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## REAFFIRMING STRONG COMMITMENT TO PEACE, STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN, ASSEMBLY ADOPTS

## CONSENSUS RESOLUTION URGING GLOBAL COOPERATION IN COUNTERING ONGOING CHALLENGES

Also Adopts Texts on Cooperation between United Nations and Arab League,
Situation in Central America: Fashioning Region of Peace, Freedom,
Democracy

While deeply concerned about the Taliban's encroaching influence around the country, the burgeoning narcotics trade and surging violence that has killed more and more aid workers and civilians, the Assembly today, in its annual debate on the situation in Afghanistan, recognized signs of progress and drew hope from the newly emerging ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Throughout the morning's debate, which ended with the adoption of a wide-ranging resolution, delegates stressed that the Afghan people and their Government needed to direct the transformation of their war-torn country into a democratic and independent nation. Meanwhile, the international community should continue to back the troubled nation's long-term vision and show commitment that would supply stability not only for the country, but the wider region and the world.

The Assembly, as it had in previous years, acted without a vote and adopted a resolution that enveloped issues from the expanding drug trade and terrorist activities of the Taliban and Al-Qaida to the daily tragedies stemming from anti-personnel landmines and ongoing recruitment of children by terrorist groups.

Germany's representative introduced the text, which reiterated the urgent need to tackle the challenges in Afghanistan, particularly the increased violent criminal and terrorist activities by the Taliban, Al-Qaida, illegal armed groups and those involved in the narcotics trade, particularly in the country's south and east. The Assembly was deeply concerned with the recent surge in violence and expressed its serious distress at the high number of civilian casualties. It also noted that the security situation was causing some organizations to cease or curtail their humanitarian and development work in parts of the country.

The resolution welcomed the Declaration of the Paris Conference of 12 June 2008 and additional pledges of international support, as well as the launching of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Yet, it noted that the Assembly remained deeply concerned that millions of anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants remained a major obstacle to restarting the economy and reconstruction efforts.

The Assembly recognized the importance of holding free, fair and secure elections in 2009 and 2010 towards consolidating democracy for all Afghans, as identified in the Afghanistan Compact. Turning to social issues, the Assembly strongly condemned incidents of discrimination and violence against women and girls, particularly if directed against women activists and women prominent in public life. Regarding children, the Assembly stressed the need to ensure respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of children and expressed its concern about the ongoing recruitment and use of children by illegally armed and terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

While highlighting the region's accomplishments, such as the creation of democratic institutions and a vibrant political system, economic growth and infrastructure improvements, the representative of Iran said serious challenges remained. The cultivation and production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs in Afghanistan continued unabated and impacted the country's security and development, while posing serious threats to the region and the world.

On the topic of refugees, he said Iran was hosting about two million Afghan nationals, half of whom were living in the country illegally. Both he and the representative of Pakistan urged the international community to help repatriate and rehabilitate those Afghans within each country's borders. Pakistan also hosted millions of Afghan refugees and it was important to create incentives, such as viable family return packages, for their voluntary return.

Pakistan's delegate also acknowledged the lack of security along the two nations' shared border and said security was a joint responsibility. Determined to play its role, Pakistan had deployed 110,000 military personnel on its side of the border and had lost more soldiers than the combined losses of the international security forces in Afghanistan. He said Pakistan was committed to working with Afghanistan and noted the two neighbours' invigorated plan to strengthen their relationship and expand cooperation beyond security to political, military, intelligence, and economic areas.

Speaking before the resolution was adopted, Afghanistan's representative said he was hopeful about a new beginning with two of his country's most important allies -- Pakistan and the United States. He viewed the election of Pakistan's new President, Asif Ali Zardari, as an initial move towards collaboration that would hopefully lead to peace and security. In addition, he looked forward to working with United States President-elect Barack Obama and appreciated the continuing support of the United States.

The representative of the United States underscored the vital role that Afghanistan's neighbours played in securing its success, and said Pakistan's newly-elected Government created an opportunity for increased cooperation between the two countries. To encourage Afghanistan's stability and development, it was crucial for regional cooperation to progress on several fronts, including by ensuring: no sanctuary for hostile forces; no use of extremists and terrorists to advance national interests; and the promotion of intelligence sharing. Integrating Afghanistan into regional institutions and the regional economy also was important, he added.

With perhaps one of the most optimistic outlooks delivered in today's debate, the representative of Turkey said progress had been made on many fronts. Like many other delegates, he was pleased by the United Nations' expanded role in Afghanistan, and urged greater regional cooperation, and the need for all types of international support to produce tangible benefits for ordinary Afghans as it improved their daily lives.

In other business this morning, the Assembly adopted by consensus a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. The representative of Libya introduced the text, which recognized the need to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations in order to reach common goals and objectives.

The resolution also reaffirmed that a general meeting of representatives of the United Nations system and the Arab League should be held every two years and joint inter-agency sectoral meetings should be convened on a biennial basis to address crucial development issues in the region. This was the sixth resolution championing collaboration between the United Nation and regional and other entities that the Assembly had adopted in the past week.

Turning to Central America, the Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on the situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. Introduced by the representative of Guatemala, the text commended the country's Government for its commitment to combating impunity and its efforts to strengthen the institutions that buttressed the rule of law and defence of human rights. The resolution expressed its appreciation to Member States and other donors that had supported the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, whether through voluntary contributions, financial and in-kind, and urged them to continue their support.

Finally, the Assembly began its debate on strengthening the Organization's coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. The debate, which will continue tomorrow, enveloped a range of regions and issues, from relief and recovery in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the reconstruction of Liberia.

The representative of Antigua and Barbuda, speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" and China, said a stronger bilateral, regional and international cooperative response was needed to counter the increasing number and scale of natural disasters and their impact on the loss of lives, livelihood and food security. Such cooperation played a unique role in enhancing developing countries' existing humanitarian capacities by developing and maintaining early warning systems, rapid response strategies to natural disasters and long-term tactics during post-recovery periods.

Also speaking on the situation in Afghanistan were the representatives of France (on behalf of the European Union), Russian Federation, Armenia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Kuwait, India, Japan, Norway, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Poland and Malaysia.

Delegates that joined in the debate on the humanitarian and disaster relief assistance were France (on behalf of the European Union), Grenada (on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)), India (on behalf of Sweden) and India.

Also today the representative of Yemen introduced a draft resolution on economic assistance for Yemen (document A/63/L.21).

The General Assembly will reconvene Tuesday, 11 November, at 10 a.m. to continue the joint debate on humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

### **Background**

The General Assembly met today for a joint debate on strengthening United Nations coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, including economic assistance. It also planned to consider the situations in Afghanistan and in Central America, and resume its consideration of the report of the International Criminal Court.

Among other reports and documents, the Assembly had before it the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (document A/63/372-S/2008/617), which provides an update on developments since the previous report of 6 March (A/62/722-S/2008/159).

It draws attention to the increase in attacks by anti-government elements, leading to a more challenging situation, with more civilian casualties, not only as a result of those attacks, but also as an "unintended consequence of operations by pro-Government forces". Preparations for the voter registration process have progressed, however, as have counter-narcotics efforts, with an increase of poppy-free provinces from 13 to 18.

The report notes that the 12 June Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan launched the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Participants pledged \$2.14 billion for Afghanistan's development. The Development Strategy provides a road map for future efforts by the Government and the international community to provide for the security and prosperity of the Afghan people. If the funds pledged are to have the impact required, massive institution-building efforts will be necessary, along with decisive action to address serious weaknesses in governance.

The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board — established in 2006 to ensure greater coherence of efforts by the Afghan Government and the international community to implement the 2006 "Afghan Compact" — met on 6 July and 9 September. On the proposal of the Special Representative, it decided to streamline its decision-making process by replacing the numerous consultative groups with three standing committees, namely on: security; governance, rule of law and human rights; and economic and social development.

Following the Paris Conference, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) undertook to enhance its coordination of donor efforts and to strengthen aid effectiveness. According to the report, the Mission is currently preparing to open new provincial offices, further strengthening the good offices and outreach capability offered by its existing 17 field offices.

The Secretary-General observes that, although the report presents a mixed picture, the negative trend can be reversed if the commitments undertaken at the Paris Conference are implemented. "Ultimately, success will depend on our ability to bring about a 'political surge' that musters the political determination to address those areas in which international and Afghan efforts have been insufficient, and to accelerate progress where gains have been made," he writes.

