



Situation in Afghanistan

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Thank you, Mr. President, for hosting this meeting today on the pressing problem of Afghan narcotics. I also would like to join my other colleagues in expressing my appreciation and the appreciation of our delegation for the fine work that Ambassador Wang of China has carried out here during his tenure as Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations. We will miss your wise council and I have very fond memories of the work we have done together here. I would also like to join our colleagues in welcoming Mr. Heraldo Munoz of Chile as he takes up his responsibilities as Representative of his country.

Mr. President, the 2003 Afghan opium poppy harvest may be as large as that of 2002, which was a record year. The resurgence of opium poppy cultivation further erodes the security environment in Afghanistan, and threatens reconstruction efforts. The message here is that we should do more, and we should do it better.

Trade in Afghan opiates generates funds that corrupt institutions, finance terrorism and insurgency, and destabilize the region. These funds also support the organized crime syndicates involved in the gray arms market. Moreover, the opium trade spreads drug abuse and HIV/AIDS across the region, including to Russia and Europe.

A shift in opium poppy cultivation from prime agricultural land to more remote areas, as reported in the April 2003 UN Office of Drugs and Crime Opium Rapid Assessment, is an alarming trend; on the positive side, it shows that poppy production is being pushed into more marginal areas; but also demonstrates the need to mainstream counternarcotics programs into overall development assistance and the urgent need to establish law and order in rural areas.

The opium economy cannot be addressed in isolation. Enforcement of the poppy ban needs to be increased, farmers require viable options for licit crops, and credit is needed for rural Afghanistan. As we fight production in Afghanistan, we also need to deal with trafficking in neighboring states.

Counternarcotics efforts will be most successful in the larger context of economic and democratic reform, but cannot succeed until basic security and rule of law are established in areas outside of Kabul.

The United States is committed to helping build the Afghan Transitional Authority's capacity to run effective counternarcotics programs and reduce poppy cultivation and trade through alternative livelihood programs, and we are working with the Transitional Authority to build a National Police Force.

My government supports the United Nations -- United Kingdom's -- lead on counternarcotics and the German lead on police training, and we are showing this support with more than \$60 million in funding in these areas.

My government also supports many projects developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We are contributing to alternative development, drug treatment and reduction programs and we are helping build Afghan national capacities for drug policy-making and drug enforcement.

In coordination with the German government, we are implementing a \$26 million police and justice program that includes equipment and training for the Afghan police, and the establishment of an identification card system and a communications network for the police. We are in the process of planning, with our German colleagues, an expansion of police training in the provinces.

Outside of Kabul, including in Afghanistan's neighboring states, we need to seek new ways and methods of joining forces - through coordination, better information-sharing, regional approaches, and, when the circumstances are right, through combined or joint operations, as we have done on certain occasions.

The United States strongly supports the UN Office of Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan as well as the proposals of the Paris Pact put forward by Executive Director Costa in Paris last month.

My government is also committed to helping establish the Border Police, and we are working closely with Germany and the rest of the international community to coordinate assistance for this important function. We are providing communications equipment to the launch of the Border Police take-over of Kabul International Airport as of June 1.

And we remain committed to working with Pakistan and Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbors to strengthen legal and institutional capacities to confront the drug trafficking that poses as much a threat to their own integrity as it does to that of Afghanistan.

We urge Council members and other member states, especially those most threatened by the trade in heroin originating in Afghanistan, to join in combating this evil trade before its influence becomes even more pervasive.

The United States remains concerned at the upswing in violence in both Kabul and the provinces, most recently with a suicide attack, which killed four German ISAF personnel on June 7. Taliban and al Qaida elements now appear to be targeting foreigners -- military and civilian -- rather than engaging Coalition forces. Coalition forces continue to root out these elements in the field while the Afghan National Army and Afghan police are trained. The Afghan National Army has deployed some of its first trained units to work with U.S. Special Forces, most notably in Bamian, and has received high marks; the Afghan National Army has also suffered its first casualties from hostile fire.

We have helped to stand up three Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs, in Gardez, Bamian, and Konduz. And eight, a total of eight such teams, are currently planned with an option for creating more of them. We are looking at ways to improve these teams and enhance their capabilities. We believe the Provincial Reconstruction Teams have made significant contributions to stability within their area of operations, and we are working with other countries to lead additional such teams.

With regard to the national elections to be held in June 2004 as called for by the Bonn Agreement, we are told that UNAMA has begun preparatory work, including voter education and registration programs. However, we have yet to see a formal plan and the associated budget for this effort, and time is growing short. We understand the United Nations' Electoral Assistance Division proposes to fund UNAMA's activities in this area out of voluntary contributions at a cost which is estimated at more than \$100 million. The United States urges all countries to provide the maximum financial support possible for the electoral process in Afghanistan.

We note with concern that the Afghan Transitional Authority is facing a shortfall of \$181 million in their recurring budget. It is critically important that donors accelerate pledges to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and identify additional funds to cover this gap. The United States will soon disperse \$20 million to the Trust Fund and will review possible additional contributions. We would urge other member countries in a position to do so to contribute to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund as soon as possible.

Finally Mr. President, while our policy discussions here in the Council today are important, it is ultimately the resources we devote to dealing with Afghanistan's serious problems that will make a decisive difference. In addition to the considerable outlay for Operation Enduring Freedom, the United States will expend almost a billion dollars this year on reconstruction, humanitarian relief, and for budget support in Afghanistan. We invite Council members and other member states to provide timely and significant financial support as well.

Thank you again, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak on this topic.

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