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Land / Organisation: **Afghanistan**

Mr Chairman, Ambassador Jschinger
Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and honour to be addressing this distinguished forum on world security. Thank you Ambassador Jschinger for inviting me to this year's forum to share the view from Afghanistan. This year, Afghanistan has entered a new phase of partnership with the international community in our joint struggle against terrorism and in building a stable, democratic and economically self-reliant country. I appreciate the opportunity today to discuss this new phase of partnership at this forum.

Last week, together with Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, I hosted the London Conference on the Future of Afghanistan, where more than 70 nations and international organizations renewed their commitment towards helping Afghanistan and to support peace and stability in our region.

Therefore, may I begin by saying how grateful the Afghan people are to the international community for this unfailing commitment over the past eight years. Together we have had enormous achievements: from the democratic process and the rule of law, to building up Afghan institutions, to delivering basic services, and to generally improving the conditions of life for our people.

These achievements would not have been possible without the sacrifices given by the Afghan people as well as the many young men and women of the various countries, big and small, who have come to help us. The Afghan people will not forget these sacrifice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the London Conference last week, we began the new phase of partnership between Afghanistan and the international community which will be marked by six pronged strategy:

- 1) Afghan-i-sation of the security sector, combined through a rapid expansion of the size and quality of the Afghan security forces;
- 2) a vigorous reconciliation and reintegration programme aimed at the Taliban;
- 3) a focus on the regional dimension of the terrorism threat;
- 4) improved governance;
- 5) the fight against corruption; and
- 6) economic development.

Consistent with the notion of 'Afghan Leadership, Afghan Ownership', in London we asked our international partners to facilitate the Afghan-i-sation of the security operations in Afghanistan. In the year ahead, together with our allies, we will be taking concrete steps to expand the strength and quality of our armed forces and to prepare for the gradual take-over of security responsibility from our international partners. Starting from the end of 2010, our forces would be prepared to start the process of receiving responsibility for security from international forces in parts of the country where this is feasible. This will be a gradual process and, conditions permitting, by the end of my current term in office, Afghan forces will have full responsibility for security throughout the country, with international forces continuing to serve in the capacity of providing backup and

assistance.

In this context, I appreciate the international community's cooperation in setting a new target for the combined strength of our national army and national police at 300,000 strong by 2012. This target calls for an ambitious effort and I urge our partners to prioritize the training and equipping of our national forces as part of their continued commitment to help Afghanistan.

As an important strand in our security strategy, the role of the international forces and how they conduct this role will remain crucial. I have warmly welcomed the new approach by the NATO commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, which puts emphasis on the need for protecting the Afghan population. Regrettably, local populations have suffered fairly often as a result of the way the war has been carried out in the villages and towns of Afghanistan and, to reverse the negative impact of this, we must make the protection of the lives and property of our people our top priority. We must do all that is possible to absolutely minimize civilian casualties, nightly raids and such other exercises that may be harmful to the populations. Military operations must be conducted with maximum caution, with strictest possible adherence to the culture and values of the communities, and in close coordination with the Afghan forces and local authorities. To the extent that the notion of sovereignty of state is crucial in reasserting state's role in the security arena, a number of special measures are also in order. One such measure, which we are currently working with our NATO and Coalition partners on, is the regulation of private security contractors, whose unregulated operations seriously undermine the rule of law and the role of the state as the lawful dispenser of security services. Another measure is the effort by the Afghan state to take charge of all detention centres in country. We will set up a commission and will work with the NATO and Coalition forces to review all detentions and facilitate the transfer of charge to Afghan authorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We Afghans know that achieving peace will also require a much more robust effort at reconciliation and reintegration than we have been able to offer so far. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, I have begun an effort to reach out to all Afghans, particularly those in the ranks of the Taliban who have been disenchanting for whatever reason, and who must be invited back to a meaningful and rewarding life in the society.

As I announced in London last week, I will soon set up a National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration which will, among other tasks, be responsible for organizing a Grand Loya Jirga for Peace. We recognize that, without support from our neighbours, particularly Pakistan, the reconciliation and reintegration programme will not bear fruit. I am encouraged by the response we have so far received from Pakistan and hope to continue our friendship and cooperation for the benefit of both countries.

I also just returned from a visit to Saudi Arabia where I discussed our peace efforts with my brother the King of Saudi Arabia, His Majesty Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, who has kindly accepted my request for him to play a prominent role in guiding and assisting the process. To help with this effort, the rest of the international community can help in a number of critical ways. Firstly, Afghans will need moral support as we undertake a crucial reconciliation exercise. Secondly, we would welcome contributions to an Afghan-led, peace and reconciliation trust fund, which would enable us to provide jobs and economic opportunities in the reintegration process. And, thirdly, we would appreciate a consensus on the UN's Sanctions Committee on delisting potentially reconcilable leaders from the former Taliban movement from the Consolidated List.