He goes on to say that the Afghan people throughout the country must be able to see and

experience more concrete results of and benefits from the assistance that they hear has been pledged to their country. They must see that corruption is being punished and competence rewarded. Civilians must be protected, not only from terrorism and insurgency, but also from unintended consequences of pro-Government military operations. They must be given a stronger sense of confidence in the international community, both civilian and military, and especially in their own Government.

On the situation in Central America, the Assembly has before it a <u>letter</u> dated 27 October 2008 from the Secretary-General to the Assembly President (document A/63/511), providing an update on the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). Pursuant to the 2006 agreement between the United Nations and Guatemala that created that body, the Secretary-General, in 2007, appointed Carlos Castresana of Spain as Commissioner.

As CICIG is an independent organ whose expenses are met through voluntary contributions, a trust fund administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was created on 3 October 2007. To date, \$26 million has been raised from 12 Member States and the European Union, covering more than 90 per cent of the projected two-year budget.

In carrying out its two-year mandate, the Commission is investigating 15 high-impact cases, most often in coordination with the Office of the Public Prosecutor; has identified the names of civil servants who have obstructed its work; and analysed national legislation on security, among other areas. Among its challenges ahead, the most complex of them could arise as investigations and court proceedings advance in cases that might touch powerful criminal interests. Operational concerns include strengthening security and facilitating the transnational exchange of information, among other things.

For its joint debate, the Assembly will take up several other reports of the Secretary-General, the first of which is that on <u>strengthening emergency relief</u>, <u>rehabilitation</u>, <u>reconstruction</u>, <u>recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster</u> (A/53/84-E/2008/80), which provides an overview of progress and challenges for the countries hardest hit by the 2004 tsunami: India; Indonesia; Maldives; Sri Lanka; and Thailand. It also covers Malaysia, Myanmar, Seychelles, Somalia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The report addresses aid and recovery coordination, models of Government humanitarian and recovery institutions, transparency to donors, risk reduction, tsunami early warning, and incorporation of prevention in development planning. It notes progress across the affected region: displaced persons are residing in newly constructed homes, children are in school, and hospitals are being rebuilt. However, the picture of success is an uneven one, as each nation faces different challenges. Common to all is the realization that it will take years for individual households and the wider economies on which they depend to recover.

Looking forward, the report notes that, as recovery and reconstruction efforts are being mainstreamed into long-term development assistance projects and programmes, continued specific reporting to the Economic and Social Council is no longer warranted.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary General's report on <u>safety and security of humanitarian personnel</u> and protection of <u>United Nations personnel</u> (documents A/63/305 and Corr. 1), which assess efforts by the Department of Safety and Security to implement recommendations contained in resolution 62/95. It also highlights significant threats to the security and safety of humanitarian and United Nations personnel during the July 2007 to June

2008 period, and focuses on the Organization's efforts to ensure respect for their human rights.

The report underscores the Secretary-General's grave concern at the rise in deliberate targeting of humanitarian and United Nations personnel. He condemns in the strongest terms the 11 December 2007 attack in Algiers, Algeria, which killed 17 United Nations staff members, and states that the present report is without prejudice to the implementation of recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide, or the Independent Panel on Accountability, related to the Algiers attack.

As part of the ongoing review of security policies, the Secretary-General will continue to encourage taking steps to enhance security management, the report states. Priorities include addressing key policy, operational and strategic weaknesses; improving the safety of locally recruited staff; providing adequate resources; improving the framework for accountability; enhancing cooperation with host Governments and restoring public trust in the United Nations.

For its part, the Department of Safety and Security will maintain its focus on enabling effective programme delivery by achieving: timely responses to and preventive action for all security related threats; effective risk mitigation; and high-quality security standards. It will enhance its efforts in promoting best practices and establishing effective mechanisms with host country authorities for information exchange.

As for Governments, the report concludes that Member States must include the security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel as integral to their deliberations in United Nations intergovernmental bodies. The Secretary-General calls on States to address: unlawful arrests and harassment of United Nations staff; obstruction of freedom of movement of United Nations and humanitarian workers; and impunity for crimes against them. He also appealed to States to lift restrictions on the import of communications equipment.

Host Governments are the first line of defence in the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, the report states, and stresses that the Secretary-General is deeply disturbed by the trend of politically motivated targeting of humanitarians, most evident in Somalia, where 18 non-governmental organization staff members were murdered. He expressed his deepest condolences to the families of all humanitarian and United Nations staff who had lost their lives in the line of duty, and recommended that the Assembly remain seized of such critical issues.

The Secretary-General's report on <u>strengthening of the coordination of emergency</u> <u>humanitarian assistance of the United Nations</u> (document A/63/81-E/2008/71), describes major humanitarian trends and challenges over the past year, and analyzes two thematic issues of concern: the humanitarian implications of climate change and the humanitarian challenges related to the current global food trends. It provides an overview of current key processes to improve humanitarian coordination and ends with recommendations for further strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

During the reporting period, the largest driver of disasters was the increased incidence and severity of extreme weather events, mostly associated with climate change. Nine out of every 10 disasters are now climate related. During the past year, the United Nations has issued an unprecedented 15 funding appeals for sudden-onset disasters, five more than the previous year. Fourteen of these were climate-related.

The humanitarian consequences of inter-State and intra-State conflicts remain high, according to the report, and displacement continues to be a major source of concern. Compounding the challenges of climate change and armed conflict are recent jumps in food and fuel prices, which have led to violent protests in many countries. High food prices have the potential to sharply increase the incidence and depth of food insecurity.

The report concludes that Member States and humanitarian actors, within and outside the United Nations system, are faced with complex challenges that suggest increasing demand for humanitarian assistance. Trends such as the increased incidence of climate-related disasters and continued rise in global food prices are likely to increase communities' vulnerability. These trends require strengthened humanitarian response with enhanced coordination at all levels, as well as greater respect by all stakeholders of the humanitarian principles that underpin humanitarian assistance.

On the basis of the above, the report puts forward a ten-point list of specific measures it encourages Member States to consider in their efforts to mitigate the challenges they face as they work to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance.

The Secretary-General's report on <u>international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development</u> (document A/63/277), gives an overview of the humanitarian response to natural disasters, emerging trends, the implication for humanitarian action and key challenges to be addressed.

The report states that during 2007, there were 414 disasters associated with natural hazards, among them tropical storms and hurricanes, earthquakes, severe weather conditions and flooding, and cyclones. More than 16,800 people died and over 211 million were affected. However, in areas that were prepared for such disasters or where early warning systems were in place, fewer lives were lost. Such was the case in Bangladesh. In 2007, Cyclone Sidr killed 4,200 people, whereas in 1970, before the implementation of early warning and community-based preparedness, a cyclone of the same magnitude killed over 300,000 people.

The report also notes that ongoing humanitarian reforms and expanded inter-agency relations have fostered greater collaboration to create a "cluster approach" in responding to disasters in Bolivia, Mozambique, Tajikistan and parts of West Africa, among others.

The Secretary-General makes several recommendations, among them encouraging States to underline the importance of early and multi-year commitments to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and other humanitarian financing mechanisms. He calls on humanitarian actors to improve the dissemination of tools to support disaster risk reduction, and on States and humanitarian agencies to promote national disaster preparedness activities, including contingency planning, within the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Further to the report, the Secretary-General encourages States to consider increasing funds for disaster risk reduction activities; make use of guidelines for domestic facilitation of relief assistance; continue to support consolidated capability in the area of satellite-derived geography information for early warning, preparedness, response and early recovery; and consider the applicability of the Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief for coordinating foreign military assets.

The Secretary-General also recommends that States consider the Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters in implementation of contingency planning, disaster preparedness and response, and make resources available to support humanitarian organizations, whose burden is exacerbated by climate change and high food and fuel prices.

The Assembly also had before it the Secretary-General's report on the <u>Central Emergency Response Fund</u> (document A/63/348), which covers the 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008 period. A two-year evaluation of the Fund found that it has largely achieved its objectives to become a "valuable and impartial tool for humanitarian action", by accelerating coverage and response time when situations suddenly deteriorate, or when humanitarian activities must be initiated in life-threatening emergencies.

