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Official Records

President: Mr. Kutesa (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Antoine (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 37

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/540)

Draft resolution (A/69/L.20)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.20.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): It is an honour for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/L.20). The year 2014 has been marked by seminal developments in Afghan domestic and foreign politics, and the draft resolution before us today reflects all the facets of those key developments in Afghanistan.

Despite the variety of topics worthy of our attention, I will limit myself today to briefly highlighting a few key developments. Afghanistan has successfully concluded its presidential and provincial council elections. For the first time in the country's history, power was peacefully transferred from one Administration to another by a democratic process. On 29 September, President Ghani was inaugurated and, together with Mr. Abdullah, the Chief Executive Officer, will form a Government of national unity. The Afghan people — men and, most encouragingly,

millions of women — have shown tremendous courage in making use of their constitutional right to cast their vote, defying the Taliban's threats to attack the election process. We commend the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the critical support they provided to the Afghan electoral institutions during that process. Germany, along with other partners from the international community, also supported the process with substantial contributions.

It is now essential that both Afghanistan's President and its Chief Executive Officer continue to work together closely, on a basis of mutual trust, to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead for Afghanistan. Electoral reform and the strengthening of electoral institutions, along with constitutional reforms, are at the core of the agreement on establishing a Government of national unity and must be addressed in a timely manner. Economic reforms must be tackled swiftly in order to foster economic growth and create job opportunities for the benefit of the entire population. Severe budgetary constraints and a volatile security situation demand effective decision-making processes on the part of the Government. As Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, underlined during his recent visit to Afghanistan, all actors in the Government of national unity must embrace their responsibility for the future of Afghanistan and continue to set aside personal ambitions.

Secondly, the draft resolution reflects the remarkable shift in the security transition that Afghanistan and its international partners are approaching. In less than six weeks, the International Security Assistance

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Force mission will come to an end, and the Afghan national security forces will assume full responsibility for providing security to the Afghan people. Since the transition process began, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan Local Police have continued to improve their capacities and have proved increasingly capable of responding to security challenges, albeit at a high cost. Challenges still remain, and the achievements attained so far are not yet irreversible.

The draft resolution therefore underlines the international community's resolve to further support the Afghan security forces beyond the transition. At the NATO Wales Summit, NATO and its partner countries renewed their commitment to continuing their support to the Afghan national security forces. At the beginning of 2015, at the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan, they will establish the Resolute Support Mission for training, assisting and advising the national security forces. They will contribute to the financial support of the Afghan security forces and have committed to strengthening the long-term enduring partnership with Afghanistan. The German Government has also offered to continue supporting the Afghan security forces. We commend the new Government of Afghanistan for expeditiously signing a bilateral security agreement with the United States and a status-of-forces agreement with NATO, both necessary preconditions for the international community's continued support.

Later this year in London, Afghanistan and its international partners will meet to refresh the long-term commitment of the international community throughout the transformation decade. That commitment, declared by the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners at the Bonn Conference of 2011 and reaffirmed at the Tokyo Conference in 2012, rests firmly on the principle of mutual accountability. Building on that unique framework, the international community has pledged \$16 billion through 2015 in support of Afghanistan's economic and political stabilization. In addition, it has committed to sustaining its support at or near the levels of the past decade through 2017, in line with the principles of aid effectiveness. In return, the Afghan Government has committed to working more determinedly to achieve its governance and development goals.

During the past decade, Afghanistan has indeed made remarkable progress in a variety of areas, including health, education and infrastructure.

However, continued efforts are of paramount importance for protecting and advancing the gains made in past years. As the draft resolution reflects, preserving and consolidating gains in the protection and promotion of human rights and the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of Afghan life remain critical. Good governance and the fight against corruption must be strengthened, a goal that the new Afghan President committed his Administration to in his inaugural speech. Finally, the Istanbul Heart of Asia process, aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and dialogue, took a step forward at the most recent Ministerial Conference, held in Beijing in October. As a supporting country to the process, Germany is looking forward to seeing progress in tapping its full potential to foster trust and cooperation in the region between now and the next Ministerial Conference, which the Government of Pakistan has generously offered to host.

Those watershed developments suggest that the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and the international community is evolving. It is essential to understand, however, that the very redefinition of the relationship should reinforce it. That is also the core message of the draft resolution before us today.

The new Afghan Government assumed its duties only a few weeks ago. It faces tremendous challenges, and the Government of national unity has clearly stated, and already demonstrated, its determination to tackle those challenges with vigour. We are confident that that resolve to improve the lives of Afghan citizens will guide the new Government in its work. By adopting this draft resolution today and once again by consensus, the General Assembly will reaffirm its commitment to a prosperous and peaceful future for Afghanistan and send a strong message of support to the Afghan Government and people.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all the delegations that participated in this year's informal consultations, and in particular to my colleague Ambassador Tanin and his team for their dedication and close cooperation.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): As we come together in the General Assembly to adopt this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/L.20), I would like to thank all the Member States that have participated in its negotiation. I would also like to thank Ambassadors Braun and Thoms, and their team at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations,

particularly Daniel Schemske, for their hard work in facilitating the negotiations.

At the end of this year, the Government of Afghanistan will take full responsibility for the country's security. The mandate of the International Security Assistance Force, authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, is set to expire on 31 December, and Afghanistan will then move towards a more normalized international status as a sovereign nation. We have been striving to reach that moment for the past decade. It is a major accomplishment and an important step towards achieving a peaceful, sovereign and prosperous Afghanistan.

While NATO's combat role will end, Afghanistan and NATO remain committed to a long-term strategic partnership. NATO will continue to train, advise and assist the Afghan national defence and security forces beyond 2014 through its Resolute Support Mission, on the basis of the NATO-Afghanistan status-of-forces agreement and the security and defence cooperation agreement between Afghanistan and the United States of America. We welcome the Assembly's message of support for the new mission. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my Government's profound gratitude to all the international civilian and military men and women who have served shoulder to shoulder with their Afghan partners in working for a better future for the people of Afghanistan. The Afghan people will always remember and honour their sacrifice and dedication.

Afghanistan has emerged from a historic election that marked its first democratic transfer of power from one President to the next, an important milestone in Afghanistan's multifaceted transition. While the challenges that arose during the election period tested our resolve, the wisdom of the country's leadership and the support of its friends and partners have enabled us to overcome the difficulties and move towards a unified, peaceful, democratic and prosperous future. The establishment of a Government of national unity has created an atmosphere of broader political inclusivity and participation. It will enable Afghans from all walks of life to contribute to the country's economic and social development, to the sustainability of the Afghan State and its security forces and to peace and security in Afghanistan and the wider region.

The newly elected President of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai,

together with the national unity Government, is vigorously pursuing a comprehensive reform programme aimed at delivering on the campaign promises and promoting peace, stability and prosperity across the country. I would like to highlight three key components of that comprehensive reform agenda.

The first is eliminating corruption. Corruption corrodes State effectiveness, security, public faith in Government and progress towards peace and prosperity. It feeds insurgency, patronage and illegal interests. Tackling corruption is crucial to the Government's reform agenda. In his inaugural address, President Ghani stressed his policy of zero tolerance for corruption. As soon as he assumed the presidency, he ordered the Supreme Court to reopen an inquiry into the Kabul Bank fraud case. Since then, the Court has sentenced the bank's executives to 15 years in prison, ordered the payment of substantial fines and frozen the assets of those accused of corruption. Other suspects will now be investigated for their involvement in the \$900 million embezzlement scandal. That courageous step demonstrates the Government's firm commitment to eradicating corruption and ending impunity.

On strengthening democratic accountability, governance and the rule of law, Afghanistan's leadership is in the process of establishing a functional, merit-based cabinet as part of a wider commitment to building effective governance at every level. In addition, we will reform electoral institutions, electoral processes and the relevant laws, as well as adopt the necessary amendments to the Constitution. The Government will also focus on reforming the judiciary and all law-enforcement institutions, inter alia by taking concrete actions to expand access to justice and uphold the rights of all Afghan citizens, particularly women and girls. I would like to call attention to the Government's recent adoption of the Afghanistan national action plan for women, peace and security, which represents an important step in that regard.

With regard to promoting economic growth and social development, the national unity Government is committed to economic reforms that stimulate growth and tackle poverty, inequality and unemployment. They include strengthening cooperation between the Government and the private sector, removing obstacles to investment and trade, promoting sustainable livelihoods, reinvigorating counter-narcotics efforts and using aid effectively to reinforce development and stability. The continuing implementation of the Tokyo

Mutual Accountability Framework remains central to those efforts, and we look forward to the next Ministerial Meeting on Afghanistan to be held in London next month. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Kingdom for hosting that important meeting.

The Afghan people have been the victims of terrorism and violence for almost 40 years. The violence perpetrated by terrorists, extremists and illegal armed groups continues to have daily, devastating impacts on all civilians, particularly women and children, and poses the greatest obstacle to political, economic and social progress in the country. The Afghan National Security Forces continue to demonstrate professionalism and courage in protecting the Afghan people. Moving forward, the national unity Government will work tirelessly to continue to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan national security forces to uphold the security of the nation and to preserve the achievements of the last decade. The continuing support of our international partners, in particular through the new NATO mission, is crucial to the success of those efforts.

But the country will not achieve peace through military efforts alone. President Ghani has called on all armed opponents of the Government to enter into political talks and play their part in building a strong and successful Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan is working to establish a wider, inclusive political framework for lasting peace, including a new outreach to the armed opposition and efforts at national reconciliation. This is an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process, but, at the same time, we recognize the important role of regional and neighbouring countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in contributing to our efforts to end the conflict. President Ghani initiated serious efforts to further a political settlement during his recent visits to Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan and in his meetings and conversations with the leaders of neighbouring, regional and partner countries.

