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***Extended version of shorter statement delivered by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to the Security Council, March 12, 2008***

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Thank you very much Mr. President,

I want to thank you for convening this debate. I would like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing. On behalf of my government I thank the staff of UNAMA, in particular former SRSG Tom Koenigs, and deputy SRSG Bo Asplund for their dedication to the cause of Afghanistan's Success. We also thank them for their timely and sound input to the Secretary-General in providing a frank and comprehensive report.

My government concurs with the central judgment of this report which presents a balanced account of both progress that has been achieved and challenges confronting Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

The success of Afghanistan is a vital interest of the international community. Success in Afghanistan will contribute not only to the improvement of the lives of 30 million people who have suffered terribly as a result of 25 years of occupation and war. It will also be a keystone in the effort to defeat terrorism, weaken extremism, to create regional stability in Central and South Asia, to advance the needed political and economic transformation of the broader Middle East, and to reduce the threat of narcotics from Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

There are many developments on the positive side of the ledger, but I would like to take a moment to highlight a few of the more significant ones:

- Afghanistan is past the mid-point of the first electoral cycle of its president and parliament, demonstrating that representative government based on inclusion of all groups and an agreed constitutional order is *the* formula for stability. Though there have been bumps along the way, Afghans have made progress on the road of establishing stable and working institutions and starting to build the habits of democracy.

- Security in three regions – the north, central, western Afghanistan – is relatively good, thereby enabling Afghans to go about the business of building their country in partnership with the international community.
- In eastern Afghanistan, NATO-ISAF has made progress in stabilizing many districts through the combination of military action, improved governance, reconstruction, and economic development. Though more work remains to be done, this demonstrates the potential of effective counterinsurgency and stabilization efforts.
- Afghanistan’s security institutions – particularly the Afghan National Army – are increasingly effective and trusted by the Afghan people. More than 49,000 ANA troops have been trained and equipped, and Afghan-led operations have succeeded in challenging missions, including the liberation of the Musa Qala district.
- Reconstruction has steadily advanced. For example, the extent of paved roads increased from 50 km in 2001 to 4,000 km today.
- Afghan governmental institutions are increasingly effective. The Central Bank has more than 30 regional branches, and the exchange rate of the Afghan currency has enjoyed great stability. The National Solidarity Program, which provides funding for small reconstruction projects chosen by village councils, now operates in some 17,000 of Afghanistan’s 22,000 villages.
- Afghanistan’s health system is making significant strides. The level of access to primary health care increased from 8 percent of the Afghan people in 2001 to 80 percent today. More than 680 clinics and hospitals have been built and equipped, and almost 11,000 medical professionals have been trained. The inoculation rate for children against the polio virus has increased from 35 to 70 percent during the past two years. Since 2001, there has been a 22 percent decline in the child mortality rate under 5 years of age – which means more than 85,000 young lives are being saved every year.
- With respect to education, the number of children enrolled in school increased from 900,000 in 2001 to more than 5 million children today. Before, virtually no girls were in school. Today, about a third of all students are girls and young women.
- The Afghan economy continues to grow at impressive rates -- 12 to 14 percent per year – the highest rate in South Asia. The licit Gross Domestic Product has more than doubled since 2002. There are now more than 3.5 million mobile telephone subscribers – almost 11 percent of the population.

In the agriculture sector, huge areas have been brought back to cultivation of legal crops. Last year, the grain harvest was sufficient to meet all internal consumption demand for the first time in 10 years.

- Finally, civil society has blossomed, with the creation of dozens of independent media organizations, political parties, and groups dedicated to social causes.

Though much remains to be done, the Afghan people, their leaders, and the friends of Afghanistan should all take pride in the achievements to date.

Mr. President:

I also want to say a few words about the challenges, for these should be the focal points of our efforts as we recommit ourselves to the cause of Afghanistan:

- Security remains a huge challenge, particularly in the southern provinces and districts bordering Pakistan. The Taliban have resorted to terrorist tactics such as kidnapping, improvised explosive devices, and suicide bombs that can be deadlier than open combat for the Afghan Security Forces and international troops.
- Problems of governance persist, particularly in remote areas. There is an urgent need to address corruption, poor and weak provincial and district administration, and slow development of the institutions needed to support the rule of law.
- Political cooperation among Afghan leaders and between key institutions is falling short of the mark, leading to polarization that is counterproductive to interests of the Afghan people.
- Last year's growth in total opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is an alarming development. Afghanistan's poppy production fuels corruption and narcotics addiction, and is a significant source of financing for criminal and insurgent groups. Poppy numbers increased mainly in areas with weak governance and poor economic opportunities.
- The regional context also has to be taken into account. The constructive spirit of the Bonn Agreement, which entailed all regional powers playing positive roles in the stabilization of Afghanistan, has eroded. It is vitally important to strengthen regional cooperation against extremism, terrorism, and the Taliban.

