
Statement by Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi,
Foreign Minister of Pakistan,
in the Meeting of the Security Council
on the Situation in Afghanistan
9 July 2008

Mr. President,

We wish Vietnam, a friendly developing country of Asia, great success in its presidency of Council this month. Let me also congratulate Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and the United States delegation on their successful presidency of the Council in June.

Mr. President,

2. The new democratic government of Pakistan has inherited imposing political, economic and security challenges. We are addressing these challenges democratically and effectively. None among these challenges is as critical as the threat posed by terrorism and extremist violence – a threat we face in common with our neighbour, Afghanistan

3. I have condemned the terrorist attack against the Indian embassy in Kabul. We deeply regret the loss of life and damage caused by this unacceptable suicide bombing. Any attack on civilians or diplomatic missions is highly reprehensible. As you know, a day earlier, a suicide bomber in Islamabad, killed twelve policemen and civilians and wounded scores of people. Again, a day later, there was a series of terrorist bombings in Karachi. We welcome the condemnation of these terrorist attacks by the Security Council.

Mr. President,

4. I am, therefore, grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr.

Kai Eide, for his briefing this morning and to assure him of our cooperation. Pakistan supports the central coordinating role of the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan in accordance with its mandate, which is specific and limited to Afghanistan. Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan will continue to be conducted between the democratically elected governments of the two countries.

5. Since the Bonn Agreement, considerable progress has been made in Afghanistan. We need to consolidate these gains and effectively address the outstanding challenges, in particular the intensifying threat posed by terrorist violence and militant insurgency. The continuing insecurity and violence in several parts of Afghanistan can be attributed to a complex interplay of several factors – Taliban, Al-Qaeda, lingering warlordism, factional rivalries and criminal activity including, but not limited to, the drug trade.

Mr. President,

6. Peace and Stability in Afghanistan are in Pakistan's vital interest. The bonds of geography, history, faith and culture inextricably link the destinies of our two nations. We face a common threat of extremism and terrorism. Peace and stability are essential to enable Pakistan and Afghanistan to serve as the hub and corridor for trade and economic cooperation between the dynamic regions of South Asia, Central Asia, China and the Gulf.

7. Apart from the Afghan people, the people of Pakistan have suffered the most from the decades of conflict in Afghanistan. We have hosted over 3 million refugees. We have been afflicted with drugs and arms. And our frontier regions, which were previously peaceful, have been inflamed by the three decades of war and instability in Afghanistan specially after 2001, when many Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements crossed the border

into Pakistan.

8. Pakistan's contribution to the fight against terrorism and extremism is well known. Much of the success against Al-Qaeda and Taliban has been achieved with our support and cooperation. We have lost more soldiers than any other country in the effort. Yet, we remain determined to defeat and eliminate terrorism and its root causes. An end to conflict in Afghanistan will help to restore normalcy on our side of the border and conversely, we recognize, that our efforts to stabilize, pacify and promote development in our frontier region will also have a positive impact on the situation across the border.

9. Pakistan has taken several measures to prevent cross-border infiltration by terrorists and insurgents. These measures have curbed such cross-border movement. But, the security environment on our side deteriorated sharply as a result of our role in the counter-terrorist campaign. In 2007, Al-Qaeda and some Taliban-linked groups turned on Pakistan and its security forces. Last year, there were a larger number of suicide bombings in Pakistan than Afghanistan, resulting in 2000 civilian casualties. Pakistan lost Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto – a leader of great stature and vision – to terrorist attack. This terrorist onslaught continues. The recent suicidal attack in Islamabad suggests that terrorist's threat to Pakistan is far from over. Naturally, this has led to growing popular concern and questioning by some of the excessive reliance on the military option. However, there is also popular disenchantment in Pakistan, including in our frontier region, with the terrorists and extremists, as evident from the success of mainstream political parties, in the region in our February 18 elections.

10. The new democratic government in Pakistan cannot but be sensitive to the sentiments of our people. The new holistic strategy we have evolved

seeks to restore peace in our frontier regions, halt and reverse extremism, and eliminate terrorism and violence through political dialogue and socio-economic measures but retaining the option to use force, whenever required. We remain committed to cooperation with Afghanistan and the Coalition forces to stabilize Afghanistan. Political reconciliation and economic reconstruction and development are our priority options to win over the people, the tribes and the moderates, and to isolate the terrorists and violent extremists. In the context of these pacification efforts, it is important to note that the problems and threats in each area and region of our frontier – as across the border – differ from region to region. Pacification will, therefore, require painstaking efforts, region by region, to win the trust and support of local people and their leaders. We are negotiating with tribal leaders and other influentials in these regions; not with the terrorists, nor with those who do not eschew violence.