The Fund's response has been diverse, broad and multilayered, the report states. After Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in May 2008, an initial tranche of funding was approved within one day. In the wake of two severe tropical storms in the Dominican Republic in late 2007, the United Nations Development Programme received part of a \$3.9 million allocation to conduct clean-up and assistance to returning families. In Kenya, after civil unrest following the presidential elections at the end of December 2007, part of a \$7 million allocation enabled the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to set up a rapid-coordinated and multifaceted response to the survivors of gender-based violence.

Also funded were the "forgotten" humanitarian crises, the report states, such as the \$6.8 million in grants in 2007 to the Central African Republic, which allowed agencies to assist over 1.2 million people with life-saving support. Such funding had the secondary effect of enabling agencies to inform donors of the severity of the situation, resulting in a significant increase of humanitarian funding for the country.

The two-year evaluation yielded four recommendations, the report states, the first of which being that the Fund should continue under its current mandate, with allowances to increase its capacity in line with demand. The quality of funded programmes should become more consistent, and to that end, the criteria for project approval and application must be further refined.

In addition, the capacity of the CERF and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) field teams must be strengthened, and the mandate for the CERF Advisory Group be extended. Finally, the multiple lines of accountability for the Fund must be clarified by specifying the roles of each actor. This requires the Emergency Relief coordinator to ensure each operational agency has in place appropriate monitoring and reporting systems without adding more bureaucracy to the process.

The report concludes that the Fund must be adequately supported so that it continues to meet its annual target of \$500 million. In that regard, the Secretary-General encourages all Member States to contribute to the Fund in solidarity with those affected by disaster. The success of the Fund's activities depends on the soundness of other parts of the system, including humanitarian programmes, preparedness programmes, and early recovery activities.

The Secretary-General's report on <u>humanitarian assistance and reconstruction of Liberia</u> (A/63/295) analyses the challenges to the delivery of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation to Liberia, in accordance with resolution 61/218. It examines particular progress in providing an environment conducive to promoting peace, development, regional security, financial and

technical assistance, and the return and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Among other major developments, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) stabilized all 15 counties, and created an environment conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. In October 2007, the Secretary-General deemed Liberia eligible for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, and the priority plan has been endorsed for \$15 million. By end-2007, 103,019 ex-combatants had been disarmed and 101,000 demobilized. As such, the focus shifted towards reintegration with vocational skills training and job placement.

The report concludes that for the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, massive poverty alleviation and economic recovery are essential, and substantial donor support is urgently needed to help the new Government provide services on a large scale. Reliable data are vital for establishing an effective development agenda and other strategies to reduce poverty. While building the capacity of national institutions is fundamental, job creation through the private sector is at the heart of the country's sustainable development.

In addition, implementation of the joint Government/United Nations programme to prevent sexual and gender-based violence is essential, the report states, and donors should ensure sustained funding for that programme. Education and health care are areas of critical concern, and increased support is also needed.

Also before the Assembly was the Secretary-General's report on <u>assistance to the Palestinian people</u> (document A/53/75-E/2008/52), which details efforts by the United Nations, the Palestinian Authority and donors to support the Palestinian civilian population and institutions between May 2007 to April 2008.

Among major developments during the reporting period, the Palestinian economy continued to decline. After Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip and formation of a new Palestinian Authority Government under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, the West Bank saw modest economic recovery. The Gaza Strip, however, continued its drastic decline and private sector collapse due to a near-complete closure. Progress was seen in reform and pledges from international donors, totalling \$7.7 billion for a three-year period, to enable implementation of the new Palestinian Reform and Development Plan.

Such events reflected the de facto political split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip from June 2007 onwards, the report notes. While bilateral political negotiations resumed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the November 2007 Annapolis conference, the situation in Gaza was characterized by near-daily rocket fire against Israeli targets, and Israeli aerial attacks. The report describes efforts by United Nations agencies to address the situation in the areas of education, health, human rights, the Millennium Development Goals and the environment. It also outlines the Organization's support for Palestinian institutions, private sector development and emergency assistance.

The report concludes that the period under review was "volatile and difficult", marked by a shift in political terrain and significant degradation in the quality of life for the Gaza population. The United Nations country team is prepared to offer full support to the Palestinian Authority to implement its Reform and Development Plan, and to Palestinians who have been severely disrupted in the conflict. In the coming year, new opportunities could emerge with the implementation of commitments from both parities. Negotiations could bring new approaches to reach the broader aim of the United Nations, the Quartet and the global community to realize

a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Assembly delegations also had before them a draft resolution on <u>special economic assistance</u> <u>for Yemen</u> (document A/63/L.21), by which they expressed solidarity with Yemenis impacted by flooding in the country's eastern provinces on 24 October 2008; invited Member States and relevant United Nations entities, among others, to provide economic and technical assistance in the post-disaster recovery process; and invited global support for Yemen's disaster risk management and disaster preparedness capacity.

#### Introduction and Action on Draft Resolutions

GIADALLA ETTALHI (<u>Libya</u>), Chairman of the Arab Group, introduced the draft resolution on <u>Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States</u> (document A/63/L.20). He emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States so that both organizations could move towards their common goals. The draft resolution requested that the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Arab League work in their own areas of expertise and responsibility towards those common goals, among them sustainable development, decolonization, disarmament and the end of all discrimination.

In engaging all aspects of the United Nations system, cooperation with the League would be more fortified and successful addressing the specific issues of the region such as energy, rural development, dedesertification, environmental protection, trade, water resources, agriculture and women's rights. In encouraging regularly consultation between the United Nations and the League, this draft's goals were in accordance with the spirit of the Charter, and he called on all Member States to support the adoption by consensus.

#### Action on Draft Resolution

The Assembly adopted without a note the draft resolution A/63/L.20 on <u>Cooperation between</u> the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

THOMAS MATUSSEK (<u>Germany</u>), introducing a draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (document A/63/L.17), said that by adopting the text by consensus, the Assembly could once again emphasize its solidarity with the Afghan people, and urge development of a democratic society after years of "Taliban terror".

Acknowledging encouraging achievements of the Afghan Government, he said 85 per cent of the population had access to medical treatment, and roads and schools had been reconstructed. To those questioning such success, he said: "Every strip of land once again cultivated by a farmer, and every child again attending school is a small victory for humanity." He urged that the Paris commitments be translated into action.

Recalling that the Afghanistan Compact remained the agreed basis of the Assembly's work, he underlined the need to ensure that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was adequately resourced. The Government needed to improve governance "across the board" and he encouraged decisive action to combat drugs and corruption, and to continue justice sector reform to improve the human rights situation. He also welcomed the recent Government decisions in the fight against corruption, the build-up of police forces, and efforts to boost growth through rural development.

For its part, Germany had increased its development aid by 170 million Euros in 2008, he said, and had made available additional funds to address the food crisis on short notice. Noting that the global community was appalled by the significant increase in attacks against aid workers, he shared great concern at the number of civilian casualties due to criminal groups, and their asymmetric tactics.

Intensified regional cooperation in all fields would be essential for the success of all international assistance to Afghanistan, and he encouraged regional partners to improve assistance to that end. In closing, he commended the women and men working on the ground in Afghanistan, and wished the country success on its road towards peace. The Assembly's approval of the draft would be a clear sign of its willingness to actively assist Afghanistan in that endeavour.

ZAHIR TANIN (<u>Afghanistan</u>) said it had been more than seven years since international forces had entered his country and the international community could sometimes lose sight of the original noble purpose for its work — to prevent terrorism from infesting a nation and the world. He urged the international community to retain this original purpose as "the light against the dark challenges that lay before us today", especially ongoing critical challenges as terrorists committed increasingly brutal acts — killing teachers, aid workers, and families.

Terrorist activities had an increasingly strong correlation with crime and narcotics. The financial and credit crisis also was impacting everyone and restricting resources. He said that Government also faced serious obstacles in its quest to fight corruption, hold elections, build a strong justice sector and increase economic development. Most importantly, he said, the current food shortage threatened more than eight million Afghans, especially with winter just a few weeks away.

The international community needed to embark on a smart and sustainable strategy that would be guided primarily by the interests of the Afghanistan people, with a priority goal of creating a self-sustaining country. Such a strategy would include components such as Afghan ownership at every level and every dimension. International involvement should refocus on the overall security of the Afghan people. Among other suggestions to that end, he suggested that the international community should consider expanding the focus of the multinational troops in the country to go beyond targeting the Taliban, with the ultimate goal of promoting and protecting the comprehensive security of the Afghan people.

