during the past 14 years. Life expectancy has increased considerably, maternal deaths have declined significantly and 9 million boys and girls now have access to primary education. We are determined to safeguard those achievements. We will discuss further steps with President Ashraf Ghani, whom we will welcome to Germany tomorrow for an official visit.

At the beginning of the year, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces took over full responsibility for the security of their country. They have shown remarkable resilience. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the deteriorating security situation in some areas. We deeply deplore the growing number of civilian lives lost due to cowardly terrorist acts and incessant fighting. We also deplore the many casualties among the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in their fight for law and order against anti-Government factions. The difficult security situation is one of the main reasons behind the rising number of Afghans leaving their country — young, educated citizens who are badly needed for the reconstruction and economic development of their country. Halting and reversing that brain drain is in the interest of all, but especially of Afghanistan itself, which has to provide its population with the prospect of a future in their own country.

We therefore strongly encourage the Government of Afghanistan to make further progress on its reform agenda. The implementation of political and economic reforms, as well as the fight against corruption, are of crucial importance, as is the core principle of mutual accountability. Germany remains committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan. We will continue our

financial assistance and our support for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in the years ahead. Last week, the German Parliament voted to continue our military engagement in Afghanistan in the framework of NATO's Resolute Support Mission for another year and to increase our troop level to almost 1,000 soldiers.

Sustainable peace in Afghanistan cannot be brought about by military means alone; only an inclusive political process can achieve that. We therefore welcome the direct peace talks that have taken place this year and urge all Afghan actors to join the process of peace and reconciliation without further delay. We especially call on Afghanistan's neighbouring States to lend their unreserved support to a durable political solution in Afghanistan and to stand united against violence and terrorism. A stable Afghanistan requires stability in the greater region, and vice versa. We commend the Government of Afghanistan for actively strengthening its ties with its neighbours — for example, in the framework of the Heart of Asia Process, which Germany and other friends will continue to support.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Germany will remain committed to supporting Afghanistan during its crucial transition period, and we call on the entire membership to do the same.

**Ms. Sison** (United States of America): I thank colleagues for their united support for Afghanistan. Today I would like to emphasize the importance of the progress made by the Government of Afghanistan and the commitment of the international community to the Afghan people. The road to peace and stability for Afghanistan remains challenging. The Afghan people are still threatened by the Taliban, international terrorists and other violent extremist groups and criminals. Afghan's electoral system is in need of serious reform. Economic growth must be increased. Corruption and human rights abuses continue to be matters of grave concern. Yet even in the face of such challenges, it is clear that extraordinary gains continue to be made in Afghanistan. Those gains must and will be maintained.

That was the focus of a high-level event convened by Secretary of State John Kerry, Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi and Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly meetings. The international community must remain committed to complement

advances made by the Afghan Government and support a path to peace, stability and economic growth across the region. Governance and development will remain the foundation for stability and progress in Afghanistan. We will continue to support President Ghani and the National Unity Government as they pursue critical reforms. We welcome the appointment of new provincial governors, and encourage President Ghani to continue his work to combat corruption, strengthen institutions, complete reforms and uphold the rule of law.

On the economic front, the Government has made it a priority to expand connectivity across the region, which we welcome. Numerous energy, trade and infrastructure initiatives are under way, including the CASA-1000 electricity transmission line. It is our hope that, at Heart of Asia conference to be held in Islamabad in December, we will all consider further ways to make progress on a comprehensive regional economic agenda.

As President Obama said last month, our commitment to Afghanistan and its people endures. Our forces remain engaged in two specific but critical missions, training, advising and assisting Afghan forces and conducting and supporting counter-terrorism operations to ensure that Afghanistan will never again serve as a safe haven for terrorism. Draft resolution A/70/L.23 is an example of our shared commitment, and we look forward to its adoption. It is critical that the international community both reaffirm its commitment to a prosperous and peaceful future for Afghanistan and send a strong message of support to its Government, and most of all to its people, who have suffered so much.

Over the next year, my Government looks forward to working with the diverse coalition of Afghanistan's friends and partners to chart the future of international security, economic and political commitments to Afghanistan. Two conferences, in Warsaw in July and in Brussels in October, will serve as the focal points for that engagement. The Afghan people's unyielding spirit and strong commitment to a better future for their children are reminders of what a strong Afghan Government and international support can accomplish. Not long ago, Afghan girls received little or no formal education. Today, millions of girls sit in classrooms. That matters, because access to education for girls has proved to be one of the most important measuring sticks for progress in any country. It matters as well that Afghan women, once confined to their homes, now

serve as Cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, judges, security officers and business leaders. It matters that a whole new generation of Afghans is eager for the chance to move their country forward, to find a place in the global community and the global economy, and to innovate and to start new businesses that will create employment and prosperity for decades to come.

**Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan):** We appreciate the delegation of Germany's efforts in steering the negotiations on the annual draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on Afghanistan, which Pakistan will co-sponsor and the General Assembly will adopt.

The people of Afghanistan have endured conflict, civil war, foreign invasion and instability for decades. They deserve the earliest restoration of peace and security. Pakistan condemns the violence and terrorism in Afghanistan. There is no justification for attacks against innocent children, women and men. Unfortunately, the challenges of restoring peace and security in Afghanistan remain imposing. Indeed, the security situation has deteriorated further with the escalation in violence and the significant increase in civilian casualties.

Recent military developments in Kunduz have illustrated the vulnerabilities of the Afghan Security Forces and their continued reliance on the international military presence, at least in the short term. Afghanistan's own internal report on the Kunduz setback highlights some of the shortcomings, including a lack of coordination and intelligence failures, which need to be addressed. It is best that the Afghan Government not externalize its internal weaknesses, but seek to resolutely tackle them. The precarious security environment is further aggravated by bandit militias, competing terrorist groups, including Daesh, narcotics production and smuggling.

There are two paths to peace in Afghanistan: a military victory against the insurgency or a negotiated peace. A military victory has proved elusive for over 14 years; it is unlikely to be achieved in the future. The clear consensus of the international community is that a negotiated peace is the only viable option to bring peace, stability and development to Afghanistan. A negotiated peace and national reconciliation are all the more vital to prevent the emergence of Daesh in Afghanistan and the region. But the Afghan parties themselves appear to have moved away from the international consensus that peace can be achieved only through dialogue and

negotiations. A unified policy in support of a peace process is lacking within the Afghan National Unity Government. It needs to bridge its internal differences, reinforce its unity and clarify its policy regarding the peace process.

Following the announcement of Mullah Omar's demise, the Afghan Taliban have reverted to their default option of fighting rather than talking, leading to a surge in insurgent attacks. The internal struggle within the Afghan Taliban has made the revival of the peace process far more difficult. Further fragmentation of the Taliban can intensify the insurgency, and possibly even enable the rise of Daesh.

Without an acknowledgement by both sides that there is no alternative path to peace in Afghanistan than an unconditional dialogue, it will be difficult to revive the peace process. At President Ashraf Ghani's request, Pakistan facilitated the first direct talks between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban in Murree. We did so in good faith. Both sides described the first session as an encouraging beginning. The process stalled after the revelation of Mullah Omar's death and due to the ensuing succession struggle within the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan remains ready to assist in reviving an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. My Prime Minister reiterated that to President Ghani earlier today when they met in Paris. But Pakistan can do so only once formally requested by the Afghan Government. Pakistan will also do so once the anti-Pakistan rhetoric ceases from Kabul.

There can be no doubt regarding Pakistan's sincerity in seeking peace within and with Afghanistan. Our ties are extensive, intense and inextricable. Apart from the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan and its people have suffered the most from the 35 years of wars, violence and terrorism in Afghanistan. Pakistan is the primary victim of terrorism. We have lost tens of thousands of lives — civilians, women, children and soldiers — to terrorist violence. Our resolve to root out the scourge of terrorism from our territory is clear and visible. Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb is the largest and most effective anti-terrorism campaign anywhere in the world, involving over 180,000 of our security forces. We have and will continue to target all terrorist groups. We have made substantial progress in cleansing our territory of terrorists. Our operation will conclude only once our objectives have been accomplished. Those objectives will not be fully achieved until the sanctuaries and safe havens of those terrorists who

have fled our operation to Afghanistan have been eliminated. We cannot allow our people or our soldiers to be targeted by cross-border attacks launched from those safe havens in Afghanistan.