Regional cooperation is key not only to peace and security but also to prosperity in Afghanistan and the wider region. In that connection, the Government of Afghanistan is committed to deepening cooperation with its neighbours and regional partners. Last week, President Ghani paid a historic visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where the leaders of the two countries opened a friendly, forward-looking dialogue and made concrete agreements relating to improving bilateral economic, trade and investment relations. The

visit generated an unprecedented surge of optimism and set the groundwork for long-term cooperation between the two nations.

In October, President Ghani conducted another historic State visit to the People's Republic of China, where bold steps were taken towards increasing cooperation in the areas of economic development and stabilization. The visit coincided with the annual Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Beijing on 31 October, which reaffirmed commitments to strengthen regional security and cooperation for a secure and stable Afghanistan. We are grateful to the Government of China for its leadership and for hosting the meeting, and we thank the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for agreeing to host the next ministerial meeting of the Istanbul process in 2015. The President of Afghanistan looks forward to furthering regional engagement and will therefore attend the upcoming summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation at the end of this month in Kathmandu.

Deepening regional cooperation will open the doors to a flourishing continental economy in the heart of Asia. Afghanistan has great potential to enhance the development and prosperity of the entire region by unlocking the country's capacity to serve as a hub for connectivity and trade across Asia. That will entail key energy and power projects, such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, as well as the building of a wide regional transport network, including railways and highways. All regional partners can play a role by working together and engaging chambers of commerce and business communities in joint and coordinated action to turn potential into reality.

As the new Government focuses on renewed regional cooperation, our long-term partnerships with the wider international community remain the backbone of our efforts for peace, security, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. The support of the international community has allowed us to build a new Afghanistan and will continue to be crucial in the transformation decade ahead. The President's upcoming visit to London to attend the London Conference on Afghanistan and his upcoming visit to the United States will be important steps in refreshing and furthering our mutual cooperation and partnership with the international community.

The past 13 years have seen the international community's unprecedented engagement in supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to build peace and stability. While the goals set over a decade ago have not been fully realized, Afghanistan is determined to bring sustainable peace, security and prosperity to the country with the support of our international partners. The Government of Afghanistan's ambitious agenda of reform, the collaboration of all Afghan political forces and the support of the Afghan people will enable us to put an end to the destructive narrative of toxic extremism and to reach the beginning of an era of peace. In doing so, we will change the course of history in the heart of Asia to the great benefit of our people, our neighbours, the wider region and the international community.

The Acting President: I call on the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia and Albania; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement. I would like to thank all delegations that have participated in the consultations on the draft resolution (A/69/L.20) and particularly the German team for so ably facilitating the negotiations. We would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Let me start by reiterating the European Union's full support for the continued important role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all the United Nations agencies that support the Afghan people and coordinate the international community's assistance. As the International Security Assistance Force mission comes to an end and the international combat troops are withdrawn, the role of the United Nations will be even more important in assisting the Afghan authorities in their efforts to ensure that the gains achieved are safeguarded and used as the foundation for further progress.

The international community will soon meet in London at the Conference to be co-chaired by the Governments of Afghanistan and the United Kingdom. The Conference will be an occasion for the new Afghan Government to set out a serious and ambitious

reform programme and to begin a process for reaching agreement on the refreshed mutual accountability framework that will be finalized at next year's Senior Officials Meeting.

The London Conference will also be an opportunity for the international community to restate its long-term commitment to support Afghanistan and to reaffirm existing financial commitments through 2017, underpinned by the principle of mutual accountability. It will also be an opportunity to consider the progress made in the commitments set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, agreed at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in July 2012. Afghanistan has been the beneficiary of unprecedented levels of international assistance, but it is vital that assistance be sustained over the coming years, since it is critical that Government revenues increase in the future. The European Union is pleased to welcome the formation of the Government of national unity and has recently signed an agreement to provide up to €1.4 billion over the next seven years in development assistance. That money will be used, in line with the common EU strategy, to strengthen Afghanistan's institutions so as to enable Afghans to be responsible for securing the gains made over the last 13 years, as well as to make it possible to continue developing national institutions in line with the needs of the women and men of Afghanistan.

Gains can be secured only if the new Government commits to enacting and implementing the critical reforms needed to improve economic and political governance in the country, including by tackling the widespread problem of corruption. Urgent action is needed to put in place the measures necessary to improve the economic growth outlook and attract investment. Only in that way can Afghanistan both create the jobs and increase the revenue that the country needs to truly stand on its own two feet. But investors are unlikely to risk their capital, if Afghanistan does not improve the ease of doing business in the country and, in particular, the enforceability of contracts through a strengthened rule of law. Serious reforms are also needed with regard to tackling illicit narcotics, which contribute to sustaining the illicit economy.

The failure to remedy injustice, both real and perceived, has been one of the greatest failings of the previous Afghan Administration and has provided an easy target for those opposed to the Government. The new Government has taken the welcome step of

reopening the investigation into the corrupt practices that led to the collapse of the Kabul Bank. The European Union also welcomes the appointment of a new Chief Justice and a new Attorney-General. It is vital to maintain that reform momentum and to encourage all parts of the justice system to work together in a constructive way to address systemic failures.

Afghanistan has made good progress since 2001 in addressing the legacy of discrimination from the Taliban regime. While the European Union is fully supportive of a national reconciliation process in Afghanistan, we must guard against the Taliban returning to its previous unacceptable practices. We need to see a democratic process that fully promotes and respects human rights and the rule of law, including the right of women and girls to education and full participation in Afghan society. For its part, the European Union will extend the mandate of its European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and continue to support capacity-building of the Afghan police and the rule of law. Much of the legal framework needed to recognize the equality of men and women is now in place, but far greater and more systematic action is required in order to ensure full and adequate implementation, as well as women's equal participation in decision-making processes across the country.

In conclusion, all those challenges will require a strong commitment from both the new Government and the international community. The European Union and its member States will remain a steadfast partner, as set out in the new comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan, which was endorsed in June. We applaud the role played by UNAMA and reiterate the importance of the Mission's maintaining the countrywide presence that is so necessary for the ongoing delivery of international assistance.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan.

The Afghan people have just completed a very important stage in their history: the transfer of power from one elected head of State to another through the mechanism of elections. We hope that the newly elected national leader will guide efforts towards achieving peace and progress in the country, and we

wish all Afghans, as well as the new leadership, success and strength in tackling the problems before them. Unfortunately, there are many.

Each of our countries supports close, friendly relations with Afghanistan, based on mutual consideration and equitable cooperation. We all have a stake in seeing that a pessimistic prognosis for the country's prospects for development, along with its security and stability, is not borne out. We consider the 30 September signing of the bilateral security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States and the accord with NATO on the status of forces to be the sovereign right of the Afghan Republic, which must in no way be disputed. It is our hope that those documents will help strengthen security in the country. We note, moreover, that the new mission, which has been agreed with the Afghan leadership and strengthened by the corresponding resolution of the Security Council, will become an integral part of the framework of international cooperation.

We are very concerned by the situation in the area of security and view with alarm the trend involving increasingly terrorist, extremist and other radical elements that are striving to broaden their spheres of influence, not only through far-reaching operations but also through contemptible terrorist attacks, which we decisively condemn. Further grounds for concern is the information on the establishment of contacts between the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and the Afghan armed opposition, aimed, *inter alia*, at joint acts of sabotage in the north of Afghanistan.

In realistically assessing the situation, the CSTO is taking measures to strengthen its own capacity for collective reaction to the threats and challenges emanating from Afghanistan. We intend to counter the dangers stemming from the infiltration of destabilizing elements into Central Asia, the spread of fundamentalist ideas and the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters. Radicals from groups affiliated with Al-Qaida have noticeably stepped up their activities along the borders of the Afghan Republic with the neighbouring countries of Central Asia. Increased instability in Asia and the Middle East makes the problem of foreign terrorist fighters all the more urgent.

In the context of the Afghan situation, the question of achieving intra-Afghan reconciliation also takes on increased importance. The member States of the CSTO support the efforts of the Afghan leadership in that regard. In that context, we hope that the new

Afghan authorities will proceed with redoubled energy to advance that key aspect of the normalization of the situation in the country. Naturally, that can happen only with Kabul playing the leading role and on the basis of the well-known triad of principles, namely that the terrorists lay down their arms, recognize the Constitution of Afghanistan and completely sever their ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, in strict compliance with the relevant Security Council sanctions regime. The CSTO States are prepared to strengthen their cooperation, both within their organization and with foreign partners, in particular with the Afghan authorities, with a view to curtailing further threats throughout our region.

The countries of the CSTO express serious concern with respect to the sharp increase in the narco-business in Afghanistan. Since the June meeting of the Security Council on Afghanistan, CSTO member States have had a unified position on that score. The agreed approaches concerning the narco-threat, in particular with regard to Afghanistan, are contained in the CSTO's draft anti-narcotics strategy for 2014-2020. We must point out that, in spite of the efforts of the international community and local authorities, Afghan drug cartels continue to increase production, and that is a challenge that can be considered a threat to international peace and security. Without tough measures to get rid of the crops and the laboratories, it will not be possible to reverse current trends and achieve a positive result. The international community and the Afghan Government have the shared responsibility to curb the illicit production of and trafficking in drugs.

We note the courageous efforts and partial success of the Afghan security forces and law-enforcement bodies in curbing the narco-business. We honour the dead and those wounded in that difficult and at times unfair fight. We believe that stopping the expansion of drug trafficking is one of the measures that will ensure security in Afghanistan and forms an integral part of our collective efforts to stand up to terrorist threats. For that purpose, the CSTO States are prepared to continue to provide assistance aimed at strengthening the ability of the Afghan National Security Forces. Moreover, our organization already has significant experience in countering the illicit trafficking in Afghan opiates, including as part of Operation Canal, which in September 2008 received the status of a permanent regional counter-narcotics operation.

