



Delegation of Afghanistan

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TO THE OSCE, AT THE 722nd PERMANENT COUNCIL
IN RESPONSE TO H.E. MINISTER BERNARD KOUCHNER

Vienna, July 17, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

My delegation joins other speakers to warmly welcome H.E. Foreign Minister Kouchner to the Permanent Council. Your Excellency, we attentively listened to your comprehensive statement and appreciate your views to better understand the challenges that we debate at this organization and certainly look forward to France's EU presidency in the next six months.

The European Union's engagement and France's leadership will be of immense help in dealing with the new threats and challenges that face us all in an increasingly globalized world.

France's new leadership role to encourage dialogue and enhance support for international harmony has already been exhibited through its efforts in organizing and hosting the Paris Conference in support of Afghanistan this past June. The government of Afghanistan appreciates and attaches significant importance to the declaration that resulted from the conference. The Paris Conference declaration renewed the international community's commitment to, and the need for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

One important element of that declaration is to strengthen regional co-operation through political, economic and security means.

Unfortunately, the latest event of bombings in Kabul last week certainly speaks to the contrary.

Your Excellency, Minister,

Terrorism and extremism remain the direst challenges in our globalization efforts. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the sacrifices of the international community have pushed Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations outside our borders.

Seven years later, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are regrouping with enhanced outside support. The primary mitigating factor contributing to the deterioration of Afghanistan's security is General Musharraf's defiance to deliver on his promise to eradicate terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan. Furthermore, his apparent unwillingness to control his Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) organization's alleged support for and contribution towards regional instability. In addition, Afghanistan strongly opposes Pakistan's tolerance of Al-Qaida and Taliban members' free reign in Pakistan, by issuing them "virtual green cards" - making our mission and effort more difficult and challenging.

As some of you may know, we, Afghans, are known for our hospitality. Today, the coalition forces are our guests and as such should be treated that way. Early this week we were saddened by the attack on and murder of nine US soldiers in Kunar province - a clear violation of Afghan hospitality. Afghans have always set the record straight, and this time won't be any different. Over the last several years, dozens of innocent people have died at the hands of Al-Qaida and the Taliban. My government's assessment is that although the AK-47 may be held in the hand of a terrorist, the source of the weapon is Pakistan's ISI, army and other nations who contribute to the demise of NATO-ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Last week in his address to United Nations Security Council, Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, H.E Dr. Spanta said: "[W]e welcome the results of the elections of Pakistan and the path the people of Pakistan have chosen towards democracy and the establishment of a civilian government. The people of Pakistan have said no to terrorism. It is clear that international terrorist networks constitute a common threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it is our firm belief that we need a joint, coherent and integrated approach by both governments to eliminate their bases".

As we turn a new page, France's role is instrumental in exploring new initiatives that encourage dialogue for attaining global security. My delegation is of the belief that it will be a grave error for our nations to overlook the gravitas of terrorist threats. If we do not firmly address the issue of Pakistan's integral role

in, and support for these terror groups, then our nightmare of terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons could become reality.

While it was noted in the conclusion of Paris conference in support of Afghanistan, my government is cognizant of providing security to its people and will continue the fight against corruption and narcotics. Both elements are major impediments in our march toward democracy.

Stability in Afghanistan is important for the entire OSCE region. While the EU approaches in Afghanistan focus on enhancing governance and long-term development, European Commission funding for the rule of law and support for civilian reconstruction confirms its long-term commitment to Afghanistan's security and development. Border security and management are a major focus of that assistance.

My delegation welcomes the decision taken at the Ministerial Council in Madrid on stronger OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

Rule of law and good governance are contributing factors in the success of the northern part of Afghanistan where most of the provinces are drug-free and will hopefully remain that way.

The Government of Afghanistan clearly sees the need for the implementation of Madrid MC Decision 04/07 to increase capacity of its law enforcement and to better manage its borders. To this extent, we appreciate Secretary General's proposal to realize the MC decision in co-operation with our central Asian neighbors and look forward to France's established experience in Central Asia to materialize these programs within and outside Afghanistan's borders.

Finally, Your Excellency Minister Kouchner, as we benefited from a successful and capable Slovenian EU presidency, we wish France the same and look forward to your able leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.