

# EAM's intervention on Afghan situation at ASEM FMs meet

June 06, 2011

Madam Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor to speak on Afghanistan.

Before I do that, may I also thank Hungary, our most gracious hosts for their hospitality and excellent arrangements for the meeting of ASEM Foreign Ministers.

Madam Chairperson,

The situation in Afghanistan has a particular impact on the countries of the region such as ours. Past experience has shown, however, that no country, however distant, can stay immune from the challenge posed by terrorist groups and the safe havens that they enjoy. It is imperative for the international community to underline its long-term commitment to Afghanistan, as well as the importance of safeguarding the gains made in areas such as democracy and human rights.

The Kabul Conference *Communiqué* rightly notes the importance of ensuring that terrorists are denied sanctuaries. Continued existence of such sanctuaries beyond Afghanistan's borders is a major impediment to restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

India has attempted to help Afghanistan in its reconstruction efforts as a means to bringing about stability in that country. During our Prime Minister's visit to Afghanistan in May 2011, India announced additional assistance of US \$ 500 million, over and above our existing commitments which are almost 1.5 billion US Dollars. India's assistance projects are spread across Afghanistan and span almost the entire gamut of economic and social developmental activities. India's assistance programme – which is Afghan owned and led - places particular emphasis on capacity building and human resource development, areas which are particularly important as the process of transition unfolds in Afghanistan.

Our vision is for Afghanistan to be a stable and peaceful economic hub linking Central and South Asia through a network of trade, transit and pipelines, for the ultimate benefit of all the countries and peoples in the region. We do not see assistance to Afghanistan's development and reconstruction as a zero sum game. Despite persistent attacks, India has reiterated its determination to fulfill its commitments to the Afghan people and Government as they build a peaceful, democratic and pluralistic Afghanistan.

For peace and stability to be restored in Afghanistan, it is essential that renewed efforts are made to sufficiently enhance the capacity of Afghanistan's own institutions, including the Afghan National Security Forces. This is a necessary prerequisite to achieving the ultimate goal of handing over responsibility to the Afghan side without sacrificing the gains made over the past few years. The importance of dealing with the terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens also becomes important in this context.

As our Prime Minister stated during his visit to Afghanistan, we fully respect the decisions of the Government and people of Afghanistan and recognize the need for a political process which is Afghan-led, inclusive, transparent, and adheres to the 'red-lines' which the Afghan Government and the international community

have agreed to. These red lines for reintegration are crucial in the common endeavour of our countries to prevent Afghanistan sliding back to becoming a safe haven for terrorist and extremist groups.

I thank you all.

**Godollo (Hungary)**

**June 06, 2011**

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*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India*