The mechanisms to counter smuggling have been functioning on the northern routes from Afghanistan into Europe. The practical challenges involved in blocking the channels used in smuggling narcotics from Afghanistan, as well as in curbing the work of transnational drug traffickers using the territory of the States of Central Asia for smuggling of Afghan drugs have been handled this past year as part of the special Canal-Southern Rim and Canal-Valley operations, thanks to which we removed 17.5 tons of hard drugs and psychotropic substances from circulation. In addition, 5,300 crimes were identified and 25,200 criminal cases opened. We welcome the participation of the Afghan National Security Forces as observers in those special operations. We call on NATO and the contingent of forces in Afghanistan to become really involved in the fight against illegal production and illicit drugs.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the willingness of our countries to actively participate in large regional projects aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development in Central Asia and Afghanistan. In particular, that involves implementing the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project and building the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway. We are also prepared to look at the possibility of providing assistance to create conditions enabling the successful implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline system and the construction of railway lines and roads for automobiles. It is important to step up cooperation with the regional organizations and mechanisms involved in those projects.

We express the hope that the new leadership of Afghanistan will get down to the business of building an independent, self-sufficient, democratic and neutral dynamically developing State, one effectively fighting terrorism and narcotics. For our part, the CSTO countries are prepared to use all the capabilities that we have and to do everything we can to help, working both bilaterally and on a multilateral basis in various arenas to deal with those challenges.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Afghanistan is on the cusp of a historic change. In that context, today's debate and this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/69/L.20) are most timely. Pakistan appreciates the facilitation of the draft resolution on Afghanistan by Germany. Pakistan is a sponsor of the draft resolution.

We wish to pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, who did an outstanding job as a leader, as a mediator and as a conciliator. His benign presence and wise counsel in Afghanistan raised the stature of the United Nations and helped that country move towards democratic transition, peace and stability. We also wish to thank him for working very closely with the leadership of Pakistan. We wish to congratulate Mr. Nicholas Haysom on his appointment as the new Special Representative, and we look forward to working with him. I also wish to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for his very positive, constructive and forward-looking statement today.

We congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the elections and the peaceful democratic transition. That was a historic first. Pakistan supported the electoral process in Afghanistan by strengthening security along the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan's relationship with the new Government of national unity in Afghanistan has started on a high note. President Mamnoon Hussain attended the inauguration of President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs, visited Kabul to set the tone for a comprehensive and enduring partnership. President Ghani's visit last week to Islamabad marked a holistic renewal of our relationship. I agree with Ambassador Tanin that the visit generated an unprecedented surge of optimism. A peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital interest. Our nations are joined by the bonds of common faith, kinship and history.

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif outlined his vision of a multi-tiered bilateral engagement on the political, security, economic and cultural levels. Pakistan and Afghanistan have resolved to forge robust economic partnerships by expanding trade, promoting investment, improving infrastructure, building road and rail links and generating energy. We also envisage collaboration with Afghanistan on reconstruction, border security and defence, capacity-building, education and parliamentary exchanges. We envision a peaceful neighbourhood, connected by trans-regional initiatives like the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. I have shared details on the recent engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to reassure the Secretary-General that our two countries are, in his words, "resetting" our

relationship and increasing the space for cooperation in all areas, particularly in the areas of security and counter-terrorism, which includes the activation of interaction on the military and intelligence tracks.

The focus is now rightly shifting to a managed security transition in Afghanistan so as to pave the way for internal stability and economic development. The past mistakes of abandoning Afghanistan should not be repeated. We welcome Afghanistan's bilateral security agreement with the United States and the status-of-forces agreement with NATO. We agree with the Secretary-General that Afghanistan's security institutions will require substantial assistance for years to come. In that context, sustaining the Afghan forces is important. The Secretary-General has highlighted the plight of civilians who are caught in the crossfire, with an increased number of deaths and injuries.

In the post-2014 period, domestic and international terrorist networks, insurgents and criminal groups should not be allowed to push Afghanistan towards deeper internecine strife. Intra-Afghan reconciliation remains the keystone for creating the conditions needed for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. An inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process, which the new Government is initiating, is imperative for national unity and progress. Pakistan stands ready to support that process.

Pakistan and Afghanistan both face the threats of terrorism, violent extremism and transnational crime, and a precarious security environment. We will counter those threats with a strong common resolve and coordinated endeavours. Non-State actors should not be allowed to dictate Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations. Our relationship must be based on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and marked by trust and cooperation. On our side, we are prosecuting Operation Zarb-e-Azb to take out terrorists and take down their networks. There is zero tolerance for them. Our nation and our valiant armed forces are determined to fight that war to the finish.

There are no bad or good terrorists. Terrorists are criminals, plain and simple. Action is being taken against them, without distinction and differentiation. The soil of Pakistan will be cleansed of the scourges of terrorism and violent extremism. Action on the other side of the border would help to ensure the annihilation of the toxic ideology of terrorism and the operatives who implement its dark agenda. In that regard, we appreciate

the steps being taken by the Afghan Government for simultaneous operations on the Afghan side of the border to address specific security situations.

The Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan (A/69/540) expresses grave concern at the economic situation, especially a precipitous drop in growth and a decline in investor confidence. We hope that the pledges made under the Tokyo Mutual Assistance Framework will materialize in order stimulate growth at the local, regional and national levels. That is critical for continued stability in Afghanistan. We look forward to continued international commitments to Afghanistan at the London Conference next month. The Secretary-General's report also refers to the booming illicit economy in Afghanistan, which is both a symptom and a source of uncertainty. We hope that the international community will assist the Government of Afghanistan and other regional countries to counter the narcotics trade and promote development priorities to strengthen its licit economy.

We are encouraged by President Ghani's decision to give priority to refugees. More than 3 million documented and undocumented refugees continue to live on Pakistan's soil, while the international assistance for them has been dwindling over the years. We are hosting the largest, single-country, chronic refugee caseload. Despite constraints on Pakistan's resources, we have extended the refugees' stay in Pakistan until the end of 2015. Three steps are necessary to deal with the refugees in Pakistan: first, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must increase its assistance; secondly, the international donor community, which seeks to help the new Government rebuild and reconstruct Afghanistan, should earmark resources for the rehabilitation and repatriation of refugees; and thirdly, the Afghan Government itself should, in its planning, pay special attention to the livelihoods and housing of returning refugees so that they can be reabsorbed in Afghanistan.

We are committed to regional stability through cooperation and connectivity. We commend China for the successful meeting of last month's Heart of Asia process. Pakistan will have the pleasure of hosting the next meeting in 2015. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif conveyed to President Ashraf Ghani last week that Pakistan would stand by Afghanistan to support its endeavours for peace and progress as it begins its decade of transformation. In 1930, Pakistan's philosopher-poet Allama Iqbal characterized Afghanistan as

Qalb-e-Asia, or the "Heart of Asia". He wrote, and I translate:

"Asia is comparable to a living body. The heart that beats inside the body is the homeland of the Afghans. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. In its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia".

More than eight decades later, those verses still hold true. The people of Afghanistan are masters of their own destiny. Today, they are defining it for a bright future. We wish them and their new Government all success.

Mr. Al Musharakh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates reiterates its full support for the draft resolution before the General Assembly today on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/L.20), and reaffirms its sponsorship of the draft resolution. The United Arab Emirates recognizes the importance of joining efforts to support the Republic of Afghanistan and its people along a prosperous and stable path that will eventually lead to sustainable economic development and to all-inclusive and effective social progress for all members of Afghan society. We also welcome the new President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. We wish him success in his presidency.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of the international community's continued support for Afghanistan as it assumes responsibility for its share of the outcomes of the various international conferences, including the Kabul, Bonn, Tokyo, Istanbul, Lisbon and Chicago Conferences. We also look forward to the London Conference to be held next month on the recovery of the Afghan economy. We reaffirm our commitment to supporting Afghanistan, which translates into stability for the region as a whole, including for the United Arab Emirates itself.

My country commends the recent political progress and the electoral experience in Afghanistan. We also commend the role of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in supporting an Afghan-led political process. We reaffirm the importance of supporting the Afghan-led political process and the Afghani forces as they take over security responsibilities, by providing training, funding and necessary support. The security and stability of Afghanistan are of vital importance in ensuring that

country's economic recovery and development. We also stress the importance of the national reconciliation process, which will bring together all elements of Afghan society, including women, in order to hold a peaceful dialogue.

On the humanitarian and development fronts, the United Arab Emirates has continued to implement projects in Afghanistan through a committee that works to coordinate the efforts of all United Arab Emirates donors and charity institutions within a framework designed to help to meet the Afghan people's basic needs in areas such as nutrition, health care, assistance to orphans and people with special needs. We have also continued to implement various infrastructure projects, such as roads, schools and mosques, throughout Afghanistan.

The United Arab Emirates also continues to assist the Afghan people, through cooperation with various other States and institutions, in implementing projects with long-term benefits aimed at improving Afghanistan's economy and enhancing its workforce. In a unique project, we launched the Fatima bint Mohammed initiative for producing carpets in Afghanistan, an industry whose production had shrunk but, since the launch of the initiative, now accounts for 20 per cent of the country's gross domestic growth, providing job opportunities for more than 4,000 people, 70 per cent of them women, furnishing a daily income that meets Afghan families' needs and exceeds Afghanistan's average per capita income. The project is now opening the door to global markets for the carpet industry, as part of the implementation of the sustainable development plan of the United Arab Emirates, which includes combating unemployment in rural Afghanistan. The United Arab Emirates has also implemented health projects, such as a joint venture with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for vaccinating children in Afghanistan, to which we have allocated \$33 million, as well as contributing to global efforts to eradicate polio by 2018.