When Pakistan initiated its counter-terrorism operation in North Waziristan, we called for coordinated action from Kabul to prevent their escape into Afghanistan and resort to cross border-attacks from Afghan territory. We have not received such cooperation so far. I would like to reiterate our call for such cooperation again from this rostrum. Reciprocity has not been lacking on Pakistan's part, but on the part of Kabul.

Pakistan also calls on the international community to resolve the problem of the more than 3 million Afghan refugees who still reside in Pakistan. We have been exemplary hosts of those refugees for over three decades. Those who are today erecting barricades in Europe against refugees from Syria and other conflict zones should not expect Pakistan to host the millions of Afghans indefinitely and without international support. The world community must facilitate the dignified repatriation and resettlement of Afghan refugees by first, empowering the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees through enhanced assistance; secondly, by earmarking dedicated resources for repatriation and rehabilitation; and, thirdly, by encouraging the Afghan Government to pay special attention to livelihood and housing in its planning programmes to absorb returning refugees.

The upcoming fifth ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia Process, to be held in Islamabad on 9 December, which will be jointly inaugurated by President Ashraf Ghani and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is a manifestation of my country's determination to support peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. We hope that it will renew international focus on Afghanistan and restore trust and mutual confidence among the States of the region.

Pakistan remains committed to the principles of peace for development and a peaceful neighbourhood. We made a good start by rebuilding our bilateral relations with Afghanistan last year after President Ghani's inauguration. We stand ready to resume that positive momentum. We believe that is what our peoples want as well. We must build our common destiny in accordance with the wishes of our peoples.



**Mr. Yoshikawa** (Japan): Allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to the President for convening this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Harald Braun of Germany and his colleagues for effectively guiding the consultations on draft resolution A/70/L.23, which is to be adopted soon. I also take this opportunity to thank the newly arrived Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal of Afghanistan, and his colleagues for playing an active role in achieving consensus on the draft resolution. The draft resolution includes very important points, but it is very long — with 23 pages and 103 paragraphs. To be frank, it can be shortened next time.

Three years ago in Tokyo, we agreed to the principle of mutual accountability between Afghanistan and the international community in order to realize Afghanistan's self-reliance. On 5 September in Kabul, the Tokyo mutual accountability framework was successfully reiterated in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. I welcome the fact that the National Unity Government of Afghanistan has reaffirmed its commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities.

Japan has been one of the strongest supporters of Afghanistan. As a former Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I have always believed that Afghanistan has great potential for realizing self-reliance. The international community and Afghanistan must continue working hand-in-hand towards that goal. While I share many of the concerns expressed by previous speakers on the political and security situation in Afghanistan, I would like to focus on three key points for achieving Afghanistan's self-reliance.

My first point is on the importance of strengthening agriculture, which is a key industry for generating jobs and income. In 2003, Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, a Japanese medical doctor, launched a project in the Gamberi Desert in Nangarhar province, with the aim of transforming it into fertile land. By utilizing centuries-old traditional Japanese irrigation technology combined with Afghanistan's own traditional methods, this Green Ground project succeeded in establishing a highly effective irrigation system, which brought about greater wheat production. Increased food production has resulted in better health for the region's people and greater job opportunities. Vastly increased job opportunities have led to greater social stability and a significant reduction

in crime. That extraordinary programme was initially funded solely by a non-governmental organization. In 2010, the Japan International Cooperation Agency joined in, providing technical and financial assistance. The Government of Japan is now looking into the possibility of cooperating with the Afghan Government and other organizations to introduce such an irrigation system to other areas of Afghanistan. That story is a vivid example of Afghanistan's potential for realizing self-reliance.

My second point is that regional cooperation, with improved regional connectivity, will provide a stronger foundation for economic growth. That point was echoed at the sixth regional economic cooperation conference on Afghanistan, which took place in September in Kabul. Afghanistan is rich in agricultural and mineral resources, but they are not fully accessed or utilized due to many obstacles. The underdeveloped transportation infrastructure, both within and outside Afghanistan, is one such obstacle. This year, Japan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) jointly promoted preliminary studies on improving interconnectivity in the region. One such study focused on a Torghundi-Herat railway to connect western Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, and hopefully open the door to new economic opportunities. The ADB and Japan are also studying the Salang Pass project, which is a key location for the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan corridor. It is one of the projects of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Programme. The obstacle in that regard is the lack of appropriate border controls. When effectively installed, border controls not only greatly enhance regional economic activities, they also prevent illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, from taking place.

My third point is the importance of human resources. Japan has constructed or renovated nearly 1,000 schools over the course of a decade. It is also worth noting that, in cooperation with UNESCO, Japan has been implementing literacy programmes for over 1 million Afghans since 2008. In addition, over 400 young Government officials have received post-graduate education in Japan. Human resources can lay the foundation for Afghanistan's economic development and self-reliance.

Japan is determined to continue its assistance to Afghanistan so that the Afghan Government can realize self-reliance and so that all neighbouring countries can benefit. Japan's support for Afghanistan is part of its policy of making a proactive contribution to peace

based on the principle of international cooperation. As Afghanistan makes a crucial transition towards self-reliance, we stand ready to offer our support in cooperation with the international community.

**Mr. Wang Min** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the report (A/70/359) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and supports the General Assembly's adoption of draft resolution A/70/L.23.

As we speak, Afghanistan is at the beginning of a decade of transformation. Under the leadership of the National Unity Government, Afghanistan has embarked upon a new historic journey of State-building and economic development. Afghanistan is at a critical juncture of a three-pronged transition, including politics, security and the economy, and its people are faced with not only a valuable opportunity for achieving peace and the development of the country, but also a variety of great challenges. In order to advance peace and reconstruction and ultimately achieve sustained security, order, development and prosperity, unremitting efforts from all walks of life of Afghanistan and continued constructive support and assistance from the international community are necessary. I wish to underscore the following points.

First, it is essential to respect the ownership of the Afghan people. Since the inception, the Afghan National Unity Government has been working hard to maintain stability, promote economic development and steadily advance the rule of law and has achieved positive results in that regard. In the final analysis, the Afghan endeavour must be assumed by the Afghan people themselves. Only by maintaining Afghan ownership can the Afghan people control their own destiny and become their true masters. It is our conviction that the Afghan people have the capacity and the wisdom to assume responsibility for their own development and eventually achieve peace and stability. The international community, for its part, should judiciously respect Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, refrain from meddling in its internal affairs and support the Afghan people in their efforts to achieve security and stability.

Secondly, it is essential to resolutely promote the political reconciliation process. Broad-based and inclusive political reconciliation is necessary for Afghanistan in order for it to achieve lasting peace and prosperity. China hopes that the various political

factions will put the interests of State-building and development above everything else and actively participate in the political reconciliation process so as to consult one another on matters of import for peace, stability, development and prosperity in Afghanistan. The international community should support and promote a peace and reconciliation process that is owned and led by the Afghan people, while supporting the efforts of the various parties to promote the peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban in an effort to create conducive conditions for achieving peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, it is essential to assist the Afghan Government in capacity-building. The grim security situation in Afghanistan, with exceedingly frequent security incidents, has continued through the recent past. President Xi Jinping pointed out at the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in July that the SCO should address the situation in Afghanistan by strengthening its cooperation with Afghanistan in the security field and assist the Afghan security forces in capacity-building. China supports international regional organizations such as the SCO in helping Afghans to strengthen capacity-building for its national security forces and police departments, bolster an effective response to new security threats and challenges, and create a favourable external environment for Afghanistan's development.

Fourthly, it is essential to support the integration of Afghanistan into the family of nations and expedite its development. As one of the most important countries along the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan used to be a transit hub that connected Central, South and West Asia, with a huge potential for development. China's One Belt, One Road initiative is aimed at promoting interconnectivity among the countries along the route, including Afghanistan, strengthening the interface of their development strategies and attaining their multidimensional, autonomous, balanced and sustainable development. We hope that the international community will work with China and continue its support to Afghanistan for the development of its advantages in terms of geography and resources and to enable it to engage in significant international and regional cooperation in areas such as interconnectivity, energy, transportation and regional trade in an effort to accomplish rapid economic development.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China

and Afghanistan and also coincides with the year of friendly cooperation between the two countries. At the beginning of November, Vice-President of China Li Yuanchao visited Afghanistan, during which an important consensus was reached with Afghan leaders.