He also urged a greater focus on addressing and curbing civilian casualties. While the Taliban were directly responsible for the majority of such deaths, the international forces could do more do reduce the risk of such incidents. "To build a self-sustaining Afghanistan, the people must be able to trust their Government and its allies to protect their lives and their families," he said. A re-emphasis on regional partnerships was necessary as the Taliban, Al-Qaida, the movement of refugees and the narcotics trade were transborder problems, he said. Afghanistan's first priority was its relationship with Pakistan, who suffered equal harm at the hands of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Despite the challenges, there was also reason for hope, as infrastructure had been strengthened and progress was being made on human rights and the rule of law. The international community needed to demonstrate its successes to the Afghan people to counter the Taliban's goal of persuading the Afghan people that the international community was

failing, especially during the transition after the United States elections.

Today also was a day of great hope because of a new beginning with two of Afghanistan's most important allies. With Pakistan's new President Asif Ali Zardari, we were witnessing the first move towards collaboration and cooperation that would hopefully lead to peace and security. With the United States, Afghanistan welcomed the recent historical election and looked forward to working with President-elect Barack Obama. He appreciated the continuing support of the United States.

JEAN-MAURICE RIPERT (<u>France</u>), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the resolution on Afghanistan was an opportunity for the Assembly and the international community to show its unanimous commitment to support that country's efforts in becoming a stable, prosperous and peaceful country. Stressing the European Union's unwavering commitment to that end, he said, however, it was essential that the international community support fully all financial commitments and human resources in order to ensure that urgent goal.

Current developments showed mixed results. There had been considerable progress strengthening the Afghan National Army and in the fight against drug trafficking and opium production, among others. He went on to point out that issues such as strong security, good governance, and the fight against corruption remained a challenge towards establishing national stability.

There was also great concern about civilian casualties. Although often at the hands of extremists and terrorist, the European Union was very certain that an increased awareness on the part of international forces was also extremely necessary to avoid civilian casualties. Still, he heralded some great achievements, such as the reduction of infant mortality and the enrolment in schools of six million children, one third of them girls, as examples of the success of the concerted efforts of both Afghan authorities and the international community.

"The international community and Afghanistan have a strategy [...] adopted in London in 2006, and a roadmap, developed at the international conference in Paris in 2008," he reminded the Assembly. There was now an urgent need to implement those institutions both by the international community and the Afghan authorities. Indeed, the Afghan Government would now need to increase its efforts of good governance and the fight against corruption. The concrete proposals of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would ensure that through several methods, among them, setting up criteria to measure aid effectiveness and the establishment of a database to track resources committed by donors.

Noting that the European Union was the second largest financial contributor to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and that the bloc's 25 member countries participated in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), he reiterated the essential need to reinforce the Afghan police. However, ultimately, "a sustainable solution to the challenges in Afghanistan must be political", one that would integrate the civilian and military efforts.

Offering condolences to the families of all international workers who had lost their lives fighting for the betterment of Afghanistan, he concluded expressing support and hope for the Peace Jirga between Pakistan and Afghan officials that had occurred this past October and that had opened bilateral dialogue and cooperation between the two countries to address the common challenges, and he urged a continuation of efforts on both their parts.

VITALY CHURKIN (<u>Russian Federation</u>), speaking on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), said his delegation was providing assistance to encourage the formation of a new Afghan statehood and the creation of sustainable democratic institutions in the country. As close neighbours of Afghanistan, SCO member States could not fail to be concerned about serious problems. Indeed, the continuing deterioration of the Afghan military and political situation, increased scale of drug trafficking, and transborder organized crime called for concerted joint action. The SCO was involved bilaterally and within multilateral forums to help ensure security and stability.

The security situation was a source of serious concern, due to intensified terrorist activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists, he explained, noting his delegation's continued relevant work within the framework of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. The scale of terrorist acts in Kabul, and increasingly frequent attacks on humanitarian personnel, made it necessary not to reconsider the policy of isolating extremist leaders, particularly those on the list of Security Council Committee 1267.

On the drug situation, he said terrorists and drug dealers were increasingly coordinating their actions, and global efforts to combat illicit drug production were ineffective. He called for intensifying anti-drug efforts in Afghanistan by destroying drug crops, prosecuting dealers and introducing alternative agricultural crops. The International Security Assistance Force deployed in Afghanistan must pay more attention to countering production and smuggling, he stressed.

For its part, the SCO continued joint efforts to establish close interaction with interested countries, as well as international and regional organizations, to create a broad partnership for countering such threats. He shared the concern that civilians be protected against terrorists and the unintended consequences of the coalition forces' operations. The ISAF should take measures to prevent civilian deaths. He highlighted the Security Council's decision to comply with international humanitarian law to prevent loss of life among civilians as an extremely important objective.

Conditions must be created for the Afghan Government to independently ensure security, he said, finally adding that such steps must be backed by real measures towards the socio-economic revival of the country. In closing, he said it was essential to ensure respectful attitudes towards national and religious attitudes.

ARMEN MARTIROSYAN (<u>Armenia</u>), speaking on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), said that while Afghanistan had been successful in building democratic institutions, it nevertheless faced continued security threats. Extremists from the Taliban and Al-Qaida had stepped up their efforts, and some regions in the country had fallen under their control. Further terrorist activities were well-organized, with the Taliban using kidnapping and suicide bombers.

It was clear that efforts to involve so-called moderate Taliban in national structures had not yielded results, he said, as they had used the opportunity to strengthen their positions. It was essential to isolate such extremists, especially those on the list of Security Council 1267 Committee. On poppy production, he said the drug-trafficking situation was very serious, and illicit crop production had grown in the southwest part of the country. Coordinated international action to combat trafficking was the only way to address that situation, he stressed.

He favoured comprehensive international cooperation to achieve the Moscow Ministerial Conference Declaration, which would involve establishing drug security and financial security "belts" around Afghanistan. He also called for ensuring the implementation of Security Council resolution 1735 (2006), especially to deal with those supporting terrorist groups. The large-scale production of heroin could be countered only by creating a global system to control its trafficking, and in that regard, he urged that resolution 1817 (2008) on the smuggling of the chemical compounds used to refine heroine be fully implemented.

He went on to draw attention to an effective format for cooperation among CSTO States for combating the drug trade, noting that for the first time, Romanian and Syrian law enforcement officials took part in it. That framework to combat trafficking from Afghanistan to Europe, in 2008, had resulted in the confiscation of tons of heroin, hashish and other drugs.

Continuing, he said stabilizing the military and security situations in Afghanistan could not be done without the United Nations, and his delegation was ready to support regional cooperation in the areas of economic reconstruction and combating drug trafficking. An important factor to help solve the conflict would be comprehensive cooperation between Afghanistan and regional countries. In closing, he urged strengthening Government structures, rebuilding the economy and dealing with the most acute social problems, and his delegation would contribute to that end.

GIADALLA ETTALHI (<u>Libya</u>) recalled the hopes of the Afghan people that the fall of the Taliban regime would have brought prosperity and stability. But clearly, according to recent reports, the situation remained difficult and their dreams had not been attained. An economy based on drug production and trafficking remained in place and conditions had deteriorated since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

He also noted that civilian casualties had increased by 39 per cent from the previous year, and that 40 per cent of those deaths were attributed to raids conducted by international forces and supporters of the Afghan Government. The casualties were increasing, despite appeals from the international community to protect civilians and to foster confidence between the international forces and the Government and the civilian population.

Creating a stable Afghanistan required not air raids, he said, but reconciliation of all Afghans. The inclusion from within all political, social and civilian sectors needed to be partnered with the social development and the creation of a dignified living standard so that the drug economy and its accompanied corruption could be dismantled. "Turning a blind eye to the fact will not change it", he said, noting that security would not be achieved unless all people were absorbed into the process. He added that indeed, if peace was going to be achieved through military action, "it would have happened a long time ago".