11. Reconciliation and reconstruction are the only sustainable solution to insurgent violence and instability. We plan massive investment for the reconstruction of the area and its incorporation into the domestic political mainstream of the country. We welcome the commitment by the U.S. to the creation of Reconstruction and Opportunity Zones in the region and its pledge to provide \$ 750 million over 3 years to support these Zones.

12. While we seek peace through dialogue and development, challenges to the authority of the government, acts of terrorism, or cross-border attacks in Afghanistan, will not be tolerated. Where such challenges and violations occur, the government will take forceful action to eliminate them. We are currently doing so in the Khyber Agency against certain violent and criminal extremist militias. The Chief of Army Staff has been given the authority to decide on the application of such military action when required. Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used against other countries. However, no foreign troops will be allowed to operate inside Pakistan.

Mr. President,

13. We can assure greater success in containing, terrorism and

insurgency on both sides of the border through more effective cooperation and matching military measures. This is a joint responsibility. Pakistan will continue active cooperation within the Tripartite Commission. We are prepared to consider suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of such cooperation. At the same time, we feel that our partners too could contribute to enhancing operational cooperation by undertaking the following measures:

- (i) expansion military deployments and check posts on the Afghan side of the border to match Pakistan's 100,000 military personnel and 1200 check-posts;
- (ii) real time intelligence sharing;
- (iii) caution in the use of artillery and aerial attacks, to avoid accidents or territorial violations;
- (iv) supply of counter-insurgency equipment requested by Pakistan;
- (v) more effective check of the 40,000 daily legal crossings, including through use of biometric I.D. cards;
- (vi) relocation of Afghan refugee camps close to the border from Pakistan to controlled sites in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

14. The bonds that bind the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the mutuality of our strategic interests, the democratic mandates of our governments dictate that political relations between our countries should be much better than have been in recent months. Foreign Minister Spanta and

I have made a beginning, by exchanging visits during the last two months. President Karzai, who I had the honour to meet in Kabul, was one of the last people to see our martyred leader, Benazir Bhutto, hours before her tragic assassination.

15. Yet, clearly, we need to do more to overcome suspicion and distrust. We will do our best to reassure our Afghan brothers and sisters that our government is inspired by nothing but goodwill towards them. They too should make every effort to address our concerns.

16. I would suggest that we take some initial steps such as:

- declaring mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with the Kabul Declaration;
- not allow our respective territories to be used against each other;
- avoid provocative statements;
- intensify the frequency of mutual visits at all levels;
- revive and reinvigorate the Jirga process. Pakistan will soon convene the smaller Jirga meeting we have agreed on;
- support the Ankara Process as well as the Afghanistan – Iran – Pakistan Tripartite cooperation;

Mr. President,

17. The economic relationship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan is already intimate and intense. Our trade amounts to around one billion. Its potential is far more. We want to realize its full potential. Most of Afghanistan's trade transits through Pakistan. Pakistan has committed \$ 300 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have pledged additional \$ 20 million for the resettlement of Afghan refugees. Responding to the food crisis, and despite shortage in Pakistan, we have authorized the export of 50,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan at subsidized rates. Pakistan supports the Afghan National Development Strategy, endorsed in Paris, as the engine for economic growth and equitable development. We will host the next meeting of the Afghan Regional Economic Cooperation forum in Islamabad from 28-30 August, this year.

18. Pakistan and Afghanistan must press forward on all possible avenues to exploit the significant potential for mutual economic cooperation, for example by:

- jointly establishing Reconstruction Opportunity Zones along the border, in which Pakistan entrepreneurs would be prepared to invest;
- implementing Pakistan's plans to import electricity from Central Asia;
- implementing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project.

Mr. President,

19. Afghanistan and Pakistan can succeed in achieving their objective of peace, stability and prosperity through mutual cooperation. They can

succeed only if they enjoy the unconditional support of the international community.

Mr. President,

20. This debate is a good opportunity to commence an honest and objective evaluation of the challenges we face in Afghanistan and to devise a cooperative strategy for success. This strategy must combine military containment with political reconciliation, administrative control and rapid socio-economic development. The military option should be used but as a last, and not the first, resort. Military tactics should not create more alienation, more opposition and more enemies. We are convinced that dialogue and reconciliation together with calibrated use of force, are the best means to promote peace. To win this war, it is vital to win the hearts and minds of the people. We must build peace in Afghanistan in a bottom-up approach – village by village, district by district – offering incentives and disincentives to win the cooperation and support of the local population. Most importantly, our strategy for success must accelerate reconstruction and development. It must offer hope to the people – hope for peace, for jobs, for better lives, for themselves and their children.

Thank You.