In terms of economic development, China will carry out bilateral development cooperation projects and help Afghanistan to formulate its development plans and strengthen its interconnectivity with neighbouring countries. In terms of security and cooperation, China will deepen the counter-terrorism and defence security cooperation between our two countries, while helping Afghanistan improve its counter-terrorism and defence capacity-building. In addition, China will continue to support Afghanistan in improving its relations with its neighbours, while strengthening the cooperation between the two countries within the framework of regional and international mechanisms, not least the SCO.

As a reliable neighbour and a friend of Afghanistan, China stands ready to join the international community in making tireless efforts to jointly push for the early realization of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan so as to enable the Afghan people to ensure their fair share of the fruits of human civilization and progress.

**Ms. Bird** (Australia): As we approach the end of 2015, the challenges facing the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and its international partners are as real as ever, but so too is progress in delivering results for the Afghan people.

The National Unity Government, under the leadership of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, has made valuable gains in a number of areas during its first year in office, including in combatting corruption and enabling economic growth. The endorsement of the Government's Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework in September was an important step in the right direction and laid out a clear path forward for donor engagement with the Afghan Government. The path to successful reform is always a difficult one, and we encourage continued efforts on reform and providing security for the people of Afghanistan.

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces this year took the lead in providing security in Afghanistan, while confronting a determined insurgency. As we recently witnessed in Kunduz,

dangers are never far away. In spite of that, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces have continued to take the fight to the insurgency in the face of heavy losses. We honour all those who gave their lives this year.

Australia welcomes ongoing international support to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. We are committed to supporting Afghan National Defence and Security Forces sustainment, with \$300 million committed through to 2018. We recognize that only through supporting security and stability can development and prosperity come to the Afghan people.

Much has been gained in Afghanistan in the area of human rights, but more remains to be accomplished. The elimination of violence against women and the national action plan for women and peace and security are essential elements of the reform agenda. We urge the Afghan Government to expedite progress on implementation. Australia provides shelter and support to over 2,300 women and girls, and provides training for over 2,800 police and justice-sector officials to uphold women's rights.

Australia is concerned by the extremely high number of civilian casualties this year. Some 9 people were killed and 18 wounded every day. That has had a devastating impact on families and communities. Ordinary Afghans deserve better.

Australia remains committed to supporting Afghanistan. We look to do so in close partnership with a responsive and accountable Afghan Government.

Australia is pleased to again co-sponsor the annual draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on Afghanistan and looks forward to its adoption by consensus.

**Mr. Mukerji** (India): I thank the President for organizing today's debate. I would like to commend the delegation of Germany for coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations that have led to the finalization of the annual General Assembly draft resolution (A/70/L.23), expected to be adopted by consensus. As in the past, India is happy to be a co-sponsor of this draft resolution.

We are happy that Afghanistan's historic political transition remains on course. That is a strong reflection of the patience, forbearance, courage and democratic aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. India is proud

to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner and stands ready to do whatever is within its capacity and means to work with the Afghan Government and its people to realize their common ambition. We share the Afghan people's desire for a strong, independent, united and prosperous Afghanistan. We were happy to host Afghanistan's National Security Adviser and its Deputy Foreign Minister in India in recent weeks to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Our main concern remains that of the security situation in Afghanistan. The latest report of the Secretary-General (A/70/359) substantiates our view that terrorism — not insurgency and not tribal differences or ethnic rivalries — is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. What is alarming is the revelation in recent reports, including the Secretary-General's report, with regard to linkages between intra-terrorist violence between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates with the Taliban. Also disturbing is the statement in paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's latest report that the majority of alleged ISIL-affiliated fighters appear to be drawn from disaffected former members of the Afghan Taliban, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or groups previously associated with Al-Qaida. The recent attacks in Beirut, Syria and Paris all point towards rising extremism and the extension of the arc of terrorism. From here in the Assembly, we urge the Security Council to act against this threat to international peace and security with a sense of urgency and within a defined time frame.

With the increasing spike in terrorist attacks in different parts of the world and ongoing terrorist activity in Afghanistan, my delegation is of the view that there is a strong case to be made for the international community to take a fresh look at the manner in which the drawdown of the international military presence in Afghanistan is happening. The patterns of violence in Afghanistan are mutating, and terrorists are not only attempting to grab territory, but also injecting sectarianism into an already complex situation. At this stage, it is important for the Security Council, which has adopted several resolutions to counter terrorism, which are binding on all Member States under the Charter of the United Nations, to look at ways to paralyse those terrorist organizations. The first step the Council should take is to strengthen the Council's sanctions regime structure in order to effectively impose and implement the restrictions placed on the listed terrorist

organizations so as to deny them sanctuaries and safe haven.

We have taken note of the various steps taken by the Government of Afghanistan, under the leadership of President Ghani, to launch a peace process in Afghanistan. We have also taken note of paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report, in which it is mentioned that the attacks in Kabul, which coincided with the emergence of a new Taliban leadership in early August, led President Ghani to call for urgent action by Pakistan against the Taliban, in particular to prevent the use of its territory to prepare Taliban operations. President Ghani has also called for effective and verifiable action against the Haqqani Network. We support a truly Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and the internationally accepted red lines.

As a developing country, we would like to focus on the fact that Afghanistan faces huge development challenges and, in view of the fragile security situation, it is important for Afghanistan to have a supportive, stable political environment for growth and development. The international community recently adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which provides a platform for our collective fight for a sustainable world without poverty and hunger. The people of Afghanistan cannot be left behind in our commitment to implement Agenda 2030. A special responsibility in that context lies with the Security Council to ensure that the threats to international peace and security related to the situation in Afghanistan are dealt with on a priority basis, so that Agenda 2030 can be effectively implemented in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan will be able to achieve its optimal economic potential only if it is allowed freedom of transit to major markets in its region, including in South Asia. We regret that this freedom continues to be denied to Afghanistan. India has opened its markets to all Afghan exports and is willing to receive Afghan trucks on its territory. India remains committed to greater regional integration and is open to joining and supporting all such regional initiatives, including the expansion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

In conclusion, India sincerely hopes that the huge efforts of the Afghan people and of the international community over more than a decade for a successful political transition will provide a solid base for

Afghanistan's stability in the future. India will stand by the people and the Government of Afghanistan in all their endeavours. We reiterate our support to the efforts of the international community leading to a peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan.

**Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain)** (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Saikal for his intervention on the occasion of his first participation in this annual debate as Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. I wish him every success in fulfilling his important role and assure him that he can always count on the support and cooperation of the delegation of Spain.

I also wish to express my delegation's satisfaction that, in the coming days, the General Assembly is set to adopt, as it does every year, a new draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on the situation in Afghanistan. The adoption by consensus of the draft resolution should be interpreted as a renewed expression of the commitment of the entire international community, represented in this Assembly, to Afghanistan, its present and its future; to its progress and to supporting it in its struggle against the challenges it faces, which are our challenges too; in short, the commitment to safeguarding all the important gains achieved by Afghanistan in the past 14 years with the assistance of the international community, and to strengthening those achievements.

Spain has already expressed its readiness to co-sponsor the draft resolution, as a further demonstration of my country's commitment to and solidarity with Afghanistan, its people and its Government. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the coordination efforts carried out by the delegation of Germany.

Before I continue, allow me to express Spain's endorsement of the statement delivered by the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Recently, we marked the first anniversary of the establishment of National Unity Government in Afghanistan, which was formed in the wake of the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. Spain commends the work carried out during this year and, in particular, the path laid out by the reform agenda based on the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We commend the resolve and determination shown by the Afghan Government and we encourage it to continue along that path, in particular with regard to the creation of an environment conducive to increased

economic activity, investment opportunities and job creation, as well as with regard to improved economic governance.

In that context, I wish to congratulate Afghanistan on its joining of the World Trade Organization, a step that will be formally approved at the tenth ministerial conference to be held in Nairobi from 15 to 18 December. That development represents an important milestone in the efforts of the National Unity Government to strengthen sustainable economic growth, stimulate private sector development, attract investment, generate revenue and advance public finance management reform.

However, economic progress in Afghanistan requires a secure environment. Allow me to pay tribute to the efforts and sacrifice made by the members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, to their commitment and to their professionalism. Spain will continue to support such efforts, as it has done so far, as well as those of the Resolute Support Mission, which supports, mentors and trains the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan.

During the past few months we have witnessed a tragic and regrettable surge in the activity of terrorist and insurgent groups in Afghanistan. We have also witnessed the determined response by the Afghan authorities and the brave rejection of terrorist tactics by the population. Terrorists and insurgents must know that the Government and the people of Afghanistan have the unanimous support of the international community in their struggle for building lasting peace in the country, achieving reconciliation among all Afghans, fostering a cooperative relationship with its neighbours and safeguarding the accomplishments of the past 14 years.