Afghanistan has long been a victim of terrorism and extremism. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of redoubling international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism, which have a direct negative impact on the development of societies. We have consistently pursued a policy that includes coordinated efforts to strengthen our national legislation, laws and regulations, including establishing a list of designated terrorist organizations, such as

Al-Qaida, based on the provisions of our 2014 Federal Act Number 7 on countering terrorist activities. In that context, we will continue to work with other partners in the framework of our membership in the Global Counterterrorism Forum and our hosting of the the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi, the first international centre of excellence aimed at countering extremism and terrorism.

We have also consistently raised awareness about moderation in Islam by training Afghan imams, a programme — to which we have allocated to 44 million emirati dirhams — consisting of two phases, the first of which has successfully trained 11,000 mullahs, while the second, to be completed in 2015, aims to train another 20,000, 1,500 of whom will be women. Moreover, several hundred of those trainees will be qualified to train other participants, which itself will make an effective contribution to creating a moderate and sustained environment in Afghanistan for decades to come.

In conclusion, we emphasize the readiness of the United Arab Emirates to provide the required support for the Afghan people, and we look forward to continuing dialogue and discussions between our two countries designed to enhance cooperation and coordination on security and development.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the report submitted to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/540) and supports the Assembly's adoption today of draft resolution A/69/L.20, on Afghanistan.

After several decades of war and turmoil, the Afghan people have entered a crucial, three-pronged phase of transformation in the political, economic and security areas, with new opportunities to achieve unity, stability, peace and reconstruction, while at the same time tackling difficult tasks. The Afghan people aspire to unity, stable growth and peace with their neighbours, all of which are in the collective interests of the international community, and it is our unshirkable responsibility to help to resolve Afghanistan's problems as soon as possible. China supports a continued leading role for the United Nations in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan in order to ensure that all stakeholders' efforts are complementary, mutually reinforcing and synergetic.

I would like to emphasize the following points. First, we must respect the Afghan people's right to make

independent choices. The country has a unique history and specific national conditions, and it is up to the Afghan people to independently explore the road that lies ahead of them, taking their current circumstances into account. During President Ghani Ahmadzai's recent visit to China at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, both sides issued a joint communiqué on deepening their strategic cooperation partnership. China would like to reiterate its support for Afghanistan's position on maintaining its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, fully reflecting the Chinese people's respect for the Afghan people's right to decide for themselves. At the opening ceremony of the fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Istanbul Process, China's Premier, Li Keqiang, also emphasized that China believes that the Afghan people have the capability and wisdom to enable them to handle their own affairs and ultimately achieve peace and stability.

Secondly, we must make every effort to promote the process of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. In order to achieve peace and stability, it is vital that the country establish a broad political base and inclusive political reconciliation. As President Xi Jinping pointed out during his meeting with President Ghani, all sides should support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. China hopes that every party in Afghanistan will participate in that process and that the international community will provide constructive assistance for it.

Thirdly, we must support Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve national security and stability. Afghanistan's current security situation is still troubled. The international community must back the country's efforts to increase the capability of its security and police forces in addressing threats of all kinds so that it can rehabilitate itself and rebuild.

Fourthly, we should help Afghanistan to speed up its national social and economic development. Poverty and backwardness provide a breeding ground for extremism. We must therefore help Afghanistan to develop its economy so that the Afghan people can live happy lives. The international community should honour its aid commitment to help Afghanistan achieve sustainable economic development.

Fifthly, we should support Afghanistan's integration into regional cooperation. Afghanistan cannot achieve development and prosperity without the support and assistance of the international community, especially the countries in the region. The international

community should support Afghanistan's development of its foreign relations, especially with regard to enhancing the mutual trust and cooperation in various areas with the countries in the region, based on mutual respect and benefits, so that it can better engage in regional economic cooperation and achieve common development.

The Chinese Government has long supported and promoted peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan. China will resolutely pursue a policy of friendship with that country and continuously move its strategic partnership ahead. China will continue to help Afghanistan in its capacity-building and enhance its cooperation with that country in such fields as infrastructure, agriculture, hydropower and the exploitation of mineral resources. We also plan to offer more training and assistance in education, security and other fields.

Not long ago, the Chinese Government hosted in Beijing the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on the question of Afghanistan, which has played a positive role in advancing the Istanbul Process and in facilitating the early resolution of Afghan issues and the achievement of lasting peace, stability and the economic and social development of the region. China will continue to lend its full support to Afghanistan in its efforts to improve its relations with its neighbours, enhance regional security and facilitate its engagement in regional cooperation. We welcome the participation of Afghanistan in building the Silk Road Economic Belt.

At a time when the Afghan people, who have suffered a great deal from war, look ahead with aspiration and hope, nothing is more important and precious than the understanding, support and help of the country's neighbours and friends. China will continue to provide the necessary assistance and support to Afghanistan, do what it can as a neighbour and assume the responsibilities of a big developing country. China will work with the international community and make unremitting efforts to help bring about sustained development and security and the prosperity of Afghanistan and the region.

Mr. Mukerji (India): At the outset, let me thank the President for organizing this discussion on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to commend the German delegation for coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations on the issue in an excellent manner, which has led us to this annual General Assembly draft resolution (A/69/L.20). India

is happy to co-sponsor this draft resolution, as we have done in the past several years, which is traditionally adopted by consensus.

I wish to congratulate the people of Afghanistan on their new Government of national unity, led by President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah.

The Afghan people have shown great patience and forbearance during the recent months. That gave much needed political space and time to the two presidential candidates and their supporters to work through the elements that have made the national unity Government agreement possible. That patience and forbearance is yet another testimony to the strong public support in Afghanistan for a democratic political system. It will preserve the gains in political reconstruction made over the past 13 years. It is also testimony to the fierce determination of the Afghan people to vanquish terrorism and extremism. We have no doubt that both President Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah will keep that in mind as they undertake the difficult tasks that lie ahead of them. They include the rapid formation of a new Afghan Government in keeping with the national unity Government agreement and also the task of electoral reforms and organizing a constitutional Loya Jirga that they have set for themselves.

Despite the great efforts and sacrifices of both international troops and the personnel of the Afghan national security forces, the evil scourge of terrorism and extremism has continued to threaten Afghanistan's peace and stability. That such terrorist and extremist groups continue to survive, despite the immense military pressure brought on them, only underscores the fact that they continue to benefit from support from beyond Afghanistan, and they also access resources from transnational terrorist and criminal networks. It is only if that support stops and the linkages with networks are broken that the scourge of terrorism will be defeated.

The reconciliation of members of the erstwhile Taliban regime is an integral part of the efforts to achieve national reconciliation that are being undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan. A successful national reconciliation programme must be transparent, led by the Afghan Government and owned by the Afghan people, and it must respect the Afghan Constitution and the international red lines. That will require sincere cooperation on the part of all parties concerned.

Afghanistan is also entering a new phase in its economic transition. In today's global economic situation, when our Government budgets are strained and when the sentiment of aid fatigue exists in most traditional donor countries, a successful Afghan private sector holds the key to a successful economic transition in Afghanistan. As a lead country in the confidence-building measures based on investment in trade and commerce, which are being undertaken under the Istanbul Process, India has gained some experience on that issue. One of the consistent messages that we are receiving from private-sector businesses serious about entering the Afghan market is that, while security is an issue that can at times be managed, Afghanistan's lack of connectivity to seaports and to faster-growing economic regions of Asia is a significant constraint. India has been in discussions with the Governments of Iran and Afghanistan to see how we can collaborate on a project to develop Iran's port of Chahbahar, which would improve Afghanistan's access to the sea and provide a significant boost to economic reconstruction activities in the western parts of Afghanistan. We hope that other similar connectivity-enhancing projects for Afghanistan will be undertaken by the international community and will henceforth be seen as a priority area in our collective efforts to assist Afghanistan's economic reconstruction programme. President Ghani Ahmadzai has taken the lead in that respect, and his efforts need reciprocation in full measure.

This is a critical decade of transformation for Afghanistan. India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner. We share the Afghan people's vision of a strong, independent, united and prosperous Afghanistan, for which so many Afghans have sacrificed so much. India will do whatever is possible within our capacities and our means to work with the Afghan Government and its people to realize their vision. Afghanistan also needs the unwavering support of the international community.

Ms. King (Australia): Draft resolution A/69/L.20 appropriately recognizes the major milestones reached this year in Afghanistan. It also recognizes the continuing security, economic and development challenges, and the continuing vital importance of effective partnerships between Afghanistan and the international community.

The September inauguration of President Ghani Ahmadzai and the establishment of a Government of national unity with Mr. Abdullah Abdullah as

Chief Executive Officer marked the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. Australia applauds the millions of Afghans who demonstrated their dedication to a democratic future and who braved a very real threat of violence to vote in two election rounds. That was a truly historic achievement. We urge President Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Mr. Abdullah to continue to work in a spirit of cooperation, as a stable, committed and inclusive Government is in the interests of all Afghan people and is essential to protect the gains of the past decade.

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) assumed the lead role for providing security over a year ago now and is on track to assume full responsibility for security by the end of 2014. The ANSF delivered security for Afghanistan's elections and now leads 99 per cent of conventional and special operations. An effective and sustainable ANSF is fundamental to Afghanistan's long-term stability, but continued assistance will be required to build their capacity. The NATO-led non-combat Resolute Support Mission will continue to train, advise and assist those forces. Australia will participate in Resolute Support and will contribute \$100 million a year from 2015 to 2017 to sustain the ANSF. We look to the Afghan Government to ensure that the support from the international community is used effectively.

As Afghanistan moves towards greater self-reliance, economic growth must be a priority for the Government. Growth must be broad-based, the widening inequality should be addressed and women should be empowered to participate fully in Afghanistan's economy. Importantly, economic growth will need to be underpinned by sound policies that facilitate commerce and investment and a regulatory framework that provides transparency and confidence. The new Government has already started to deliver on much needed reforms. The reopening of the investigation into fraud committed by the Kabul Bank is an early and important demonstration of the new Administration's strong stance against corruption.

