

Statement by the Head of Afghanistan Delegation

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Affairs

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

It is a great honor for me to represent Afghanistan in this Ministerial Council meeting, I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers in extending our appreciation to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, His Excellency Karel De Gucht and the OSCE Secretariat for their warm hospitality and excellent organization of this important meeting and also wish all the best of success for the incoming chairmanship, Spain.

The Government of Afghanistan greatly values its partnership with the OSCE and commends the important role this organization plays in supporting the democratic process in Afghanistan. The presence of the OSCE “Election Support and Monitoring Teams” during the past presidential and parliamentary elections was of utmost importance and well-appreciated in Afghanistan. As a member of the Asian Contact Group, Afghanistan remains committed to work with the OSCE and will be honored to co-host the OSCE-Afghanistan Conference in Kabul in 2008.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a result of recent negative media coverage of Afghanistan, questions have been prompted as to what went wrong in Afghanistan and where the country is going. Any assessment of the direction of the political-security landscape of today's Afghanistan must begin by asking where Afghanistan was five years ago.

Decades of conflict and persistent violence left Afghanistan as a broken territory with no state institutions. With the support of our international partners, in less than five years we succeeded in re-building our state institutions, democratically elected both the president and members of the new parliament. We now have an independent Supreme Court, a new Constitution, National Army, National Police, a functional economy with the average 12% growth and a vibrant civil society. Over six million boys and girls attend schools and universities all across Afghanistan and we have a respectable place on the international stage. Therefore, what we see on our TV screens is only part of the story of Afghanistan, not the whole story.

In our view, however, there are three major threats that can derail Afghanistan's journey towards a bright future: terrorism, narcotics and weak state institutions, in particular the security sector. With respect to the primary source of threat, terrorism, unfortunately we are facing the most lethal types of terrorism in Afghanistan: These are non-state terrorist groups such as Al-Qaheda and more importantly terrorists who receive

sustained ideological, financial, logistical and intelligence support and sanctuary outside our southern border, in the guise of the Taliban.

Furthermore, there exists an organic link between the above three menaces. For example the profits from trafficking drugs have become important sources of sustaining the terrorist network in the region and also an important contributory factor in the prevailing corruption of state bodies in parts of Afghanistan. As a result, we need to pursue a holistic and comprehensive strategy to deal with the above three interlinked problems. A very important component of such a strategy must be the sustained and long-term commitment and support of all members of the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our consistent and sincere desire to have friendly relations with all members of the international community, particularly with our neighbors. The Government of Afghanistan believes that in an increasingly interdependent world, development, security and prosperity are indivisible and must be shared among neighbors. We view increased regional cooperation and integration as the best way to address the challenges of the region and to prosper in this competitive and globalizing world.

Unfortunately, there still remain forces in our southern neighbor that see a vulnerable and dependent Afghanistan in their perceived national interest. Such forces avail from

any means, including extremism and terrorism to realize their objectives. We need the support of the international community either to convince or coerce such forces in our southern neighbor to alter their policies towards Afghanistan. A stable, independent, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan is also in the interest of Pakistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude my speech by sharing with you our vision for Afghanistan. Events of recent years have exacerbated mutual suspicion, fear and misunderstanding between Islamic and western societies and have widened the gap between the worlds' two great civilizations. As a result, the theme of Clash of Civilization has gained credibility. But for the sake of world's peace and human civilization, we need to confront those who are seeking clashes and divisions. Afghanistan has been fortunate to have the support of almost all members of the international community with diverse political, cultural and religious orientation. One can refer to Afghanistan as an example of "Alliance of Civilizations", the noble joint initiative by Turkey and Spain, in which we wholeheartedly endorse it. World is in urgent need of bridges. It is our desire for Afghanistan to become a bridge between the Islamic world and the family of pluralistic democracies.

To realize this Afghan vision, we need the full support and long-term commitment of all members of the international community, particularly our democratic partners.