By that same token, and this is a cross-cutting element that touches on all of the aforementioned issues, we wish to stress that we believe that regional cooperation is an essential factor. Spain welcomes and encourages the deepening of dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours in all domains, and in particular in the areas of security and the economy. We look forward with interest to the upcoming ministerial conference of the Istanbul Heart of Asia Process, to be held from 8 to 9 December in Islamabad, a process in which Spain is participating as a supporting country. We also encourage the continuation of efforts aimed at a profound and lasting reconciliation within

Afghan society through an inclusive process that is also respectful of the Afghan constitutional framework, is pro-human rights and includes the ownership of the Afghan Government and society.

While we recognize the progress made by Afghanistan, Spain also wishes to commend the clear choice made by the National Unity Government to consolidate and build upon its achievements in the areas of civil liberties and human rights, in particular the rights of women. We also commend the efforts of the National Unity Government to improve the situation of Afghan children. A recent example of the National Unity Government's policy is the adoption, in June, of the action plan on women and peace and security. But, there is still work to be done. We encourage the continuation of such policies and we reiterate Spain's readiness to continue cooperation in this endeavour. Furthermore, the recent adoption of the national action plan of drugs for the period 2015-2019 represents an important step forward in the fight against the production, trafficking and consumption of narcotics in Afghanistan. We encourage the Afghan Government to redouble its efforts in order to properly implement the plan.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating Spain's commitment to the stabilization and transformation of Afghanistan. My country's commitment is an unwavering and long-term one. As friendly country to Afghanistan and as a logical corollary of the close relationship between our Governments and our peoples, Spain shares the aspiration for a prosperous, democratic and peaceful Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Jakubonė** (Lithuania): At the outset, allow me to thank the delegation of Germany for facilitating the negotiations on the draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on the situation in Afghanistan. We look forward to its unanimous adoption.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

The first year of the transformation decade in Afghanistan has been marked by continuous efforts by the leadership to put forward substantial reforms. However, a number of major challenges to the National Unity Government remain. It reminds us all that Afghanistan continues to need close attention and strong support from the international community.

First, one of the most important challenges is that of creating a secure environment for the development of the nation. Lithuania is deeply concerned about the intensified fighting in different parts of the country. The conflict continues to exact a heavy toll on ordinary Afghans. More civilians lost their lives this year than in 2014. Ground engagements, improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks and targeted killings are causing an increase in the number of deaths and injuries. The rise in the number of women and children killed and maimed by conflict-related violence is particularly disturbing. The kidnappings and beheadings of Hazara men, women and children add to the latest wave of violence. Affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Afghanistan are also causing increasing concern.

Despite President Ghani's efforts to restart peace talks with the Taliban, meaningful results are yet to be seen. We call on the major players in the region to redouble their efforts in supporting the peace process in Afghanistan. Growing insecurity in Kunduz and other provinces of Afghanistan shows not only the strength of the Taliban but also the weakness of local Government institutions. Lack of economic progress, corruption, and incompetence on the part of some local officials are behind the declining support for the Government.

Implementing reform is another major challenge for the National Unity Government. Broad consensus is required to improve the rule of law, strengthen the protection of human rights, fight corruption, reform the electoral process and combat drug production and trafficking. In that context, the timely appointment of governors and advancing electoral reform are necessary to enhance citizens' confidence in the Government and the democratic process. As Afghanistan accounted for an estimated 85 per cent of global opium production and 77 per cent of global heroin production in 2014, it is imperative that the new national drug action plan have a tangible impact in tackling the drug challenge.

Young and capable Afghans leaving the country is yet another troubling phenomenon. It causes increasing brain-drain, at a time when the best and most dedicated minds are particularly needed in Afghanistan. It also contributes to the migrant crisis in Europe and in other parts of the world and exposes those leaving to additional risks. We urge the National Unity Government to increase efforts aimed at creating employment and improving the business climate in the country, and thus

enable Afghans to stay in Afghanistan and contribute to building a better future for their nation.

While much has been done to promote the rights of women, being a woman in Afghanistan remains a challenge. Violence against women and girls continues to be widespread — suffice to remember the case of Farkhunda, the Afghan woman who was brutally murdered by a Kabul mob on 19 March. The recently adopted national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, is an important step in addressing some of the difficulties that Afghan women face. The plan should be vigorously implemented. Women must be able to participate fully in all aspects of Afghanistan's processes, including the peace efforts. Any future accord must retain all the major achievements of the past decade, including increased protection for the rights of Afghan women.

Regional cooperation remains as important as ever in building a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan. All neighbouring countries have a stake in the stability of Afghanistan. Competing interests will not lead to a sustainable solution.

Lithuania remains a firm partner of Afghanistan, a supporter and contributor in achieving its main goals. Our political, military and civilian support to Afghanistan, including for the development of Afghan National Security Forces and promoting regional initiatives, will continue. Lithuania remains engaged in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and continues its participation in the European Union Police Mission. Given the recent spike in violence, there is an urgent need to discuss further engagement of the international community in Afghanistan after 2016. We encourage the international community to continue assisting and supporting Afghanistan on the difficult path towards building a secure and just future.

Lithuania commends the United Nations work in assisting Afghans in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development. The presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been of crucial importance to the advancement of human rights, democratic processes and the overall development of Afghanistan. The UNAMA field presence in remote regions of the country is vital for achieving peace, self-reliance and growth in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the primary responsibility for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan lies with the Afghans themselves. Lithuania stands ready to support their efforts.

**Mr. Van Oosterom** (Netherlands): I thank the President for organizing this annual debate.

I align myself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

We also thank Ambassador Saikal of Afghanistan for his statement, and the German delegation for its efforts that resulted in a consensus draft resolution (A/70/L.23).

I will make three points — first, on security challenges and regional cooperation; secondly, on economic development cooperation; and, thirdly, on good governance. My full statement will be available on Twitter.

First, on security challenges and regional cooperation, as we all know and as stated earlier today, Afghanistan has come a long way. Let me mention, for instance, service delivery in the areas of health care and education, the first democratic transfer in the presidential election of 2014, and the formation of the National Unity Government and the provision of its own security since the beginning of the year. However, security challenges in Afghanistan remain worrisome. Recent developments in Kunduz have shown, and furthermore, the report (A/70/359) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) describes, an increase in civilian casualties and displacements. The Kingdom of the Netherlands offers its condolences to Afghanistan for the lives lost. The continued support of the international community, the Kingdom of the Netherlands included, remains important.

Lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region can be achieved only through a regional peace and reconciliation process. It is important that the process be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and that it have the required buy-in of the region in order to be successful in achieving lasting peace and stability. The Kingdom of the Netherlands hopes that peace talks can resume quickly with a representative Taliban delegation and, at least equally important, with the required support of the wider region.

In that context, the Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the recent positive steps in regional

rapprochement. We particularly welcome the recent Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Kabul, where an intensification of regional economic cooperation was discussed. We would also very much like to welcome the upcoming Heart of Asia ministerial meeting, to be held next week in Islamabad, and express our sincere hope that progress will be achieved in bringing the region together.

Secondly, on economic development cooperation, 40 per cent of the Afghan population remains unemployed, and 400,000 young Afghans, on average, join the labour market annually. We therefore wholeheartedly welcome the jobs plan presented by the Afghan National Unity Government. Future prospects for youths and tapping into young people's human resources are crucial for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will remain Afghanistan's partner in supporting that effort through contributions to reconstruction programmes and through the political and economic empowerment of Afghan women. Within the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, donors agreed on commitments, and we feel it is important for both sides to deliver on their respective responsibilities.

Thirdly, on good governance, we believe that the Afghan National Unity Government has made significant progress in furthering good governance by improving accountability and reducing corruption. In addition, the Special Electoral Reform Commission managed to achieve impressive progress in a short time. But much still needs to be done in order to also ensure that future elections are fair, transparent and inclusive. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will remain Afghanistan's partner in supporting that effort.

We welcome the concrete deliverables within the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. In particular, we welcome the establishment of prosecution units to deal with violence against women in all provinces. The protection of human rights and improvement in the human rights situation are crucial for a more inclusive, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. Many Afghans have been working towards that end. Recently, the Afghan population of Kunduz, including aid workers and human rights defenders, has been subject to severe threats by the Taliban and other insurgents. Many of them have already returned to Kunduz to continue their work and their lives, which demonstrates the great resilience of the Afghan people.