Afghanistan has also come a long way on human rights. The Afghan Constitution now enshrines equal rights for men and women. Three million Afghan girls now attend school, compared to virtually none in 2001. In this year's elections, millions of Afghan women exercised their right to vote, and many were nominated for office. Australia welcomes the recent establishment of Afghanistan's National Women's Advisory Council.

That positive momentum must continue. We look to Afghanistan to ensure full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women and to finalize and implement a national action plan on women, peace and security, so as to ensure that women have a role in the peace and reconciliation process. As a strong supporter of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, we were pleased by recent news that the Commission has retained its "A" status following a review by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, much has been achieved by Afghanistan with the support of the international community. We look to Afghanistan to continue to build on its security, political and economic transition achievements and to continue improvements in human rights. The international community remains committed to supporting Afghanistan in that endeavour. The signing of the bilateral security agreement with the United States and the status-of-forces agreement with NATO provides the legal instruments that will allow the Resolute Support Mission to continue supporting the national security forces as they provide security to the Afghan people. In addition, the upcoming London Conference will provide an important forum to discuss continued development cooperation with Afghanistan within the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Also, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has a strong mandate to continue providing support to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan faces significant challenges on the road to a more peaceful and secure future. Australia, along with the international community, is committed to supporting Afghanistan. And we look to do that in close partnership with a responsive, transparent and accountable Afghan Government. We express our thanks to Germany for coordinating the draft resolution A/69/L.20 on Afghanistan and to Ambassador Tanin for his important contribution. With over 80 sponsors, including Australia, the draft resolution sends a strong message of continuing international support for Afghanistan. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I should like to express my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Harald Braun of Germany and his colleagues for guiding consultations on draft resolution A/69/L.20 on Afghanistan. I should also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin of

Afghanistan for his comprehensive statement at the beginning of this debate, as well as for his constructive engagement towards achieving consensus.

As a sponsor of the document, Japan is pleased to offer its support for the draft resolution at hand. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and, in particular, to its former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, who led the Mission ably during his tenure. In that connection, I wish to extend my congratulations to Mr. Nicholas Haysom on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and my countryman, Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto, as the new Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Under the new leadership, I expect that UNAMA will continue to play a central role in supporting an Afghan-led political process and socioeconomic development.

Japan welcomes the induction of Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai as the new President of Afghanistan and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah as the new Chief Executive Officer. They are assuming their new posts at a very crucial juncture. As the country embarks on the transformation decade aimed at achieving peace and stability, supported by sustainable finances and a viable economy, the new Government must tackle numerous challenges. In that regard, I should like to touch upon three points of particular importance, namely, advancing the political process, improving public order and safety, and finally, continuing efforts to achieve sustainable development.

First, with regard to the political process, Japan congratulates the Afghan people on their first democratic transition of power. The electoral process was a testament to the political will and courage of millions of Afghan men and women. We are pleased to have supported that process through, among others, the provision of polling materials and capacity-building for the Independent Election Commission. Nevertheless, we note with disappointment the numerous delays that the presidential electoral process experienced. Furthermore, it is regrettable that more than 50 days after the inauguration of the President, key Government posts have yet to be filled.

We call on the new leadership to form an inclusive cabinet without delay and to respond to the calls of the Afghan people to advance the political process. We look to the new Government to carry out its commitments on

the campaign against corruption and narcotics, as well as on political reform. We also hope to see advancement in the political reconciliation process with the Taliban. Moreover, in anticipation of future elections, such as the Wolesi Jirga or the House of the People in 2015, lessons from past elections must be utilized to reinforce the democratic process and make it more transparent.

Secondly, I would like to address the issue of public order and safety. The conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) mission at the end of 2014 will mark a watershed in Afghanistan's path towards self-sufficiency. In that regard, we welcome Afghanistan's recent signing of the bilateral security agreement with the United States and the status of forces agreement with NATO. We also highly commend the courageous efforts of ISAF in having provided security assistance to Afghanistan since its inception in 2001.

Furthermore, we welcome the fact that the NATO mission Resolute Support will continue to provide assistance for Afghan security forces and institutions beyond 2014. Public order and safety constitute the foundations of Afghanistan's development process and the international community's engagement in it. In order to prevent the country from ever becoming a seedbed for terrorism again, it is imperative that the international community continue its engagement with Afghanistan.

In that regard, Japan has provided more than \$1 billion to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, operated by the United Nations Development Programme. For example, this month Japan is providing financial and technical assistance for the training of approximately 200 female Afghan police officers in Turkey. We expect our contribution to the Fund to be utilized with appropriate oversight and to strengthen Afghan law enforcement capabilities.

My third point concerns the achievement of sustainable development. At the 2012 Tokyo Conference, Afghanistan and the international community established the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which reaffirms their partnership for economic growth and development through a process of mutual accountability. At the London Conference on Afghanistan, to be held next month as a follow-up to the Tokyo Conference, we look to Afghanistan to renew its commitments on governance and development. Correspondingly, we look forward to the international community manifesting its continued support for Afghanistan.

Japan is the second-largest aid donor to Afghanistan. It has contributed approximately \$5.4 billion since 2001 and has already disbursed over \$2 billion of the \$3 billion commitment it made at the 2012 Tokyo Conference. But that is also a commitment based on mutual responsibility. With the understanding that the new Afghan Government will deliver on its commitments, Japan will continue to carry out the aid commitments it made at the Tokyo Conference.

Japan's assistance to Afghanistan is a testament to our support for the people of Afghanistan on their path towards achieving sustainable development. As Afghanistan makes the crucial transition towards self-reliance, peace and prosperity, Japan stands ready to offer its support in cooperation with the international community.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Tanin and to align myself with the statement made by the delegation of the European Union.

Over the past 13 years, the international community, in conjunction with Afghanistan, has undertaken a massive economic and human effort. Progress has been remarkable. However, it remains fragile.

On the political front, the constant terrorist attacks and economic difficulties have not prevented a historic peaceful transfer of power. Spain welcomes the rapid finalization of the bilateral security agreement between the new Afghan Government and the United States and the status-of-forces agreement with NATO, which will allow for support and advice to be provided to the Afghan forces.

In 2014, Afghanistan is completing the transition phase and beginning a decade of transformation. At its conclusion, the country should have its own solid and effective mechanisms to ensure comprehensive security. The core of the decade of transformation is the international community's partnership with Afghanistan, which, from this point on, will be deployed on the basis of the commitments declared at the recent Wales Summit and the Bonn and Tokyo Conferences, the conclusions of which, we hope, will be confirmed at the upcoming London Conference to be held on 3 and 4 December.

In that context, Spain wishes to emphasize in particular the need to ensure progress in the area of women's rights, which are enshrined in the Constitution

of Afghanistan. I wish to congratulate the Afghan Government on the adoption of the National Action Plan on Women and Peace and Security in Afghanistan in October 2014. We encourage Afghanistan to work tirelessly in the new phase that is just beginning towards a future in which women achieve full participation in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life in Afghanistan, on an entirely equal footing with men.

The progress made over the past 13 years could also be compromised by economic problems. We therefore welcome the determination that has been expressed repeatedly by Afghanistan's new Government of national unity to undertake the necessary reforms as soon as possible and to fulfil the commitments undertaken in those areas. We also encourage the efforts by the Government towards a deep and lasting reconciliation within Afghan society. Without full reconciliation, there is no hope for the future of Afghan — or any other — society.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Spain's firm commitment to the stabilization and transformation of Afghanistan, the country's long-term progress and the construction of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for all Afghans. In that regard, we welcome the general support once again for this year's draft resolution (A/69/L.20), which Spain once again sponsored and which we will adopt today. The draft resolution is a key document on the international commitment to Afghanistan.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's thanks and appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/69/540).

The Islamic Republic of Iran is indeed eager to see a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan as its neighbour. We continue to do everything in our power to that end, since security in Afghanistan directly and indirectly affects security in the region, including my country.

We commend the Afghan people for their broad-based participation in the presidential election despite the threats by extremist and terrorist groups. We also welcome the formation of the Government of national unity, with Mr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai as its President and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah as its Chief Executive Officer.

We trust that all political entities will work together in accordance with the Afghan Constitution and with the aim of strengthening Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity in order to achieve a peaceful and prosperous future for the entire Afghan people. The new Government represents the true will of the Afghan people and should enjoy the due respect and support of the international community.

On the important question of security arrangements, all General Assembly resolutions concerning the situation in Afghanistan, including today's draft resolution (A/69/L.20), are emphatic that all measures to support the training, equipping, financing and development of the Afghan National Security Forces beyond 2014, including the Resolute Support mission, should be undertaken in consultation with and with the consent of the Government of Afghanistan, which reflects the strong commitment of the international community to respecting the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan.

We continue to support Afghanistan and the Afghan people. Iran has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for more than three decades. The remaining Afghans in our country use our Government-subsidized schools and higher education, health and social security services. Based on the information provided by our Ministers of Education and Higher Education, in this year alone more than 320,000 Afghan students were enrolled in our schools, and more than 7,000 in our universities. We continue to expand our bilateral cooperation, particularly on security matters and counter-narcotics efforts, while developing projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture and finding durable solutions for Afghan refugees.

The continuing engagement among Afghanistan, its neighbours and its regional partners in the areas of trade, economic exchanges and development projects must be further supported and strengthened. We firmly believe that greater economic ties will bring about peace and reinforce security and stability in the country.