Though significant, these challenges are not insurmountable. The Afghan government and the international community have shown that they can be tackled – and there are models and examples of

success in each of these areas. The task for all of us is to make these models the standard across the country.

Mr. President:

As we look ahead, Afghan leaders, regional powers, and the international community all have important responsibilities if Afghanistan is to fully succeed. However, I would like to focus on the needed actions on the part of the United Nations.

The UN should be proud of the role it has played in Afghanistan, starting with the Bonn Process. The US welcomes the appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank him for taking this important and challenging job. He can count on our support and promise to work closely with him. His appointment opens a new chapter in UN engagement in Afghanistan. His role will be vital in advancing the kind of productive partnership with President Karzai and the Afghan government that's the foundation for all meaningful progress. Afghans have governed their country for millenia. Our task is not to do this work for them, but to enable their country to stand on its own feet again as soon as possible.

As we discuss the renewal of the UNAMA mandate, the focus should be on setting the right priorities. At the top of the agenda is empowering SRSG Eide to coordinate and integrate the support of the international community, which is composed of dozens of donors, agencies, and implementers. One of the greatest assets for Afghanistan is the sheer number of countries involved, both on the military and civilian sides. The inevitable resulting challenge is ensuring that sufficient coordination exists to get the most of out of the individual efforts.

First of all, SRSG Eide will need to ensure that civilian assistance is integrated in support of the Afghan people and government and efforts to stabilize the country. While integrating NATO-ISAF's military efforts will be dealt with during the upcoming summit in Bucharest, success against the insurgency requires a comprehensive campaign plan that ensures that military actions to clear areas of the enemy is coordinated with civilian efforts to establish good governance and economic development.

Second, SRSG Eide should better coordinate the efforts of the international community to ensure a shared and focused commitment to the Afghan National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact. The execution of the elements of the compact has been uneven, and SRSG Eide should catalyze improved results where needed. This will entail greater coordination both among the donors and between the Afghan government and donors. This is particularly needed to increase the capacity of Afghan ministries to provide basic services and to tackle the problem of corruption.

Third, SRSG Eide should work to bolster international support for Afghanistan. Among the leaders – as well as the publics – of key donor countries, there is an inadequate understanding of the achievements and challenges in Afghanistan. The upcoming conference of donors in Paris will be an important opportunity to rally such support. By taking a leading role in explaining all aspects of the current situation, SRSG Eide can enable friends of Afghanistan to appreciate the returns on the investments to date and to focus future commitment on the most important challenges and opportunities.

Fourth, SRSG Eide should use his good offices to promote reconciliation and accountability, in close coordination with the Afghan government based on the acceptance of the Afghan constitution.

In addition, SRSG Eide should have the mandate to engage in active diplomacy to create a regional environment conducive to the stabilization of Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the attacks of September

11, regional powers came together despite their differences to support the Bonn Process, which enabled Afghans to freely choose their own government. Reclaiming the “spirit of Bonn” is in the interest of all these countries. It should be a key priority for the UN effort.

To carry out this mission, UNAMA must have the right people in Afghanistan, as well as sufficiently robust funding and security assets. We regret that, as noted in the recent Secretary-General’s report, UNAMA faces vacancy rates and staff retention issues. The UN must incentivize its best people to create an effective presence, particularly in parts of the country where NATO-ISAF is achieving stability but needs a partner to help to improve governance and development. It is not just a matter of filling the slots but rather one of getting highly motivated and capable people with the right skills.

The United States is ready to do its part to help Afghanistan succeed. In addition to the 27,500 troops already deployed to support Afghanistan, the United States will send an additional 3,200 Marines, with 2,200 dedicated to the strengthening of security in the south and 1,000 to training Afghan National Security Forces. In 2008, the United States will provide over \$2.9 billion in total assistance including \$1 billion for education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and local reconstruction. In addition, we have asked Congress for \$2.6 billion in a 2008 supplemental funding request. We are also undertaking a number of new initiatives, including the establishment of a public-private partnership with American law firms and schools to help advance the rule of law and establish a strong core of legal professionals.

Mr. President,

We believe that SRSF Eide must have the right mandate to succeed, and we look forward in the coming days to working with the Government of Afghanistan, the Security Council, and other key countries to ensure that UNAMA’s renewed mandate reflects current needs and priorities.

We agree with the findings of the Secretary-General’s report and the need to strengthen the SRSF’s and UNAMA’s role in coordinating and prioritizing international assistance. We further agree that political outreach, sub-national governance, humanitarian coordination, elections support, and cooperation with NATO-ISAF should be priorities for UNAMA.

Thank you, Mr. President.