In conclusion, recent developments in Kunduz show that Afghanistan still requires international support. Continued engagement by the international community is crucial to ensure that earlier investments have not been made in vain. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, a long-time partner of Afghanistan, has contributed significantly in the fields of security, justice and development. We will remain committed throughout the transformation decade and we are currently in the process of assessing our post-2016 contributions. These commitments shall be made in a context of increased Afghan ownership and leadership. In the spirit of partnership, we will focus on supporting peace, justice and development, and we are committed to continue to support Afghanistan and its people.

**Mr. Çevik (Turkey):** Allow me to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. We welcome the successful completion of the consultations led by the German delegation on draft resolution A/70/L.23, on the situation in Afghanistan. We look forward to its adoption by consensus in the coming days. We deem this comprehensive draft resolution especially important, as it highlights the achievements and guidelines for the future efforts and responsibilities of both Afghanistan and the international community.

We will have an opportunity to review the progress on the issues reflected in the draft resolution at future important occasions concerning Afghanistan, such as the fifth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process, the 2016 NATO summit, to be held in Warsaw, and the ministerial conference on Afghanistan, to be held in Brussels.

Afghanistan continues on its journey of political, security and economic transformation. The achievements of the past 14 years, including in the fields of security, democracy, governance, economic development and human rights, deserve to be applauded. Nevertheless, those achievements are not at a point of no return. Many challenges also need to be addressed. To maintain and build upon the achievements, the international community's ongoing support to Afghanistan during the transformation decade is of the utmost importance. We appreciate the role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the efforts of the international stakeholders in Afghanistan. We hope that the international community will continue to support the efforts of UNAMA.



Furthermore, the maintenance of security and stability in Afghanistan should remain a key priority. The stability of Afghanistan, and subsequently that of the region, will depend on improved security. The efforts towards a successful peace process remain an important element for lasting peace and stability in the country.

We welcome the Afghan National Unity Government's efforts in bringing into practice various reforms in the field of good governance, with special emphasis on fighting corruption and on the rule of law. Those reforms will undoubtedly enhance social cohesion in the entire country and help strengthen trust in State structures. Election reform is another area where the Afghan Government has initiated an important process. We expect that the parliamentary elections to be held following the completion of the relevant reforms will further strengthen the functioning of democratic institutions.

Many of the problems faced by the countries of the region, such as terrorism, organized crime and the illegal narcotics trade, are of a transboundary nature. Close cooperation among the countries of the region is crucial in tackling those challenges. We therefore believe that the existing multilateral platforms should be used more effectively. In that regard, the Istanbul Process continues to serve as an effective cooperation model for providing practical solutions to the current challenges in the Heart of Asia region.

Turkey will continue supporting the Afghan Government in its endeavours aimed at bringing peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan, as long as our help is needed. Turkey's assistance to the Afghan people is the most comprehensive development aid programme directed to a single country in Turkey's history. Through our aid programme Turkey has completed more than 800 projects since 2004. The programme will continue in the years ahead, with a commitment of \$150 million for the period 2015-2017. As proof of our commitment to the security of Afghanistan, Turkey is one of the four framework nations of the Resolute Support Mission. Turkey will continue its capacity-building programmes both within the NATO framework and on a bilateral basis in support of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. Last but not least, Turkey will also continue contributing to Afghanistan on multilateral platforms, through the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Turkey trilateral summit process and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the international community's continued commitment will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for a brighter future. Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and continue to contribute to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

**Mr. Jinga** (Romania): Romania fully endorses the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (EU) on behalf of its member States. I would like to reiterate the EU's final remark, namely, that it is important that the international community remain strongly committed for long-term to progress in Afghanistan.

I would also like to welcome the new Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and to wish him every success in his mandate.

The Afghan people deserve much admiration and credit for their achievements, but many challenges remain. We therefore believe it is essential that a new environment be created in Afghanistan that would offer a serene, decent and peaceful life for the Afghan people, one that is favourable to lasting stability and the country's reconstruction.

Since January 2002, Romania has participated in Afghanistan through manoeuvre forces encompassing 22 battalion-level units, consisting of approximately 14,000 soldiers. Currently, we have 615 troops deployed in the Resolute Support Mission, thereby continuing our lasting commitment to peace and stabilization in Afghanistan.

At the same time, empowering Afghans to defend their country themselves is crucial. Accordingly, Romanian armed forces have been involved in missions designed to educate and train the new Afghan armed forces. They have also been active in operational mentoring and liaison teams and in military advisory teams. It is worth mentioning that Romania has deployed mixed-gender teams, including in the Civil and Military Cooperation Unit and female engagement teams, with the aim of engaging with Afghan women and girls. The use of such special capabilities has contributed to a better understanding of the operational environment and has helped to increase the level of mutual confidence.

I would also like to point out that, since 2011, the Romanian gendarmerie has participated in Afghanistan with more than 300 personnel, in the fields of mentoring,

monitoring and advising officers of the Afghan National Police. They have performed activities aimed at improving Afghan instructor training, knowledge and use of arms, command and control, military topography, pedagogy and medical training, as well as activities in the area of hostile environment security training. On average, every six months, more than 4,000 Afghan police officers received training by each deployed contingent.

Currently, Romanian police officers are deployed within the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan as mentors and advisers to Afghan officials, and are responsible for the implementation of projects designed to help the democratization and reform process of the Afghan National Police. The total number of Romanian personnel who have participated in training and assistance missions exceeds 1,400 troops. Our presence has been highly appreciated both by the Afghan Government and the military commanders of the International Security Assistance Force. During our 12 years of continuous presence in Afghanistan, 23 Romanian soldiers have lost their lives and more than 130 have been wounded in action.

Romania believes that the stability of Afghanistan will not be achieved by security activities alone. We therefore fully support the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve a political settlement to secure peace. We share President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai's view that "peace is our basic demand, and we shall get to our demand with the help of people."

We also give priority to building and consolidating Government and administrative capabilities in the country. In that respect, in the period from 2012 to 2016, the Romanian Ministry of Education has provided 10 higher-education scholarships to Afghan students every year. In 2013 and 2014, the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs organized training programmes for young Afghan diplomats, and in 2014 and 2015 the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs organized, in cooperation with the Combined Security Transition Command, training programmes for high-ranking officers from the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs.

As soon as the security situation allows, in close cooperation with our Afghan friends, Romania will be ready to provide Afghan authorities and other interested parties the know-how and training to support Afghan specialists in projects related to mining and oil

extraction, fields in which my country has extensive and widely recognized expertise.

**Mr. Lambertini (Italy):** Italy aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union. In my national capacity, I wish to make some additional remarks.

First of all, I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Saikal, for his exhaustive statement. I would also like to thank the German Mission for facilitating the work for the adoption of the annual draft resolution (A/70/L.23).

Afghanistan has taken significant steps forward over the past 14 years. Democratic institutions have been strengthened. Over 3 million girls attend school today. Many other positive results have been achieved for the country's economic and social development, thanks to the efforts of Afghan authorities and the support of the international community.

But the challenge has not been completely overcome, and there is still a risk of losing ground. Despite the remarkable improvements, education for girls is at constant risk, as demonstrated by the closing of over 200 schools in the first nine months of 2015, thus limiting access to education for more than 20,000 female students, according to recently published United Nations data.

Violence by insurgent hostile groups whose aim is to destabilize Afghanistan has in fact gotten worse. The number of civilian victims of the conflict has increased. The security situation in Afghanistan is cause for great concern. Uncertainty about the future is prompting growing numbers of migrants and refugees to leave the country.

The National Unity Government is committed to ensuring peace, stability and prosperity for Afghanistan and its people, and Italy staunchly supports those efforts. Together with our partners, we actively participate in the framework of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, designed to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions, particularly in the western region of Afghanistan, in order to strengthen their capacity to achieve their mandate and ensure security throughout the country.

Nevertheless, we are aware that long-term stability in Afghanistan will require internal reconciliation. It is therefore necessary to promote the conditions for a meaningful peace process without jeopardizing the

progress we have made and the values of liberty and gender equality that constitute inalienable human rights. Such conditions also require genuine cooperation among all the countries in the region. Close cooperation among the main actors is of particular importance and, in that context, we hope that Afghanistan and Pakistan can establish constructive cooperation. We also hope that the upcoming fifth ministerial conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, which will be held in Islamabad on 9 December, may provide an opportunity for such cooperation.