On counter-narcotics efforts, we are particularly concerned about the reports indicating that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has almost doubled since 2012, which is a real threat for the region and beyond and should be addressed by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. We welcome the initiative taken by the Afghan Minister on Counter-Narcotics to organize a good-neighbourly

relations declaration conference in Kabul in January 2014, with the participation of ministers or heads of anti-counter-narcotics institutions from China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

With the strong support and commitment of international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking, a main source of income for extremist and terrorist groups, could be curtailed to a great extent. In that regard, the international community should support the Triangular Initiative on counter-narcotics enforcement among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, which is essential not only to strengthening the security and stability of Afghanistan but also to alleviating the serious concerns of neighbouring States and the transit and destination countries of drug trafficking.

We support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development assistance for the reconstruction of the country through a robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, the return of refugees and drug control measures. The role of UNAMA should be further strengthened in the light of the developments expected in Afghanistan this year. The future role of the United Nations in Afghanistan is going to grow, due to the multifaceted and increasingly complex challenges. We therefore regret to learn about the reduction of resources available to it.

I would take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Ján Kubiš, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA, for his dedication and outstanding service to Afghanistan. We wish him success and good luck in his future assignment. I also wish to welcome his successor, Mr. Nicholas Haysom.

In conclusion, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to once again reiterate its sustained support for the promotion of security, stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan and extends our full support to the country's new Government.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join other Member States in sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/L.20). The text renews the international community's commitment to supporting

the people and the Government of Afghanistan as they work to expand security, freedom and prosperity in the country.

The year 2014 has already featured Afghanistan's first democratic, peaceful transfer of power and the formation of a Government of national unity under President Ghani's leadership. The determination of the Afghan people showed in voting in such large numbers despite security risks, and the two presidential candidates' choice of unity over division demonstrated the depth of Afghans' commitment to continuing their country's democratic development and its progress towards lasting stability. As the new Government takes on formidable challenges, including preparing for parliamentary elections, considering constitutional reform, combating corruption and illicit drug trafficking while developing the licit economy, it will continue to need the strong support of the international community.

By adopting this draft resolution, the General Assembly will affirm its commitment to meeting that need. It cannot and should not be forgotten that Afghans, with the support of the international community, continue to develop their country under the constant threat of attack by illegal armed groups whose attacks on civilians demonstrate their sheer brutality. Afghan forces have performed courageously and every day are growing more capable of protecting the Afghan people from harm.

The United States and its partners remain committed to supporting their continued development after the International Security Assistance Force concludes its mission at the end of the year. In the near term, NATO and its partners, at the invitation and in full coordination with the Government of Afghanistan, will train, advise and assist Afghan forces with the ultimate goal of developing professional, self-sustaining security forces capable of securing Afghanistan.

As important as security and political progress is, lasting stability in Afghanistan will not be possible without sustained socioeconomic development and growth. The Afghan Government must facilitate development by taking on corruption and doing so vigorously and upholding the rule of law so Afghans and their trading partners can engage in commerce in a predictable and fair legal environment. It is encouraging that President Ghani has made combating corruption a clear priority for his Government from the outset.

But again, international support can play an important role in promoting development not only through the provision of development assistance, but also through efforts, particularly by Afghanistan's neighbours, to integrate Afghanistan into the regional and global economy. Events like the recently concluded Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in China as well as the upcoming London Conference offer occasions for the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to focus on that critical ingredient for a stable Afghanistan. The United States encourages all participants to take maximum advantage of those opportunities.

The United Nations has been, and will continue to be, an important focal point for international support for Afghanistan. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other United Nations elements played a critical and commendable role in this year's election audit and will continue to be called upon for advice on electoral and legal issues, inter alia. In those efforts, the United Nations will continue to enjoy the support and the partnership of the United States of America as we work with it and all of our partners to support Afghans' efforts to transform their country.

The progress of the past decade has been real and tangible. Afghans have seen improved access to education for all children, including girls. Fewer than 1 million students were enrolled in school in 2001, none of them girls. Today more than 8.3 million students attend school, one third of whom are girls. In 2001 there was virtually no independent Afghan media, only Taliban propaganda. Today Afghans can listen to 175 FM radio stations, watch 75 television channels and read hundreds of print publications. The progress we have witnessed has changed people's lives for the better and offers a sound foundation on which the Afghan people, with international support, can — and will — build a brighter future for their country.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea welcomes the first democratic transition of power in Afghanistan's history. We believe that the recent inauguration of the new Afghan President, based on the political agreement to form a Government of National Unity, signals a new era of Afghan-led efforts towards peace and prosperity.

In particular, we appreciate the courage and determination of the Afghan people, especially Afghan women, who actively participated in elections despite

violence threatened by the Taliban and other terrorist groups. The support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and of global electoral observers during the electoral process is also commendable.

The new Afghan Government faces a multitude of challenges, including issues of security, governance and human rights. Given the Afghan National Security Forces' assumption of full responsibility for security and the International Security Assistance Force's withdrawal at the end of this year, continuous international assistance is critical. In that regard, we appreciate the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) leaders' Wales Summit declaration in September, which envisages the establishment of the short-term Resolute Support Mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces, and their commitment to continuously finance the Afghan National Security Forces beyond 2014. We also welcome the conclusion of the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Afghanistan and the status-of-forces agreement between NATO and Afghanistan.

My delegation recognizes that the transition requires not only a process to improve the security situation, but also the full assumption of Afghan leadership and ownership over governance. The decision of the international community to muster long-term support depends on the Afghan Government's progress in key areas under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. The London Conference on Afghanistan in December will serve as an important opportunity to review the progress made and to reaffirm the international community's commitments.

The Afghan Government must redouble its efforts in the promotion of human rights, especially those of women, as well as good governance, including its fight against corruption and the illicit economy. We call for the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women and the anti-money-laundering law in that regard.

Enhanced regional dialogue and confidence-building measures are also important to ensure lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. We note the fourth Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, held in Beijing on 31 October, and the Beijing declaration, which furthered the Istanbul Process.

National reconciliation owned by Afghans and led by Afghans will be essential for lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. We look forward to further

progress on political dialogue and peace negotiations among all the relevant stakeholders under a newly launched Afghan Government of unity.

Today's draft resolution (A/69/L.20), to be adopted by consensus, embodies the political will of all Member States to support the Afghan people in their political and national reconstruction process. The Republic of Korea has actively taken part in the global contribution to reconstruction and stability in Afghanistan since it joined the ISAF contributing nations in 2010. As part of such efforts, our provincial reconstruction team operated in Parwan province until June, with a focus mainly on four key areas — medical and health, education, governance and rural development. Moreover, my Government has contributed \$250 million in financial assistance to date, for both the sustainment of the Afghan National Security Forces and the socioeconomic development of Afghanistan, since it pledged in 2011 to provide \$500 million to Afghanistan.

We will continue our support to Afghanistan, including financial contributions beyond 2014, so that the Afghan Government and its people can achieve a prosperous, stable and democratic Afghanistan for all Afghans.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): At the outset, allow me to thank Germany and other States for preparing the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/L.20). Lithuania looks forward to its adoption by consensus.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

This year has presented a number of challenges for the Afghan nation, which it has successfully met. The presidential elections marked the first democratic transition in the modern history of Afghanistan. Moreover, the elections took place at a time when the Afghan National Security Forces assumed their responsibilities for safeguarding the country. Although the situation remains fragile, the successful completion of those processes proves the willingness and capability of Afghanistan to continue on its path towards creating a stable, peaceful and prosperous country where every man, woman and child can feel safe and secure.

Afghanistan now urgently needs a fully functioning Government of national unity that is able to implement the necessary and pressing reforms. A particular focus needs to be placed on improving the rule of law, dealing with the security situation, protecting human rights,

fighting corruption and combating drug production and trafficking. Illicit opium production threatens the security and development of the country and the whole region, as the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014* shows a worrying trend of increasing opium poppy cultivation. We call on Afghanistan and the international community to intensify their joint efforts in supporting alternative livelihoods and fighting organized crime.

Lithuania has been a firm partner of Afghanistan, a supporter and contributor in achieving its main goals. Our political and development cooperation, including support for institutional capacity-building, civil society, economic growth and social development and promotion of regional initiatives, will continue, as stated at the Chicago Summit, the Tokyo Conference and other meetings.

Lithuania, which has undergone a radical transformation over the past several decades, is ready to share its experience in a number of areas of State-building, including strengthening regional cooperation. In our view, regional cooperation is of crucial importance for strengthening stability and facilitating the development of Afghanistan and the entire region. We support regional initiatives involving Afghanistan such as the Istanbul Process, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference and others. The future of Afghanistan also depends on the positive engagement of its neighbours.

As the International Security Assistance Force mission winds down, the sustained capacity-building of the Afghan National Security Forces is essential for the maintenance of security and stability in the country. Lithuania will continue supporting the Afghan National Security Forces with financial contributions as well as through participation in the Resolute Support Mission. This non-combat mission, aimed at training, assisting and mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces, builds on the results achieved by the International Security Assistance Force.

The invitation extended by Afghan Government to continue to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces, and the signing of the United States-Afghanistan bilateral security agreement and the NATO-Afghanistan status-of-forces agreement offer a solid legal basis for the new mission. We urge Afghanistan to ratify both agreements so that future security assistance can continue unhindered. Lithuania would also welcome a Security Council resolution,

which should be prepared in consultation with the Afghan Government.

Another area in which Lithuania contributes to the efforts of Afghanistan's Government is through its participation in the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL). The decision to extend EUPOL's mandate in Afghanistan until the end of 2016 is a welcome one. Lithuania is planning to continue its participation in this important Mission, which has provided much-needed training for the Afghan civilian police and support to the Afghan authorities at the strategic level.

The presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been of crucial importance to the advancement of human rights, democratic processes and the country's overall development, and as Afghanistan starts its transformation decade, UNAMA's role will become more prominent and essential.