Reconciliation, in our view, is ultimately the most effective and lasting solution.

However, it will not be pursued at the cost of compromising the democratic process, and the equal rights of Afghan men and women as enshrined in our Constitution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In addition to the tasks I just described, the goal of securing Afghanistan, and undermining the

menace of extremism and terrorism across the region, requires a broader, more comprehensive approach — one that involves governance and economic development as integral elements of the strategy and, more importantly, that addresses the sources of insecurity at the regional level.

On the regional question, we are very optimistic about the prospects of cooperating with Pakistan in tackling terrorism which is posing a mortal threat to their security as much as it does to ours. While there is significant amount of good will on both sides for continuing this cooperation, the role of other nations in fostering this partnership remains valuable. I particularly note the good offices of the Turkish government in this regard.

On governance, last week in London we gave our commitment to the international community that we would continue and expand our efforts aimed at improving governance in the country. We will continue to reform and improve the capacities of our state institutions. We will pay special attention to improving administrative capacity and coordination across the various levels of government, from village to district, to municipality and provincial levels, as well as in their relation with the centre. We will streamline decision making and safeguard the participation of people's representatives from all these levels in decision making processes. In short, our approach to improving governance will see the expansion of the reach of central government to the remotest parts of the country, as well as building up governance right up from the village level.

At the national level, we will continue our work in improving capacity of state institutions and will hold the government accountable to the people. The election this September of our second parliament will be a huge milestone. We look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections, and expect the Independent Election Commission to work closely with the United Nations and the civil society to ensure the integrity of the elections and prevent irregularities and misconduct.

Fighting corruption will be the key focus of my second term in office. My government is committed to fighting corruption with all means possible, including punishing those who commit it and rewarding those who avoid it. We are currently reviewing the structure and capacities of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption and will make it into a stronger, more responsive organisation to lead our fight against corruption. Our goal is to put an end to the culture of impunity as we take steps on the path of rule of law and democracy.

And finally, on the economic development front, in addition to improving the living conditions of our people, we must undertake some major, longterm projects in key sectors of the economy. As the bedrock of economic growth, we will pay particular attention to investment in the agriculture and energy sectors, and will strive to create favorable conditions for private sector investment in these and other fields.

I am grateful for the continued generosity of our friends from the international community. In particular, I acknowledge the significant financial commitments from the United States and Japan over the coming years. I also welcome the positive outcome in London last week concerning the increased use of the Government budget as the framework for channeling financial resources. For a long time, an unacceptably high volume of international assistance has bypassed the Afghan government. We are pleased to see the consensus that this situation has to change, and we would like to see this changed in reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Conferences such as this one, and the one in London I mentioned multiple times today, are often opportunities not just to talk about responsibility or set dates. They could also be useful occasions to review the original cause, reflect on commitments to the broader goals, and refresh consensus about effective strategies.

In reflecting about the war in Afghanistan today, we see tremendous success in many spheres but overshadowed by failure in one major field: that of defeating terrorism and safeguarding the security of Afghanistan, the region and the world at large. We see that, despite our relentless fight over the past many years, and the sacrifices we have offered, terrorism is still a lethal enemy that takes innocent lives on almost daily basis.

On the other hand, the public in Afghanistan as well as in many of your countries are rightfully asking where this effort has led to. They would like to see progress in the war and get a sense of

when will ultimately the Afghan people themselves take charge of their own security. Of course, let it be clear to all that we Afghans wish to see the day sooner rather than later when we are able to defend our borders, own villages and towns, on our own, and when young men and women from other countries do not have to shed blood on our soil for our security. But to get to that day, our determination must be matched by time, effort and resources geared towards building up our capacity.

Moreover, terrorism is a resilient foe that still retains the ability to strike where we do not expect it. Where Afghanistan was once the worst victim of terrorists, today Pakistan is equally affected, and it is only a matter of time when terrorists emanating from this part of the world will get their next opportunity to strike in any corner of the world. Therefore, our public must be informed about what is at stake in Afghanistan, and there must be no illusion about the necessity of taking this war to its successful conclusion. Let us bear in mind that the war in Afghanistan is not — nor was it from the outset — a war of choice, but a war of necessity.

Having said that, the case for international community's continued support to Afghanistan is not limited to the menacing spectre of the terrorist threat. Despite the long hardships, I still see the sparkle of hope in eyes of everyone of my fellow Afghans that I meet. Only a few weeks ago, a survey established that the vast majority of Afghans are still optimistic about their future. I'd say Afghanistan has every potential to be a stable, democratic and economically self-reliant country. This may sound a lofty statement to others but to Afghans it is a long-cherished aspiration that we are determined to realize. We are determined to grasp every opportunity with eagerness and vision, and meet each challenge with courage and resolve. And we will count on continued partnership with the international community.

Thank you.