It is also crucial that Afghanistan effectively carry out much-needed internal reforms. The Government's plans for reform and the programmatic platform established through the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework last September are certainly a step in the right direction. It is now necessary to rapidly implement those plans. Only tangible progress in that sphere will increase people's trust in State institutions; create an environment that promotes private entrepreneurship and investment; continue the process of democratic strengthening, and lead the country towards economic self-reliance.

At the same time, the partnership with the international community can be strengthened so that the latter will be motivated to continue to support Afghanistan, with a view towards the Brussels conference to be held in October 2016.

In the context of this pressing reform process, action to promote the rights of women must remain a priority. The Afghan Government's commitment and the results achieved so far are worthy of praise; however, the fight to counter violence against women and the objective of full women's empowerment in Afghan society must be pursued with the utmost determination, as the path to achieve such goals is still long.

**Mr. Ružička** (Slovakia): I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. We all appreciate those delegations that have contributed to the text of the annual draft resolution (A/70/L.23), especially our German colleagues, who once again facilitated negotiations in an admirable and professional manner.

Slovakia would like to align itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union; however, allow me to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Beyond any doubt, Afghanistan remains on the track of continuous, though fragile, progress in all areas vital to the functioning of the State. In 2015, Slovakia repeatedly highlighted at Security Council debates the key role of the Afghan Government, its dedication to a sustainable future, its responsibility to maintain the political unity framework and its awareness of the relevant challenges, especially in the area of security.

We often refer to momentum. We hope to take hold of a trend of positive changes and seek to continue that trend for as long as possible. We try to transform momentum into long-term and sustainable positive developments. However, negative momentum also exists, and it is perhaps most visible today in the global impact of regional crises. The unprecedented levels and statistics in the area of migration currently top the political agenda. Its negative momentum has an impact on all countries — those of origin, transit and destination. While war and/or armed conflicts tend to be the primary reason that people flee their homeland, the dire humanitarian and economic situation and a lack of prospects for a decent life are also motives, especially for young or productive generations. Afghanistan is not in a state of war, but the Taliban, illegal armed groups and criminals, including those involved in the trafficking in narcotics and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, continue to pose threats to the security and stability of the country. Through its support for this draft resolution, Slovakia encourages the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, to continue to address those challenges.

An improved security environment is a precondition to avoid the forced displacement of Afghan citizens. Furthermore, the implementation of reforms, the creation of opportunities and a vision for prosperity are necessary if Afghan citizens are to opt not to choose the life of a migrant. Regional cooperation, supported by the wider international community, is paramount in that regard. Slovakia therefore welcomes and supports all relevant initiatives. We sincerely hope that the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia Process, to be held in Islamabad on 9 December, can deliver prospects for further engagement in our joint effort to support Afghanistan's sustainable development.

With regard to development assistance, with the cooperation of the Afghan Government, Slovakia continues to implement its strategy in three areas.

The first is education in four subjects: entry into the labour market and self-employment targeted at women and young people, education for health-care personnel, education in the field of agriculture and education in efficient public administration and good governance. The second area is agriculture: food security and the modernization of the agricultural sector. The third area is security sector reform, particularly in the form of financial contributions to multi-donor forums. Education is the only way forward with regard to utilizing the talent and potential of Afghan youth, including the youngest generations of both boys and girls. Agriculture is a natural and important sector. In the past, Afghan agriculture produced enough food for internal consumption, and part of the production was also exported. Finally, security sector reform seeks to provide a framework and safe environment for the development of the economy and knowledge.

In conclusion, Slovakia remains committed to supporting Afghanistan through bilateral assistance as well as via cooperation with other stakeholders in the international community. Here in New York, I am personally looking forward to working together with the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal, and wish him a very good stay and tenure in New York. Slovakia would like to contribute to the work of the group of friends led by Canada, and to participate in all forums that look for peaceful and sustainable solutions that will contribute significantly to the stability of the whole region.

**Mr. Khoshroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran considers prosperity and security in Afghanistan to be important factors for the peace and security of the region. As such, we are eager to see a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan in our neighbourhood, and will continue to do everything in our power to that end. We fully support the Government of Afghanistan and its leading role in providing peace and security. We are confident that that Government is well-positioned to address its political, economic and security challenges. We believe that all actions in Afghanistan by other countries should be undertaken on the basis of Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity.

We believe that the security of Afghanistan should be a common objective for all regional and international actors, rather than an issue of competition. With the increasing presence of Daesh and its affiliates in Afghanistan, international and regional Powers now

have a greater responsibility to the National Unity Government, especially in its fight against terrorism.

With regard to counter-narcotics efforts, we welcome the initiatives taken by the countries of the region and invite the international community to support such initiatives, especially the triangular initiative on cooperation on countering narcotics in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Moreover, a strong commitment from international donors, Afghanistan's authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is also essential.

On bilateral cooperation, we see the further expansion of our political and economic ties with neighbouring Afghanistan as a priority. Iran stands ready to increase its bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan in different areas, particularly on security matters, countering narcotics, developing projects and economic cooperation, including in the development of infrastructure and agriculture. Moreover, there are many areas of great potential in our relations that will be explored, including, for example, those of trade and transit. Once implemented, the trilateral agreement on Chabahar Port facilities, which includes India, Afghanistan and Iran, will be a milestone not only for the three participating countries, but also for the entire region. By implementing that contract, Afghanistan, a land-locked country, will have access to that strategic port in Iran. The ongoing railroad projects linking Iran to Herat and Farah, two large cities in Afghanistan, are also important steps that will boost economic cooperation between our two countries.

The people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite all of its economic hardships — caused by a range of reasons, from war to unjust sanctions — have generously shared their resources with Afghan refugees for over three decades. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees continue to live in Iran. We continue our support to tens of thousands of Afghan students, from primary to higher education, pending their eventual repatriation and irrespective of their legal situation. We continue to participate in the work of the tripartite commission involving Iran, Afghanistan and the Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to plan for the voluntary, safe and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees and the continued management of the refugee population in Iran. The decrease in voluntary repatriation over the past two years serves to underscore the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of

repatriated refugees in Afghanistan in order to reverse that trend. It also highlights the need for mobilizing more international support to improve living conditions in Afghanistan in order to encourage that repatriation.

We believe that the United Nations system has an important role to play in Afghanistan. That role will continue to grow in the foreseeable future owing to the complicated nature of the challenges that that country faces.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that the peoples of Iran and Afghanistan are well-connected by history, language, geography and culture. Therefore, my Government looks forward to working closely with the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to foster the well-being of our good neighbour, Afghanistan.

**Mr. Abdrakhmanov** (Kazakhstan): As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on the situation in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan reiterates its unfailing commitment to enhance peace, security and development in Afghanistan, which in turn strengthens stability in the region, in which Afghanistan is an integral and extremely important part. My delegation acknowledges the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan and ensuring that joint efforts on the part of all key stakeholders are complementary, mutually reinforcing and synergetic. My delegation therefore commends the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the entire the United Nations system in their efforts aimed at ensuring economic stabilization, peaceful development, the rule of law and good governance in Afghanistan.

The Government of Kazakhstan has always contributed to peace, reconstruction and capacity-building in the peaceful and brotherly country of Afghanistan. It also pledges to increase its cooperation with other actors and with the Government of the country in efforts aimed at State-building, within the framework of political, economic and social advancement. We are deeply convinced that Afghanistan's high potential, represented both in its human capital and in natural resources, will transform the State into a key country in the region. We therefore call on the global community to support every effort aimed at ensuring stability so as to attract foreign investment with a view to boosting the Afghan economy.

The threats posed by the Taliban and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant compel us all to be proactive in supporting the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Afghan Government. We therefore co-sponsored the new draft resolution on improvised explosive devices, initiated by Afghanistan, because we believe that multilateral action can be strengthened only through the implementation of all the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the recommendations of major conferences on Afghanistan.

As drug production and trafficking are a source for financing for terrorism, we believe that combating drug trafficking can be effective not only through better cooperation among law enforcement agencies, but also by providing market incentives and through, for example, the purchase of Afghan-produced drugs by international organizations for medical purposes.

Regretfully, Islam is perceived sometimes in a distorted way. To bridge the gap and to overcome mistrust and hatred, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has planned to convene, as soon as possible, a United Nations high-level forum on the theme "Islam against terrorism". We invite Member States to support that initiative in uniting against the destructive nature of radicalism and violent extremism.