Expressing concern that recent international crises would aggravate food shortage in Afghanistan, a crisis already impacted by a drought, he called for the General Assembly, Member States and the wider international community to pledge \$4 million to counteract the dire situation. Financial obligations, committed in Paris last June, needed to be scaled up and fulfilled. He also referred to the violations of human rights to prisoners and pointed out that the last report on that situation had not mentioned any improvement

Clearly, progress had been made in many fields, such as mine clearance, fighting drugs, and infrastructure. But more resources were needed for UNAMA's mandate to be honoured, and

for that to happen, donor countries needed to fulfil their obligations. He concluded by stating that the success of the elections was not only based on how procedure was initiated and ensured, but by the inclusion of all Afghan people in the development and participation of the Afghanistan government.

ABDULLAH HUSSAIN HAROON ( <u>Pakistan</u>) said the success of international efforts in Afghanistan was critical for regional and international peace and security, and terrorism posed a common threat to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan had deployed 110,000 military personnel on its side of the border with Afghanistan and had lost more soldiers than the combined losses of the international security forces in Afghanistan. Much of the region's success against Al-Qaeda and Taliban had been achieved with Pakistan's support and cooperation.

Pakistan's support for the international efforts in Afghanistan demanded reciprocal cooperation based on goodwill, respect for each country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and mutual commitment not to let the respective territories be used against each other. Indeed, such violations of territorial sovereignty undermined joint efforts and actually served to "empower the forces against which we are fighting together". In addition to cooperation on security issues, the two countries had begun an invigorated plan to diversify and strengthen their relationship while promoting mutual trust and good will. The two sides had agreed to engage on multiple tracks, including political, military, intelligence and economic cooperation.

Turning to the issue of refugees, he said that Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the international community needed to do more for the early repatriation and rehabilitation of the millions of Afghan refugees that Pakistan continued to host. It was important to create a "pull factor" for the voluntary return of refugees inside Afghanistan, including viable family return packages. Until their repatriation, the international community needed to share the responsibility for maintaining Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The lack of security remained a major problem and concern and the control of the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan was a joint responsibility. Pakistan was determined to carry out its part and was committed to working with the Afghanistan and international forces. The Tripartite Commission continued to play an important role and should be fully used.

Much more needed to be done on counter-narcotics, and short-term measures needed to be complemented by comprehensive, durable and long-term solutions based on alternative livelihoods. He said the United Nations had a central role in the international efforts and UNAMA had a well-defined mandate. A huge development effort was required to turn around the situation in Afghanistan. Only through mutual cooperation and support could peace, stability and prosperity be achieved in Afghanistan and the region.

NAWAF AL MUTAIRI ( <u>Kuwait</u>), noting that his country was a sponsor of the resolution before the Assembly, stressed the United Nations' neutral role in fostering stability in Afghanistan. Indeed, Afghanistan had suffered from the scourge of wars, which had destroyed basic infrastructure facilities that provided water, electricity and communication services to the public. The humanitarian situation had reached a level of "extreme gravity", with 2008 marking the worst year since the initiation of military operations. International forces faced a real dilemma, as their goal was to eliminate Taliban and Al-Qaida movements and support the Afghan Government and people in rebuilding their country.

After seven years, achievements had been far less than those desired, he said, noting that some success had been realized in eliminating land mines, developing the national armies and police, and combating drugs. However, progress had been slow in light of recent developments in the Afghan arena. To that end, he was concerned at the deteriorating situation, particularly as the challenges were far greater than what the Government could handle alone, and it had lost control of substantial areas of its national territory.

Killing and kidnapping of civilians had increased, including the killing in September of two doctors and their driver who had been working to inoculate children against polio. He condemned the escalation of such violence, which had led to increased deaths among civilians, humanitarian aid workers and others. Last year, the country's humanitarian needs had increased, notably because of increased food prices, and he appealed to States, the United Nations and non-Governmental organizations to provide assistance. He also called on States to adhere to what had been decided at the Paris international Conference of Donor Countries, held in June.

He went on to say the Kuwaiti Fund for National Development had provided a \$30 million loan in fulfilment of its pledge, \$15 million of which had been allocated to rehabilitation of the Kandahar-Speen Bwaldak road. The Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society had provided more than \$6.5 million in assistance. In closing, he urged continued provision of aid to help Afghanistan achieve peace and stability.

K. YERRANNAIDU (India), noting that the resolution's central themes of security, governance, human rights, rule of law, and counter-narcotics, among others, were in line with India's perspective of the international community's challenges in Afghanistan. The escalation in asymmetric attacks in areas cleared of the Taliban and Al-Qaida was deeply worrying. While his Government condemned the attacks against civilians and international staff, the ultimate responsibility was with those who supported, financed and empowered the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. Increased random acts of violence against civilians only illustrated the desperation of terrorist groups in seeking to convert strategic defeat into tactical advantage.

For such reasons, he urged against inadvertently giving terrorists comfort, and ensuring that the complexity of the challenge was "not mistaken for a weakening of our collective will to win this war". Terrorists should not achieve parity with the legitimate Afghan Government, and it was essential to ensure that the message was clear: global support for and commitment to Afghanistan was unshaken.

With that, he urged pursuit of a three-pronged strategy, starting with security, without which neither Afghans nor other citizens could hope to see a "peace dividend". The converse was also true: without a robust military effort, Afghanistan could not be secured, and India saw a need for much closer alignment between the consistent application of force on terrorist groups and the achievement of political objectives of international efforts in the country. Second, he urged raising governance capacities in Afghanistan, and collectively ensuring better coordination of efforts to support the Government. Third, he urged ensuring that Afghanistan was at peace within its region, and vice versa, notably through regional coordination. The challenge was in ensuring that regional programmes were implemented, and removing barriers to effective overland trade and transit.

In that context, he reaffirmed India's commitment to assisting Afghanistan, highlighting that India's assistance programmes focused on bringing development benefits at the local and

national levels. In closing, he cautioned against diluting the overall message by adding on excessive expectations based on efforts that tended to replicate national socio-economic models in an inappropriate setting.

NORIHIRO OKUDA (<u>Japan</u>) said Afghanistan had made much progress over the last seven years, despite the difficult situation. The economy had grown at the rate of about 10 per cent over the last five years, and the number of students in school had soared from less than a million in 2001 to over 5.6 million today. It was gratifying to note that the capacity of the Afghan army had been enhanced to the point where it had been able to assume responsibility for Kabul's security. However, Afghanistan's problems could not be resolved by military means alone and the goals of security, governance and development could not be achieved independently of each other.

The international effort on behalf of Afghanistan was anchored in the United Nations, and UNAMA should be strengthened, he said. For its part, Japan had pledged a total of \$2 billion to the nation-building effort in the country. Japan had also taken the lead in disbanding illegally armed groups in Afghanistan, which had contributed to improving the security situation. Japan had also taken part in fighting terrorism by replenishing the fleet of the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition in the Indian Ocean.

However, even with the continued commitment of the international community, he said, much rested on the shoulders of the Afghan Government. The recent cabinet reshuffle was a demonstration of President Karzai's resolve to address the relevant issues more effectively. Such issues as governance, corruption and reform should also be addressed, particularly reform of the police force, Interior Ministry and counter-narcotics machinery.

The upcoming elections would be the most important political events over the next two years. The smooth start to the voter registration process was a good launching point for legitimate elections, he said. Finally, the importance of the regional dimension could not be overemphasized. Recent dialogues between Afghanistan and its neighbours were welcome.

ESHAGH AL HABIB ( <u>Iran</u>) said despite many accomplishments, such as the establishment of democratic institutions, efforts against terrorism and economic growth, much work remained to be done in Afghanistan, and serious challenges had yet to be tackled. The whole world had a vital interest in a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, and one that was free of terrorism and extremism.

In Iran's view, insecurity in Afghanistan could best be addressed by strengthening the autonomy and integrity of the Afghan national security forces and hastening the full national ownership of Afghans over the security of their country. In addition, capacity-building, training, education, the development of important sectors, and helping ordinary Afghans feel the results of the support of the international community in their daily lives, could help improve the country's overall situation.

The cultivation, production and trafficking in narcotic drugs in Afghanistan continued unabated and had impacted the country's security and development, while it simultaneously posed serious threats to the region and the world. While welcoming the Afghan Government's efforts in that area, more resolute endeavours needed to be made by Afghanistan and the international community. He said Iran had fought a deadly and costly war against drug traffickers that had cost it the lives of 4,000 law enforcement personnel, while another 12,000

had been maimed.