I would now like to turn to the situation of Afghan women. Violence against women in Afghanistan remains underreported, especially in rural areas. We call on the Afghan Government to step up efforts to fully implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the country's law on eliminating violence against women and its recently adopted national action plan for women, peace and security. Involving women genuinely and meaningfully in the peace, reconciliation and development processes, ensuring the safety and dignity of women public servants and recruiting, training and retaining women for the Afghan National Security Forces are all essential for the future Afghanistan. The prominent role that the First Lady of Afghanistan is willing to take will, hopefully, produce positive results, including in engaging women and strengthening their rights. We hope this progressive momentum can be sustained. Afghanistan needs to find solutions suited to the Afghan way of life and yet able to improve the female population's situation.

In conclusion, as Afghanistan enters its transformation decade, the support of the international community and countries in the region will be essential. The National Unity Government, the Afghan people and the international community must work in unison for a better future for Afghanistan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-

General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/540), and to thank the Permanent Mission of Germany for conducting consultations and introducing today's draft resolution (A/69/L.20).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Russian Federation on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. However, I would also like to make a statement in my national capacity.

The Kyrgyz Republic supports the efforts of Afghanistan to establish peace and security in the country, build effectively functioning State institutions and develop its economy to further the prosperity of the Afghan people. We respect the Afghan people's right to choose their own path to political development and emerge successfully from a transitional period. In that regard, we congratulate Afghanistan on its completion of elections and establishment of a Government of National Unity. The peaceful and democratic transition of power from one President to the next creates a solid foundation for the country's peaceful and sustainable development.

In a message congratulating the new President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani, President Almazbek Atambaev of the Kyrgyz Republic expressed his readiness to further strengthen brotherly relations between Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan and the two countries' cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The Kabul Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic, which officially opened in February, is actively promoting the development of bilateral relations and becoming an important link in the joint promotion and implementation of regional projects.

We are still seriously concerned about the persistently unstable security situation in Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, insurgent groups, international terrorists and associated networks took advantage of the prolonged political and electoral crisis to mount major assaults around the country. Kyrgyzstan condemns the continued attacks on innocent civilians, particularly women and children, and is of the view that the transfer of responsibility for security should be gradual and orderly so as to ensure the overall stability of the country and in the region as a whole.

Achieving full national reconciliation is one of the main preconditions for ensuring lasting peace in Afghanistan. We support an Afghan-led and Afghan-

owned inclusive peace and reconciliation process, which should be implemented by the Afghan people themselves and in the interests of all Afghans. A comprehensive peace process should be open to all interested parties ready to reject violence, break off links with international terrorism and respect the Constitution of Afghanistan.

According to the most recent report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime — the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014* — the opium crop in Afghanistan will hit a new high this year. It is a serious threat to the national security both of Afghanistan and the countries of Eurasia. Despite the activities being conducted in the framework of national and regional anti-narcotic strategies and programmes, we have not fully stopped the flow of drugs from Afghanistan via the so-called northern drug-trafficking route. The situation is worsened because revenues from illicit drug production and trafficking serve as a major funding source for terrorist and extremist groups. That in turn undermines the security system both in the country and in the region as a whole. We therefore call on our regional partners and the relevant United Nations bodies to step up further joint efforts to counter the illicit production and trafficking of drugs in and around Afghanistan.

Sustained and comprehensive economic development in Afghanistan is crucial not only to combating the challenges the country faces today, but also to its achievement of long-term security and stability. In that regard, there is an urgent need to pay special attention to rebuilding Afghanistan's economic infrastructure and to fully implement the considerable commitments to Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development that have been made at major international and regional conferences.

We believe that involving Afghanistan in regional cooperation and promoting its trade and economic relations with neighbouring States will play a strong part in ensuring peace, stability, development and trust in the region and beyond. As a participant in several regional organizations, Kyrgyzstan is ready to contribute to that process. It is important that Afghanistan be involved in regional economic integration through the implementation of joint social, economic and infrastructure projects. Kyrgyzstan fully supports measures aimed at promoting regional economic cooperation by developing infrastructure in the areas of energy, transport and communications. We are very interested in implementing projects exporting

energy to Afghanistan through the framework of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project and by establishing a tripartite agricultural consortium between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as well as by constructing railroads that connect Afghanistan with its neighbours.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reiterate the Kyrgyz Republic's principled position of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan, and its readiness to assist Afghanistan in achieving lasting peace, sustainable security and economic development.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): The Maldives delegation welcomes the comprehensive report submitted to the Assembly by the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/540).

My delegation follows the situation in Afghanistan with much interest, and often with deep concern. For a number of years, the country remained in a constant state of civil war, with low productive capacity and failed governance arrangements. In April, hope dawned on Afghanistan — hope for a fresh start and progress for the better. After remaining deadlocked for nearly four months, the leaders of Afghanistan finally showed maturity and reconciled the differences that had emerged after the presidential election. The Maldives welcomes the efforts made by both parties that had contested the election to reach a resolution and put their differences aside. We furthermore congratulate the leadership for their willingness to put the interests of the Afghan people ahead of personal or political agendas and join hands in a unity Government. The solidarity shown by both leaders is commendable and demonstrates their commitment to take the country into a new phase of prosperity and development.

Our own experience with democratization is that the hard work does not stop with elections. That is just one step. The real task involves cultivating norms and values that bolster democratization. It involves changing people's perceptions and way of thinking. Institutions and systems need to develop slowly and, we ardently believe, organically. We therefore call on the international community to allow Afghanistan the time and patience to find its own path towards democracy consolidation.

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, insurgent groups and international terrorist networks are taking advantage of the country's dire security

situation resulting from the protracted political and electoral crisis. The Maldives welcomes the continuous efforts by Afghanistan to combat the insurgency and the terrorist activities. In particular, we note the enactment, in June, of two landmark statutes in Afghanistan to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. We are also encouraged by the expansion of the security initiative of the Afghan local police overseen by the Ministry of the Interior. Those developments give rise to hope for stability and security for the Afghan people.

As Afghanistan endures security challenges, political crises and economic hardship, those that suffer the most are the vulnerable populations. The Secretary-General's report highlights some of the key issues faced by vulnerable populations, including women and children, and notes the Government's actions in addressing those issues.

The Maldives welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the 2011 action plan for preventing underage recruitment, including age verification, screening of new recruits and the training of Afghan security forces in respect of children in armed conflict. My delegation furthermore welcomes the continuing efforts by the international community, especially the United Nations, in providing the Government of Afghanistan with technical support and advice on the elimination of violence against women.

The Maldives acknowledges the challenges faced by the Government of Afghanistan in addressing some of those human rights issues and calls on all stakeholders — including the Government, private institutions and the international community — to continue increased efforts towards the protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

The Maldives believes that increased regional integration is of the utmost importance and contributes to confidence-building, which in turn greatly benefits the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan. In that regard, it is heartening to note that Afghanistan has continued to engage its neighbours in promoting regional cooperation. As a fellow member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Maldives takes this opportunity to reinforce its brotherly affection by calling upon all of our regional members to maintain their support and commitment to Afghanistan and embrace it in its quest for peace and prosperity.

The situation in Afghanistan cannot be resolved in isolation. Continued assistance and coordination on the part of the international community and regional collaboration are required to lift the country out of civil war and strife and aid its transition to a new phase of development.

Despite all of the hardships faced by the people of Afghanistan, the fact remains that they have persevered through difficult times with courage for over three decades. Like many speakers before me, my delegation today reiterates the call on the international community to help the country through its transition for the sake of the people of Afghanistan and the region.

Mr. Vencel (Slovakia): Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his presence here and for his important statement.

Our thanks also go to the German delegation for its continued successful leadership during this year's negotiations on the important draft resolution A/69/L.20, which my country readily co-sponsored.

Recently, the Security Council and the international community hailed the Afghan people and authorities for their tenacity in successfully completing a peaceful and democratic transfer of power this year and their vision for the future of the country. The conclusion of the Afghan presidential elections and subsequent move to form a Government of national unity represent an unprecedented political transition. That spirit of collaboration should remain part and parcel of the economic and human development, ensuring the rule of law and peace and reconciliation efforts in the months and years ahead.

The political transition coincides with the country's security transition as Afghan forces take over full responsibility from the international partners that are expected to end their missions in December. The challenging period of ongoing parallel transitions in the security, military and economic spheres, as well as the political arena, will be critically important to the country's future. The Security Council and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in cooperation with the Afghan Government, must continue playing an important role in facilitating a peaceful political transition in Afghanistan and ensuring coherent approaches to equitable sustainable development.

Slovakia, based on its own history of transition, is fully aware of the fact that the transformation process is often found to be the opposite of easy. We would like to take this opportunity to assure Afghanistan and its people of our long-term commitment to participate in the transformation and consolidation efforts of the country alongside our partners in the international community. In that regard, we anticipate close cooperation with the new Afghan Government, with whom we are willing to share our own transitional experience.

Reforms in Afghanistan are necessary. We therefore welcome the adoption of the Afghanistan national development strategy and the ideas outlined by the Government of Afghanistan in its strategy document entitled "Towards self-reliance: strategic vision for the transformation decade". Since public administration is key in that regard, we urge the Government of Afghanistan to continue to effectively reform the public administration sector in order to implement the rule of law and ensure good governance and accountability.

Slovakia welcomed the signing of the United States-Afghanistan bilateral security agreement and the status-of-forces agreement between NATO and Afghanistan. The signing of those agreements represents an important step in the process of the ongoing efforts towards stabilizing the security situation in Afghanistan, which is a prerequisite for the development of the country.

In cooperation with its international partners, Slovakia is committed to further reinforcing security in the country and in the follow-up to the finalizing of the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan in 2014. Slovakia is also ready to take part in the NATO Resolute Support mission to train, advise and assist as of 2015.