Kazakhstan was among the first to support the Northern Distribution Network, the New Silk Road initiative and the Silk Road Economic Belt, implemented under the Asian Development Bank's Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme, to provide greater access to foreign investors in Afghanistan and to create favourable external conditions for economic growth. On a bilateral level, we provide humanitarian aid and technical assistance to the country, as well as an extensive scholarship programme for thousands of Afghan students to study medicine, engineering and public administration in universities in Kazakhstan. We have established the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development, which will focus its development assistance on Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan also launched the Nurlu Zhol road map, aimed at integrating our country's economy into those international infrastructure development projects, in which Afghanistan also plays a very crucial role. On 26 November, the President of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, paid an official visit to Kazakhstan, during which leaders of the two States signed a number of very

important bilateral agreements on further economic assistance to Afghanistan.

To unite global efforts in fighting terrorism and violent extremism in Afghanistan, the Middle East and throughout the entire world, the President of Kazakhstan proposed establishing a United Nations-led counter-terrorism coalition and to develop additional mechanisms, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which would have a legally binding character by virtue of the adoption of relevant Security Council resolutions. We also believe that a United Nations unified global network to counter international terrorism and extremism, as an outcome of the Secretary-General's forthcoming comprehensive plan of action to combat terrorism, would serve the purpose of minimizing that threat.

The thrust of our actions must shift from routine conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery to a new development strategy that would considerably eliminate or reduce the threat of war and conflicts. We therefore propose to launch a new trend in global development entitled "(2045 Global Strategic Initiative)".

Finally, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's unwavering support to Afghanistan on its path towards stability and security, sustainable economic development and prosperity.

**Mr. Al-Buainain** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for all the efforts that have gone into preparing today's report (A/70/359).

The General Assembly is convened today to review the situation in Afghanistan, which has made huge progress in the area of economic development and in improving the political and security situation. We commend that. But we should not lose sight of the fact that this is a historic set of circumstances, given the remaining challenges that face the country. That means that we need to further dovetail and harmonize efforts in Afghanistan, both by Afghanistan and the international community, to achieve peace and security for the benefit and well-being of the Afghan people. Development, reconstruction and social and economic stability all require security as a precondition. Afghanistan is no exception to that rule, and we must therefore be vigilant in our response to the security situation and duly address it, inasmuch as it is vulnerable to the phenomena of insurgency and terrorism, particularly with foreign terrorist fighters operating in Afghanistan. We need to

help the Afghans tackle those phenomena to promote peace and security.

As we mark the first anniversary of the National Unity Government in Afghanistan, we pay tribute to the progress it has made in the process of political transition and we commend all the efforts undertaken by the new Government to introduce the necessary reforms in the areas of good governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and tackling corruption. It is essential for us to maintain consensus among the different factions in Afghanistan and to ensure that there the lines of communication remain open between the Government and society. We hope that the process will continue within Afghanistan so that we can find resolution to all pending issues and that we can do so through peaceful means and dialogue.

We pay tribute to the very important role played by the United Nations in supporting the transition period in Afghanistan. We would like to underscore the importance of pursuing and continuing the support of the international community in Afghanistan throughout the 2015-2024 transformation decade following that transitional period, to support the efforts of the Afghan Government to continue reform and to build capacity in the areas of sustainable development as well as, in particular, with regard to the repatriation and return of refugees, the needed reforms in the security sector and efforts to tackle drugs. Continued international support will be needed as they take those steps as part of the transformation decade.

We in Qatar will continue to work with our international partners to ensure that we lend our backing to the Afghan Government to help it meet those and other challenges. The Government of Qatar has provided humanitarian and educational aid to Afghanistan. The Red Crescent Society of Qatar opened an office in Kabul last year, which has enabled us to provide emergency response in a more timely manner to those who need it, in particular to those who were affected by the earthquake that recently struck Afghanistan. We are currently participating in a project called "Warm Winter" to provide shelter to those most in need at this time of year. We are also providing access to water to approximately 15,000 persons, along with equipment for clinics in remote villages and towns that serve some 60,000 people and meet their medical needs. We are also working on disaster-risk reduction initiatives in various locales to ensure that we can mitigate the impacts of the earthquakes that frequently

strike the country. We will continue to ramp up efforts with the international community in order to be able to support Afghanistan in all its laudable efforts to deliver peace and stability.

**Mr. Van Bohemen** (New Zealand): New Zealand looks forward to the adoption of the draft resolution (A/70/L.23) on the situation in Afghanistan, which we are co-sponsoring. We hope it will be adopted later in the week. It reflects the progress made and recognizes the challenges facing Afghanistan.

Like everyone else in the Hall, New Zealand wants Afghanistan to succeed. Like others, too, we have invested a lot in Afghanistan's future. We put 10 years of effort into building security and governance in Bamiyan and, in cooperation with others, in building Bamiyan's infrastructure and productive capacity. We have helped to train Afghanistan's National Defence and Security Forces, both in Bamiyan and Kabul. We are continuing that effort as part of the officer training school for the Afghan National Army.

At the moment, we are also chairing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011). In that capacity, are seeing to build stronger links between the Security Council and the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that the sanctions regimes both suppress terrorism and support Government reconciliation efforts.

It is important to note the positive developments over the past year, which include progress in developing the institutions of Government, the holding of direct talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban in July, and maintaining peace and security in significant parts of the country. We also acknowledge the bravery and the success of the Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces in their efforts to preserve peace in the country following the drawdown of international forces. However, as we all know, there is much still to do and many challenges still to overcome.

At the Government level, there need to be further appointments to key positions such as the Minister of Defence and the Attorney General. It is not credible that such important posts remain unfilled, particularly while the Taliban continue to fight the Government of Afghanistan while engaging at a minimal level in peace talks. Meanwhile, organized crime continues to undermine Afghanistan's economy and stability. Much

of that happens despite Government efforts, but it is also a sad reality that complicity and corruption on the part of some Government officials are also part of the reason that illegal trade has continued to flourish.

The international community has put enormous resources into Afghanistan over the past 14 years by defeating Al-Qaida and rolling back the Taliban, by re-establishing security and infrastructure in much of the country and by underwriting the Government of Afghanistan, as well as by investing in large-, medium- and small-scale development projects. We know that such efforts must continue, but the international community cannot proceed without the active cooperation of the Government of Afghanistan. The same holds true for Afghanistan's neighbours. As long as Afghanistan remains unstable, they have a security problem on their borders. We urge all of Afghanistan's neighbours, therefore, to work with the Government of Afghanistan to build security for Afghanistan and for the wider region.

We recognize the complications of the past few months. They include the offensive in Kunduz, the revelation of the death of Mullah Omar, the effective suspension of the peace talks with the Taliban since July and the increased presence of affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Afghanistan. The medium- and longer-term implications of those challenges remain unclear. However, we can be certain that they will require the continued attention and vigilance of the Government of Afghanistan, the countries of the region and the wider international community.

As the fighting in Afghanistan subsides over the winter, we should reflect on ways in which Afghanistan, with the international community behind it, might use the available tools to meet those challenges. It may be that sanctions can be further utilized to target those who are not responding to calls to put down their arms, and those who fuel the instability through narcotics trafficking and natural-resources smuggling. We need to place more pressure on access to components for improvised explosive devices, which are responsible for many of the devastating attacks against civilians and the Afghan Defence and Security Forces. Those and many other questions need to be considered in close consultation with the Government of Afghanistan.

**Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan): I thank the President of the General Assembly for having

organized this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We also thank the German delegation for guiding the consultations on the draft resolution (A/70/L.23). I look forward to its adoption.

Azerbaijan reaffirms its support to peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. We recognize the important work carried out by the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and its efforts to address complex political, security and economic challenges. As the country enters the transformation decade, we commend the progress that it has achieved to date in key priority areas and encourage it to continue to implement its reform and development agenda.

We are concerned about the challenges created by the security environment in the country in the light of the expansion of the conflict and the escalation of violence. We fully support the Secretary-General's view that military operations must be conducted while respecting international human rights law.

Mass displacement within the country further complicates the humanitarian situation. We appreciate the ongoing work of the humanitarian actors and recognize the need for their further involvement in assisting the affected population in a timely manner.

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) play an increasingly important role in combating security threats, and Azerbaijan commends the ANSF's dedication to serve in ensuring the security and safety of its country. We welcome the rate of support it enjoys. International support to the ANSF is more critical than ever, as the latter increasingly confronts insurgent and international terrorist-associated networks. Against that background, it is important to redouble efforts to promote an inclusive peace process and an Afghan-owned and -led dialogue so as to reinforce reconciliation at the local and national levels.