Iran had actively participated in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and had shouldered a huge burden over the past three decades by hosting millions of Afghans. Those Afghan nationals had enjoyed Iranian educational and welfare facilities, and had benefited from the same subsidies as Iranian people. Iran was hosting about two million Afghan nationals, half of whom were living in the country illegally. Iran expected more assistance and efforts by the international community to help Afghan nationals return to their home country in a more timely manner, he said.

ZALMAY KHALILZAH (<u>United States</u>) said he was pleased to co-sponsor a resolution before the Assembly that underscored the lead role being played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan as the central coordinator for civilian international assistance, and for ensuring that such assistance was coordinated with the Afghans and with military efforts. Commending the Special Representative and his staff for their work, he called on Member States to join "in supporting a surge in UNAMA's capabilities", including in finding ways to allow the Special Representative to hire people quickly. In turn, the Special Representative needed to develop "plans with timelines" for achieving the major tasks in his mandate.

He said the United States was gravely concerned about the humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan, where many lives were in jeopardy from possible food shortages and extreme cold weather. The United States -- which was the largest donor in Afghanistan, both financially and in-kind -- was prepared to do more, and other States were urged to respond to appeals from the Afghan Government and United Nations.

Further, given the challenges to security posed by Al-Qaeda and extremist Taliban, success would require the Afghan Government to make tough decisions and to implement agreed policies, including in local governance, combating corruption, enforcing rule of law, achieving economic development, pursuing robust counter-narcotics, and in reform of the police force. Indeed, the United States welcomed, and believed it crucial, that Afghan security forces take increasing responsibility as their capabilities grew and as conditions warranted.

Hewent on to welcome UNAMA's efforts to support preparations for elections, which President Karzai had committed the Government to holding in 2009. He also underscored the important role of neighbouring countries in securing Afghanistan's success, noting that the newly elected Government in Pakistan provided an opportunity for increased cooperation between the two countries.

He said that for Afghanistan's stability and development, it was crucial for regional cooperation to progress on several fronts: no sanctuaries for hostile forces; no use of extremists and terrorists to advance national interests; intelligence sharing; precluding regional geopolitical rivalry; encouraging reconciliation; and integrating Afghanistan into regional institutions and the regional economy.

For its part, the United States would do everything to ensure that the ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom took every precaution to prevent civilian casualties. However, the international community should not lose sight of the fundamental cause of the increase in casualties which, as spelled out in the Secretary-General's report, was the systematic campaign of violence being waged by the Taliban and other anti-Government elements. Donors must also follow through on their commitments, which they pledged last June when the

international community had endorsed the Afghan National Development Strategy.

MORTEN WETLAND (Norway) said the resolution under consideration sent an important message that States were united and committed to helping Afghanistan build a democratic country. Recalling the Paris Donors' Conference, at which States had pledged to renew their partnership with Afghanistan, he said Norway had pledged 500 million euros for the period covered by the Afghan National Development Strategy.

To make a difference, he focused first on United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), saying that expectations were high: The Afghan people were waiting to see the results that would justify "rhetoric in Paris". However, they had yet to experience the benefits of development. While improvements were seen in school enrolment and public health, other sectors had lagged, and he urged that the Mission be provided the necessary resources and personnel. That might require the practical application of rules regarding budgets, and he urged the Secretariat to "cut red tape" and speed the process of placing qualified people in the field.

On the humanitarian situation, he urged assisting the Government, drawing attention to Norway's increased support in facilitating the establishment of the new Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs office in Kabul. Regarding the elections, he said women comprised 38 per cent of the more than 820,000 voters registered in the first phase of the process, a "heartening" development. It was vital that the elections take place according to plan in September 2009 and 2010.

ROBERT HILL (<u>Australia</u>), expressing support for the draft resolution, noted important international steps to secure the situation in Afghanistan over the past year, such as renewed commitments and adoption by ISAF of a comprehensive political-military plan, as well as the Afghanistan Review Conference and the Afghan National Development Strategy. Still, challenges remained, and without basic security, much of what was needed — helping the Afghan people become self-sufficient in their own affairs, and creating conditions for economic and social development — would not be realized.

He said that the Taliban-led insurgency remained a serious threat to the sustained progress of the Afghan people. Indeed, the Taliban was determined to prevail, "not on the battlefield, but by sapping our resolve and public support for our endeavours and sacrifices, and through fear and intimidation of the Afghan civilian population". There was ample evidence of such indiscriminate violence, which had left more than 500 civilians dead in the first eight months of 2008. Further, the Secretary-General's report noted that reportedly, last year, insurgent groups had been responsible for some 142 cases of summary executions of community leaders and officials.

The international community must prevent the return of the former violent ideology, which had bred hatred, brutalized women, and fostered extreme poverty and repression of human rights. At the same time, he said States had the responsibility to prevent the re-establishment of safe havens for terrorist groups. Australia, for its part, had contributed some 1,100 troops and was the largest non-NATO contributor to ISAF. To help the Afghans combat Taliban-led insurgency and international terrorists, it had also committed over \$600 million in development assistance.

He went on to express support for UNAMA, especially in the preparations for upcoming elections. On the ground, Australia had undertaken efforts to bolster stabilization and

reconstruction, especially in the southern part of Afghanistan, largely through its Reconstruction Task Force. It had built schools, rebuilt bridges and irrigation systems, and provided training in basic trades. While those were only "small steps", what was under way in that province demonstrated the critical need for a coherent, integrated military and civilian strategy, which provided the basis to secure and sustain progress.

To help Afghanistan become more self-sufficient, especially towards taking responsibility for its security needs, Australia had initiated a mentoring and liaison team in Oruzgan province that was set to shortly begin active training for Afghan military units. He urged the United Nations to play a strong role in the more effective coordination of civilian efforts, especially in terms of relief, reconstruction and in governance. He stated his country's support for President Karzai in strengthening Afghanistan's institutions, and called for a "secure, free and fair" election. He praised Pakistan for recently improving relations with the Afghan government, and urged Afghanistan's wider neighbours to help support Afghan stability, especially border security, and anti-trafficking and counter-narcotics efforts.

JOHN MCNEE ( <u>Canada</u>) opened his remarks with condolences to the Spanish Government for the loss of the lives of two of its soldiers killed in Afghanistan this past weekend. He then went on to herald both the appointment of Kai Eide as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the restructuring of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, a collaborative effort between UNAMA and the Afghan Government. However, he pointed out that the success of UNAMA was only as strong as the support it received from the Member States. To that end, financial resources and political support needed to be ensured. That would honour and acknowledge the efforts of the Afghan people, "who continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination". An example of that national spirit was the growing Afghan National Army, an institution that had been unthinkable a year ago. In addition, Afghan security forces had just recently assumed, from ISAF, the lead security responsibility for Kabul. The strengthening of Afghanistan security and military forces promised future success in stabilizing the country.

Over the past year, Canada had increased its development commitment with an additional \$600 million, bringing its total contribution to \$1.9 billion over a ten-year period. He said commitment was also made for the repair of the Dahla Dam and irrigation system in Kandahar province, which, upon completion, would provide secure irrigation water supply to the province, as well as revitalize agriculture and provide thousands of much needed jobs to its residences. Canada had also initiated its Polio Eradication Program, with the goal of immunizing more than 7 million children across Afghanistan.

Furthermore, half of Canada's relevant funded programming was earmarked for national level initiatives as well, such as rebuilding the Afghan National Police, justice and corrections systems. To ensure regional stability and security, he said Canada was also participating in technical discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan border management officials. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga process was great encouragement to continuing establishing regional peace, and he congratulated both countries for their efforts.

However, in conclusion, he observed that progress should not "blind us to the harsh reality that these gains are precarious." With the deterioration of security in some parts of the country, rising food prices globally, a failed harvest and a drought, the Afghan people were facing pressing and difficult challenges. Because of those factors, Canada was placing humanitarian relief in Afghanistan as one of its priorities. "In doing so, we are making clear to the Afghan

people that the international community remains committed to supporting them," he said, and gave his Government's promise that they would ensure such commitment, not just in words, but in action.

ROSEMARY BANKS (New Zealand) said her delegation welcomed the progress made in Afghanistan in the past year. She congratulated the Afghan Government on its efforts to improve the situation, including in the areas of security, drug control, justice sector reform, gender equality and local governance. She welcomed Afghanistan's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and encouraged the Government to continue fighting that scourge.