Let me conclude by expressing our sincere gratitude also to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for their dedication and leadership. I would like to commend the United Nations for its work in supervising the unprecedented election audit. I also wish to thank the team of the Mission for their professional work in difficult conditions and to reiterate my country's full support for the irreplaceable role that UNAMA is playing. We wish the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, every success in his new appointment. We continue to offer him our full support.

Mr. Kassim (Malaysia): I wish to extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/69/540). My delegation would like to highlight some perspectives on the situation in Afghanistan that Malaysia considers to be important.

My delegation is of the view that this meeting has been convened in a timely manner. We welcome the formation of the Government of national unity in Afghanistan, which is a positive step forward for its people. We would also like to commend the United Nations for the supervisory role it assumed in the second round of voting in the presidential elections in June. Through that cooperation between the Government and the United Nations, Afghanistan has embraced a new Government that is inclusive and representative of its people.

Malaysia is heartened by the courage and determination of the millions of Afghans who participated in the first and second rounds of voting. The large turnout reflected the people's aspirations to achieve a peaceful and democratic transition in leadership. In that regard, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Afghanistan as they embark on the journey whose first milestone is the formation on 29 September of a national unity Government. Malaysia is confident that the new Government will bring about continued stability, progress and development despite the many challenges it faces. We would encourage the new Government to continue to promote its ambitious transformation decade programme for the period 2015 to 2024, with an eye towards developing a new vision for the country's future.

Malaysia continues to monitor the security developments in Afghanistan with strong interest. The expected withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force by the end of 2014 means that the Afghan Unity Government will assume full responsibility for the security and safety of its people and for its territorial integrity. Malaysia is concerned that the country continues to face security challenges and to experience incidents of violence in the country. Malaysia condemns acts of violence in all its forms and manifestations, including those acts.

Despite the incidents of violence, Malaysia remains confident that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will be able to shoulder the responsibility of protecting the people and maintaining security

in the country. While the ANSF fulfils its primary responsibility for security, it is imperative that the international community continue to provide the ANSF with the support needed to ensure that its forces are equipped and trained to counter threats to security in the country.

The work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, deserves to be commended as well. UNAMA has been active in reinforcing sovereignty, leadership and ownership in the country. Its comprehensive approach has been effective in laying down the foundations for sustainable development in Afghanistan, while supporting confidence-building measures within the framework of the Afghan Constitution.

On another note, Malaysia has always been supportive of stability and progress in Afghanistan. Our track record on that can be seen with the deployment of the medical contingent from the Malaysian Armed Forces. Stationed in the Bamyán province, our forces were active in providing much-needed medical services from July 2010 to April 2013.

Malaysia's assistance to Afghanistan does not stop there. As a moderate and progressive Muslim nation, we will continue to provide opportunities for capacity-building and human resource development in the country. Through the Malaysian technical cooperation programme, we will continuously share our experiences in the fields of development and public administration as pillars of a developing nation. We strongly believe that Afghanistan could benefit from the sharing of experience and expertise that Malaysia has to offer.

We have seen a significant development in Afghanistan with the formation of a united Government. The situation in Afghanistan is an opportunity for Member States to continue our support to that nation. Its people have demonstrated the political will to embrace a new era of democratic and inclusive governance. In that regard, we must not turn our backs on them, but instead lend them our helping hand.

Malaysia is pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/69/L.20, on the situation in Afghanistan. We will continue to be a partner to Afghanistan in this moment of progress and development.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Turkey is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution before us today (A/69/L.20), and we look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Afghanistan is going through a crucial phase in terms of its political, security and economic transformation. The gains in the country in the past 13 years, including in the fields of security, democracy, governance, capacity- and institution-building, economic development and human rights, should be commended. Nevertheless, those achievements have not yet reached a point of no return, and major challenges remain to be tackled. Therefore, the international community's continuing support is vital for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan to be able to effectively serve the needs of its people. With that understanding, the comprehensive role assumed by the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in supporting the Afghan people will continue to be critical.

We welcome the successful continuation of the political transition process in Afghanistan. Indeed, the results of the presidential elections were a success for all of the Afghan people, as it demonstrated their strong will and courage to determine their own future. The developments have also proved the professionalism of the Afghan institutions that took part in the process. The common will of the candidates running in the second round of the elections to establish a national unity Government independent of the election results is of particular importance, since it has clearly displayed the Afghan people's determination as a whole to carry their country forward, as well as their belief in a common ideal. We believe that Afghanistan has emerged stronger from those experiences.

We welcome the fact that by the end of 2014 the Afghan National Security Forces will assume full security responsibility for the Afghan people and their country. However, support for the continued development of the Afghan National Security Forces and institutions and wider cooperation with Afghanistan will still be of paramount importance. The stability of Afghanistan, and subsequently that of the region, will depend on improved security. The consequences of failure would be too immense for any of us to bear. Turkey remains committed to standing by the people of Afghanistan in this transition process, including in the fields of security and development.

In addition to Turkey's financial commitments for the funding of the Afghan National Security Forces, Turkey will also assume the framework nation role for Kabul in the new mission that will be launched after the International Security Assistance Force is concluded by

the end of 2014. Turkey will also undertake responsibility for Kabul International Airport. As may be recalled, Mr. Ismail Aramaz, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Afghanistan, was recently appointed as the next NATO senior civilian representative in Afghanistan.

At a critical juncture of political, security and economic transformation in Afghanistan, the importance of regional cooperation and commitment is becoming increasingly relevant to efforts to steer the region towards becoming a zone of peace, stability and prosperity. The region has demonstrated on various occasions its readiness to resolve its own problems and to transform common problems into areas of mutual benefit. We welcome all bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation efforts to that end. With that understanding, we also welcome the increased momentum that has been achieved through the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan thus far. The fourth Ministerial Conference of the Process, held in Beijing on 31 October, once again demonstrated the importance of promoting regional cooperation.

Turkey welcomes and encourages all efforts to enhance connectivity at the regional level. We believe that tangible projects emerging from increased cooperation will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability in the region.

A continued display of will by the international community will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for a bright future. Turkey will always remain in solidarity with the Afghan people and will continue to contribute to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, as we have done for so many years.

Ms. Freimane-Deksne (Latvia): Latvia aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) and would like to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

I would like to welcome the draft resolution to be adopted today (A/69/L.20), which Latvia sponsored, and to commend the efforts by Germany, Afghanistan and all partners that led to a successful outcome. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

First of all, Latvia welcomes the conclusion of Afghanistan's presidential elections, the inauguration of the new President of Afghanistan and the formation of a Government of national unity. The Afghan people have demonstrated their clear desire for democracy. Now it

is up to all parties in Afghanistan to work together and to achieve a united, peaceful, secure and prosperous future for all its people. Afghanistan has achieved remarkable progress in the past decade. It is imperative that that progress be sustained and that further reforms be implemented. Sustained economic growth and a State-building process that is founded on the principles of good governance, the rule of law and human rights, especially the rights of women and children, should be the basis for a democratic, prosperous and stable Afghanistan. We welcome the upcoming London Conference as an important opportunity for both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to restate their commitments within the mutual accountability framework.

Continued international commitment to support Afghanistan is essential to achieving long-term stability and sustaining Afghanistan's transformation. Latvia remains committed to a lasting partnership with Afghanistan. We welcome the signing of the bilateral security agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the United States and the NATO status-of-forces agreement as important steps for securing future international support in providing security in Afghanistan. Latvia will take part in the International Security Assistance Force operation until the end of this year and is fully committed to participating in the new Resolute Support Mission. Latvia has already committed to providing financial support to the Afghan National Security Forces on an annual basis from 2015 to 2017. Latvia will also continue its participation in the civilian European Union Police Mission.

Moreover, with the shifting of responsibilities in Afghanistan, the role of the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will only increase and will require continued support by the United Nations membership.

International commitment and support to Afghanistan should go hand in hand with regional cooperation, stability and economic development. Afghanistan lies at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asian and South Asian regions, each of them with its own dynamics. However, we believe that middle ground can be found and a space could be created where differences are left behind and constructive engagement emerges. Latvia supports the process emerging from the Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference as an important opportunity to establish such a space of constructive and consistent engagement by neighbouring countries.

In the first half of next year, Latvia will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union, and the strengthening of relations between the EU and Central Asia will be one of our presidency's priorities. We believe that close cooperation with the Central Asian States is of the utmost importance for the promotion of regional security and economic development. The Latvian Government is currently looking for new ways to step up its development assistance in Afghanistan and Central Asia. For instance, Latvia has already provided training for Afghan rail and civil aviation experts. Our long-term plans include providing scholarships to Afghan students in the fields of customs, guarding borders and railways. We just launched a new training programme for the Eastern Partnership region and Central Asia, which could also be provided to Afghan students interested in building up their knowledge of European law, economics and international affairs.

We believe that infrastructure projects that strengthen regional connectivity contribute greatly to regional cooperation and economic development. To contribute to those efforts, this summer Latvia hosted the third High-Level Conference on Transport, Logistics and Trade Routes on the theme "Connecting Asia with Europe". It brought together more than 400 participants from countries of the Far East, South and Central Asia and from partner countries of the China and Central and Eastern European cooperation programme. Latvia will continue its engagement in that regard.

During Latvia's presidency of the European Union, we would like to organize, in the context of the Asia-Europe Meeting, the third transport ministers' meeting, side event and business forum on multimodal transportation networks, to be held in Riga from 29 to 30 April 2015.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Latvia will remain a reliable partner for both Afghanistan and the international community in joining our efforts for a peaceful, secure and prosperous Afghanistan and region. An Afghan proverb says that a river is made drop by drop, and we truly believe that.

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

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.20, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/69/L.20, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belize, Benin, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Finland, France, Georgia, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, the Federated States of Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Senegal, Spain, Tajikistan, the

former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the United States of America.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.20?

Draft resolution A/69/L.20 was adopted (resolution 69/18).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 37?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.