Regional and international assistance is essential to fulfilling Afghanistan's aspiration to achieve peace, stability and prosperity. Support for Afghanistan's economic development in the transformation decade of 2015-2024 is key to sustaining the positive results of stabilization efforts in the country. In that regard, we look forward to the upcoming Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, to be held in Islamabad. For its part, Azerbaijan has remained committed to supporting the stabilization of Afghanistan since it joined international efforts in 2001, through military and non-military contributions alike. Since that time, Azerbaijan has

announced that its air space is open for operations carried out in Afghanistan. In addition, surface, rail and sea routes have been used for operational and construction purposes in carrying out cargo transits. Thirty-five per cent of non-military cargo in 2012 was transported through the territories of Azerbaijan. Six thousand flights were conducted via Azerbaijan in 2012.

Azerbaijan joined International Security Assistance Force operations in 2002 and maintained a presence until the end, increasing its military contribution several-fold. Azerbaijan resumed military efforts at the same level in the Resolute Support Mission. Currently, cargo for that mission is being transported through the airspace and surface transport infrastructure of Azerbaijan. We contribute to the mission by providing a 90-person contingent, including two doctors and two engineers. We also provide training for Afghan Security Forces representatives and financial assistance to the ANSF. In particular, in 2012, Azerbaijan allocated €1 million to support the ANSF. We have pledged an additional €1 million for the period of 2015 to 2017. Beginning in 2014, Azerbaijan, in partnership with NATO, has organized annual training for Afghan military and civil officials in Baku.

We have much to offer in terms of supporting Afghanistan's economic development and its integration into the regional and global economy. We have a solid track record of fostering regional cooperation and achieving concrete results in developing transregional infrastructure with multi-modal capabilities along the east-west and north-south axes. The new Baku International Sea Trade Port and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will immensely contribute to the establishment of a new transport corridor stretching from China to Europe, while facilitating Afghanistan's linkage to European markets.

My country has also initiated the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway, which is designed to provide affordable and reliable broadband connectivity for the benefit of the countries of the region, including Afghanistan and Central Asia. Furthermore, the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy have developed joint expertise and, since 2012, have annually held training sessions for Afghan Government officials in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan reconfirms its support for Afghanistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, and resolves to further cooperate with the National Unity Government.



In conclusion, I would like to thank the country personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Special Representatives for their dedication to supporting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Sareer** (Maldives): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/70/359) on the situation in Afghanistan, submitted to this session.

The Maldives remains hopeful in seeing the determination with which Afghanistan has been moving forward, despite the grave challenges that it faces. The geographic location of Afghanistan places the country, with regard to its geostrategic importance, at the heart of the region. Increasingly, the involvement of non-State actors in the internal dynamics of the country adds complexity to an already difficult situation. The Maldives is encouraged by the ongoing efforts on the part of the Government of Afghanistan in maintaining peace and security. In that regard, we welcome the assumption of full security responsibility by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. As a regional partner, the Maldives remains in solidarity with the people and the Government of Afghanistan in their efforts aimed at maintaining peace and harmony in their country.

The Maldives is encouraged by the positive political developments in Afghanistan that have led representatives of the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to official talks, the first such talks to be held after many years. Those positive developments prove the willingness of the Government of Afghanistan and the other parties involved to move forward. The Maldives hopes that the renewed continuation of dialogue will be a way forward to creating a mechanism aimed at ceasing all hostilities and focusing on a people-centred approach aimed at developing the country. However, the Maldives remains concerned by the ongoing security-related incidents throughout the country. My delegation remains even more troubled about the fact that the brunt of those armed clashes continues to be borne by civilians, resulting in significant casualties and the displacement of Afghan civilians. That is especially alarming, given the increase in casualties among children and attacks on schools, as noted in the Secretary General's report.

Comprehensive efforts for inclusive development and the recognition of the important role of women

in society by the Government of Afghanistan are important steps in its reform initiatives. We would also like to note efforts to promote the rule of law and accountability and to address corruption in the country. Positive initiatives, such as the 100-day plans presented by all ministries — with the exception of the Ministry of Defence — and the executive branch bodies that outline programmes and policies towards enhancing efficiency and increased decentralization demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to achieving reform.

The Maldives welcomes ongoing efforts by the Government of Afghanistan for regional collaboration, including its role in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. We are further encouraged by Afghanistan's ongoing engagement with regional partners and active participation at various high-level conferences aimed at confronting collective security challenges. The Maldives believes that such regional collaboration and engagement are necessary to strengthening peace, stability and economic cooperation in the region.

The people of Afghanistan can be the only drivers of a successful future for their nation. The democratic and economic transformation and stability that the people of Afghanistan rightly deserve can be realized only with the ongoing support of the international community. My delegation would like to reiterate the call upon all members for their support and commitment to embrace Afghanistan in its quest for peace and prosperity.

**Mr. Alshamsi** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government and the people of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan and to the families of the victims for the tragic earthquake that struck the country in October.

The United Arab Emirates renews its support for draft resolution A/70/L.23, on the situation in Afghanistan. We have co-sponsored this draft resolution in the conviction that we must support Afghanistan and its people so as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity. The United Arab Emirates reiterates the importance of the entire international community supporting and standing by Afghanistan. We must honour the outcomes of previous international conferences and we look forward to participating in the ministerial conference on Afghanistan to be held in Brussels in 2016.

The United Arab Emirates wishes to highlight the progress made on the political level, especially with regard to the elections and the agreement reached concerning executive power. Allow me to commend the roles played by the United Nations in Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in implementing Security Council resolution 2210 (2015). Their efforts were aimed at ensuring cohesion and international coordination, notably with regard to the political process. We also welcome Pakistan's determination to enhance its bilateral relations with Afghanistan, especially in the areas of combating terrorism, promoting economic cooperation and ensuring the ongoing reconciliation process in the country. The United Arab Emirates reiterates the importance of continuing the political process under the auspices of the National Defence and Security Forces. Ensuring stability will allow for progress on the path towards economic and social prosperity, security and stability.

We continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan at the humanitarian and development levels. In particular, through the standing committee on humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan, we provide assistance to orphans, children of all ages and people with special needs. For example, the Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation for humanitarian work participated in a project that provided food to children and pregnant mothers. That project was the subject of commendation by the Ministry of Health in Afghanistan. In our partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to vaccinate children, \$33 million has been allocated to a project aimed at ending polio by 2018.

The United Arab Emirates has also allocated \$25.8 million to support demining operations in the Kandahar region. Those efforts have resulted in the clearance of 45 per cent of hazardous areas in Kandahar, allowing for the agricultural use of the land and the construction of housing for returning refugees. The United Arab Emirates has therefore largely contributed to Afghanistan's prosperity. It is our hope that Afghanistan will be mine-free by 2023. That goal is within reach. However, it requires that we maintain our positive momentum alongside donor countries in committing to such efforts.

We also support education in Afghanistan, and we are promoting education for orphans. We are providing support to the Kandahar region and have succeeded in enrolling Afghan youths at universities. We have provided assistance to the Afghan people by cooperating with various Member States and agencies to provide long-term benefits to the Afghan people in terms of capacity-building and economic prosperity.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the role of women in ensuring peace and stability, while promoting Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent Council resolutions on women and peace and security. We believe that Afghan women play a key role Afghan society, and we underscore the progress made in that regard. Afghan women represented 38 per cent of the voters in the latest elections. In that regard, we also worked with our partners to implement a broad initiative on carpet weaving— under the auspices of Her Highness Sheikhs Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi — which employs 4,000 workers, 70 per cent of whom are women. We believe that that initiative will assist women living in rural areas and enable them to work from home, providing them with health care as part of the national sustainable development strategy.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its commitment to combating terrorism and extremism. We believe that it negatively affects Afghan society, and we are continuing to coordinate our counter-terrorism efforts with those of other partners within the framework of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and through hosting Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, in Abu Dhabi. We also have contributed to sensitizing society on matters relating to religion and to spreading moderate teachings of Islam. To that end the United Arab Emirates has allocated \$20 million to provide assistance to clerics in Afghanistan on teaching of Islam on the basis of moderation, tolerance and respect for women.

In conclusion, we underscore our support to the Afghan people in the ongoing talks and the process of dialogue and reconciliation, while also reiterating our desire for cooperation between our two countries.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*