Despite such progress, she said there was major concern about ongoing insurgent attacks and a continued high level of opium production. She said these extreme security challenges must not be allowed to justify continuing infringement of fundamental human rights, including access to justice, the right to due process, and freedom of expression. New Zealand condemned the insurgent attacks which often jeopardized innocent civilians. She thanked Afghanistan's neighbours for helping to stabilize the country and encouraged them to continue to help.

The international community needed to increase non-military assistance. She encouraged all nations to implement the commitments they had made to improve the circumstances in Afghanistan. It was essential that the required resources were available if conditions were to get better.

ANDRZEJ TOWPIK ( <u>Poland</u>) said the international community's presence in Afghanistan had one main purpose: to facilitate the creation of conditions in which Afghan authorities would be able to take full responsibility for the security, stability and development of their country. With that in mind, Poland had decided to increase its engagement within the International Security Assistance Force, from 100 troops in 2006, to the current level of 2,600 troops.

Moreover, in October, Poland had taken over responsibility for the security situation in Ghazni province. Turning then to the most important challenges facing the international community in Afghanistan, he stressed the need to stabilize the security situation and suggested that the best strategy to do so would be to create conditions that would be conducive to the development of a prosperous country, with effective, well-functioning and transparent Government structures.

At the same time, it would be necessary to address the humanitarian situation, by concentrating on the effective distribution of assistance and enhancing humanitarian capacity, he continued. In addition, the international community should better coordinate its activities, especially in regard to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force, the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and other international actors.

Developing regional cooperation was also important to stabilize the country and, in that context, he welcomed the improved relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. While Afghanistan would need significant and continuous support by the international community for reconstruction and stabilization efforts, programmes and initiatives that would enable the Afghan people to take full responsibility for the peaceful and prosperous development of their country should also be elaborated.

HAMIDON ALI (<u>Malaysia</u>) expressed deep concern for the significant deterioration of the security situation stemming from the spread of insurgent attacks and their use of asymmetrical tactics, stressing that "security is the major enabler" for urgently needed humanitarian relief, long-term reconstruction and socio-economic development in Afghanistan. He also called the high number of civilian casualties "unacceptable", and noted that UNAMA's record showed 1,445 civilian deaths in the past eight months, a 39 per cent increase over the past year.

He went on to condemn the "cowardly terrorist acts" of insurgents and other extremists, which targeted civilians, including humanitarian aid workers. But just as grave were the civilian casualties caused by pro-government forces, with 27 per cent of such deaths attributed to air strikes. All parties were therefore urged to ensure the protection of Afghan civilians according to international humanitarian and human rights laws. He urged relevant authorities on the ground to continually review their rules of engagement and procedures.

H drew particular attention to the narcotics situation in Afghanistan as the nexus of the drug trade and insurgent activities helping to finance terrorism and corruption. He recognized the "monumental task" for the country to eradicate the drug trade while providing alternative livelihood to poppy farmers, along with the protection of counter-narcotics officials, 77 of whom had been killed last year. Though national efforts had been made, he called on the international community to cut down the demand for opium by stemming the outflow of the drug from Afghanistan. In that endeavour, he encouraged the adoption of a Security Council resolution that would curtail the illicit drug trafficking from exporting countries.

In conclusion, he called for an integrated civilian and military approach, along with an all-inclusive national reconciliation process, to resolve the situation in Afghanistan, in addition to improvements to the country's delivery system, and respect for good governance and human rights. He reiterated Malaysia's commitment in that endeavour, and for continued assistance through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme to assist Afghanistan in the development of much needed human capital.

BAKI İLKIN (<u>Turkey</u>) said the resolution before the Assembly was a balanced document that reflected the progress made in Afghanistan, as well as the remaining challenges. Turkey was as committed as ever to helping Afghanistan build a secure, stable and prosperous country, and he noted Turkey's unique ties with the country. He referred to an annex to his speech's text, which included a concise inventory of Turkey's security and development assistance.

Despite the "doom and gloom" scenarios that sometimes appeared in the international media, Turkey was not pessimistic about Afghanistan's prospects. Despite the continuing challenges, primarily in the areas of security, counter-narcotics and governance, progress was being made on many fronts, he said. Yet, the primary responsibility to achieve success rested on the shoulders of the Afghan people and their Government, and he urged that Government to build its fight against corruption and fulfil the legitimate expectations of the Afghan people.

The Afghan people and their Government needed the full support of the international community in their efforts to transform their country. He was pleased to see the United Nations assume a more active and central role in coordinating the efforts of the international community. It was important to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian and development assistance to produce a positive impact for ordinary people in their lives, he said.

Improved regional cooperation was imperative to achieving overall goals and producing

tangible benefits for the Afghan people. He was pleased to see dialogue and cooperation emerging between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkey was committed to encouraging that promising relationship, including through a tri-lateral cooperation process between Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, which recently held its second summit level meeting in Istanbul. While the international community was moving in the right direction, the road ahead was full of challenges and the Afghans themselves should be in the driver's seat. At the same time, it was imperative that the international community act in a spirit of partnership with a long-term vision and commitment.

#### Action on Draft

The Assembly adopted the draft resolution, A/63/L.17, by consensus.

#### Introduction and Action on Drafts

Introducing the draft resolution on the situation in Central America (document A/63/L.18), GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) said there could be no doubt that the situation in the region was "incomparably better" than during the mid-1990s. Indeed, the last United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) had left in 2002, after 10 years of fruitful work. At the same time, his country had inherited a "culture of impunity", which had translated into prolonged human rights violations. That culture had given rise to crimes, often with transnational connections.

Against that backdrop, the idea to develop a more robust criminal prosecution entity had come about, and consultations between his Government and the United Nations continued for an extended period of time. After a first attempt in 2004 failed to receive approval in the Guatemalan Congress, a second attempt, promoted by the previous administration, had sought to strengthen national institutions, with an ad hoc Commission governed under national legislation. That revised Commission received Congressional approval in August 2007.

He drew attention to two issues, saying first that the Commission had responded to a Guatemalan initiative, rather than one of the United Nations, reflecting Guatemala's belief that global cooperation was needed to confront organized groups acting with impunity. Second, he said lessons to be drawn in Guatemala would benefit the United Nations, as the world was entering relatively new territory for multilateral cooperation. The work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala would "open new opportunities" of work, and at the same time, offer alternatives to traditional peacekeeping or peacebuilding models.

The purpose of the resolution was to keep the United Nations involved and informed of steps taken by Guatemala, and to receive the Assembly's continued support, without implying additional financial implications.

Making a general statement ahead of action on the text, JUAN ANTONIO YÁÑEZ-BARNUEVO (Spain) said it was important to recall that the issue had been on the Assembly's agenda since 1963, and the name change since then gave a sense of hope. Strengthening the peace processes should not lead the Assembly to forget the region's needs. Overcoming impunity was a long-term project, and combating impunity, combating transnational crime, and eradicating poverty, were challenges that remained despite positive macroeconomic indicators.

He supported a regional perspective in addressing such challenges, and was convinced that

further integration in Central America was essential for achieving regional economic development. Spain continued to prioritize democratic governance and strengthening civilian institutions, an example of which was Spain's work in combating gender violence. For such reasons, he welcomed Guatemala's efforts in reforming its security forces. In creating an international commission against impunity, the Government had shown its determination to take Guatemala down the path of development.

The Commission had had a considerable impact, he said, and commitment from the Government and the United Nations was more necessary than ever for its success. Spain had supported it from the beginning, and would continue to provide such support. He emphasized his commitment to continue support for Guatemala and said it was important that Central America stay on the Assembly's agenda. He hoped the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

KAREN HOUSE (<u>United States</u>), also speaking before the vote, expressed support for the Commission as it continued to implement its mandate to assist Guatemala in promoting the rule of law. In the past year, the Commission and the Government had directly confronted the challenge of strengthening Guatemalan institutions for prosecuting crime and ensuring a transparent, impartial legal process. Such work would help Guatemala protect the fundamental human rights. Much work remained to be done, but she hoped notable progress achieved would continue. Commending such efforts, she offered the United States' strongest support for all actors committed to promoting peace.

The Assembly then adopted by consensus resolution A/63/L.18 on the situation in Central America.

Speaking after the vote, the representative of the <u>Russian Federation</u> said the resolution adopted was very important, and he welcomed Guatemala's efforts to combat lawlessness. He hoped the Commission would assist the Government in ending organized criminal groups, which the country had inherited from a lengthy internal conflict.

Highlighting the Commission's unique legal nature, he said that in the body's founding agreement, it had been described as a non-United Nations body. Strengthening national legal systems should be done in the context of a specific State, and sometimes non-traditional solutions were required. He stressed that such arrangements be made in a transparent way. He noted that there had been a straying away from that rule, and in bringing the issue of the Commission's establishment before the Assembly, he reserved the right to return to the issue, as any other, in the future.

The Assembly then concluded its consideration of the agenda item.

AHMED HASSAN HASSAN MOHAMED ( <u>Yemen</u>) spoke of the recent unprecedented natural disaster in his country of floods and rains, which had caused extensive damage of approximately \$1 billion. This natural disaster had destroyed thousands of homes, had left more than 10,000 people homeless and had damaged 4,000 hectares of land. That profound impact to Yemen's infrastructure had complicated its progress toward achieving its Millennium Development Goals.

Yemen welcomed the enormous efforts and support from regional neighbours, the United Nations system and the wider international community, and he called for additional assistance

so that the Government could cope with the natural disasters while continuing its efforts to reach its Millennium Development Goals.

#### Statements on Humanitarian Assistance

JEAN-MAURICE RIPERT (<u>France</u>), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noting that conflicts, natural disasters, climate change, increased competition for scarce resources, as well as humanitarian crises, sadly continued to buffet civilian populations around the globe, reiterated the European Union's commitment to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Compliance to those principles was essential in order for host populations in often complex political and security contexts to accept humanitarian actors.

Stressing that European action in that area was built on compliance with principles and international humanitarian law, he also condemned attacks on humanitarian personnel, which continued to occur in a number of places, notably in Darfur, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. It was even more worrisome and unacceptable when humanitarian workers, both from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, became the specific targets of such attacks on a daily basis, he said.

Continuing, he underlined that the primary responsibility of States hosting United Nations operations or installations was to guarantee the security of humanitarian personnel, and he recalled the European Union's firm condemnation of all acts of terrorism, in any form, anywhere and whatever the excuse. The European Union attached great importance to the respect of humanitarian space, which was essential for providing access to populations in distress. Further, the independence of humanitarian actors with regard to the needs assessments of populations affected by crises had to be maintained.

He said that as agreed by the Heads of State and Government at the Assembly's 2005 World Summit, the European Union was convinced that each individual State had the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The international community, through the United Nations, also had the responsibility to protect populations from those crimes. "But where national authorities are manifestly failing to meet the responsibility to protect, the international community has confirmed that it is prepared to take collective action through the United Nations Security Council," he added.

CONROD HUNTE (<u>Antigua and Barbuda</u>), speaking on behalf of "Group of 77" developing countries and China, stated that after two years of operation, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) had been a step forward towards an internationally collective, responsive, prompt, fair and needs-based humanitarian assistance system. He noted that the report from the Secretary-General called for Member States to contribute to CERF, otherwise, the ability for the United Nations to coordinate responses to serious needs and demands would be seriously affected.

He requested that the Assembly be kept abreast of the financial dealings of the fund. He also noted his concern that, despite international humanitarian law and the guidelines in resolution 46/182 stating that humanitarian assistances should be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, in this past year, statements and efforts had been made that implied a modification of that framework. Intergovernmental consultations were necessary to ensure the recipient countries needs and views were taken into account.

Clearly, a stronger bilateral, regional and international cooperative response was needed in the face of the increasing number and scale of natural disasters and their impact on loss of life, livelihood, agricultural production and food security. Such a response played a unique role in enhancing developing countries' existing humanitarian capacities, through the development and maintenance of early warning systems, rapid response strategies to natural disasters and long-term tactics targeting post-recovery periods, among others. That point was of great interest to the Group of 77 and China, he said, as it addressed the transition from relief to development, and thus transforming disasters into opportunities for sustainable development.

The delegation planned to submit a draft resolution on "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". "International cooperation in response to natural disasters gives life to international solidarity and hope to multilateralism," he stated in conclusion.

MICHAEL MITCHELL (<u>Grenada</u>), speaking on behalf of Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that as the trend of natural disasters increased, CARICOM Member States were most vulnerable to hydro-meteorological hazards, and those States were also affected more frequently. To that end, CARICOM was particularly interested in the improvement of facilities for rapid access to funds in the initial phases of the humanitarian emergency and for ensuring equitable response to neglected emergencies or otherwise chronically under-funded emergencies.

Made up of small island developing States, with particular vulnerabilities to hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, the region's development was dependent on the frequency and magnitude of such weather events. Yet, international response to disasters that had struck Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and other islands, which experienced weakened infrastructure due to persistent and constant strong winds, rains, and tidal swells, in the more recent past, had been inadequate, he said.

It was in that context that he welcomed the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund, as a means to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies. He also recognized the innovative grant element in the improved Fund. Continuing, he stated that two years after the Fund's launch, CARICOM remained pleased with its overall application and noted in particular the immediate disbursement of funds based on appeals application. He said members of CARICOM also praised the invaluable role that the Advisory Group continued to play in the management of the Fund, and took note of the recent appointment of 16 members to that Group by the Secretary-General, which included four past members to assure continuity and integrity.

SUKHDEV SINGH DHINDSA, Member of Parliament of <u>India</u>, speaking also on behalf of Sweden, said the two countries had recognized that the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance was one of the most importance responsibilities of the United Nations, and thus, had noted that the demands for humanitarian assistance were likely to show an increase in the near future.

India and Sweden reiterated that humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law provided the basis for humanitarian assistance and that national Governments had primary responsibility for disaster management, although he acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult for States to tackle emergencies on their own. Nations could and should cooperate

amongst themselves to find collective and cooperative solutions to the challenges that disasters represented. To that end, Member States' efforts to come together to promote a more responsive, prompt, fair and need-based humanitarian assistance system had to be augmented and strengthened.

He said both India and Sweden believed that the capabilities and role of the United Nations in coordination and delivery of international humanitarian assistance needed to be strengthened. Further, both countries believed that disaster management had to be an inclusive process in which communities, civil society and the private sector all played important roles.

Referring to the unprecedented financial crisis the world was going through, he said in light of that crisis, it was important to highlight the continued requirement for maintaining and augmenting the levels and predictability of funding for humanitarian assistance. In that regard, Sweden and India believed that the Central Emergency Response Fund had been a success. That mechanism had succeeded in mobilizing \$1 billion during its first two years of operation. The disbursal of those funds had helped accelerate responses to emergencies and had helped in the management of those situations, he said.

Mr. Dhindsa, speaking in his national capacity, noted that as global humanitarian needs grew out of natural disasters, the demands on the humanitarian assistance from the United Nations system would grow as well. Asia, including India, had been affected by such natural disasters and, along with the international crises of food shortages and price increases, had put unprecedented stress on humanitarian responses.

He also observed that although there was no substitute for national efforts, the United Nations, in particular the Central Emergency Response Fund, played a key part in complementing and supplementing the groundwork laid by Member States. In two years, it was clearly becoming a valuable and impartial tool by helping to accelerate response and by catalysing field-level coordination. In that regard, the CERF annual budget was about 5 per cent of annual global humanitarian assistance, and he urged that figure to be increased.

He went on to express great concern at the increase of attacks on humanitarian personnel and on United Nations premises, stating India's condemnation of such violence. And, regarding the efforts to expand the base and scope of intervention in humanitarian aid and assistance, he stated India's openness to new ideas that would strengthen the operation and coordination capabilities of the United Nations.

He went on to say that India approached its own disaster management through a holistic, proactive, multidisaster and technology driven strategy, which conformed to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the 1992 Rio Declaration, Millennium Development Goals and the Hyogo Framework. The pillars upon which India developed its strategy were: community-based disaster management; capacity-development; consolidation of past initiatives and best practices; and the cooperation with agencies at national, regional and international levels. That illustrated India's commitment to promoting a culture of prevention and preparedness. Working together with the media, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in generating awareness, he stated in conclusion, would aid in the development of challenging and tackling humanitarian disasters.

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