

**Statement given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker
to the United Nations General Assembly
Emergency session on international assistance for peace,
normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan
Thursday, December 20, 2001**

Mr. President,

We would like to thank the German Mission for their co-ordination of this resolution.

It provides needed guidance from the General Assembly on the evolving political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

Canada views the impending inauguration of the Interim Administration in Afghanistan as an important step in the implementation of the Bonn agreement.

This is the first real opportunity for a sustainable and lasting peace in a country that has known only strife for the last 20 years.

Above all, the Afghans are to be commended for their good will in reaching this agreement and taking this courageous step towards a better future for their people.

We congratulate Special Representative Brahimi and his staff for the part they played in facilitating the discussion in Bonn which led to this significant agreement. We will continue to depend on his wise counsel as we move forward towards reconciliation, reconstruction and long-term development in Afghanistan.

\ We would hope the UN will continue to ensure a coherent response to Afghanistan, with the political, security, human rights, humanitarian and development arms of the UN system collaborating for a common and effective strategy.

There can be no question that the Interim Administration will require considerable support from the International Community, and Canada is committed to working with the Administration to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, and to enable the eventual transition to democratic governance.

Any future government should, in our view, represent the broad spectrum of Afghans, and ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making.

We expect the new authority to ensure full respect for Afghanistan's obligations under international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

Stability in Afghanistan is crucial to the overall effort to combat terrorism.

We are encouraged by the recent successes of the military campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan.

At the same time, we are very concerned by continued insecurity throughout the country, including reports of lawlessness and reprisals.

Deployment of an International Stabilization Assistance Force will be an important contribution towards a stable political transition in Afghanistan.

As many have already noted, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was already dire prior to the events of September 11th, and was exacerbated as result.

We remain concerned about the safety of Afghan civilians, and call on all parties to ensure their access to protection and assistance.

We applaud the efforts of the UN, Red Cross and NGOs in continuing to meet the needs of vulnerable Afghans throughout the recent crisis, and note in particular the courage and dedication of local Afghan staff.

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We will continue to emphasize the importance of building and supporting Afghan civil society.

Canada has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan over the last 10 years, including substantial additional aid in response to the current crisis.

We remain committed to providing humanitarian assistance and will participate actively in the reconstruction process.

We are very pleased with the UN's humanitarian response to date.

The UN demonstrated important leadership in preparing timely and credible contingency plans.

This must continue, particularly for the transition from relief towards rehabilitation and reconstruction.

We note the continuing relevance of the co-ordination structures in place in Afghanistan for humanitarian and development assistance, and would encourage these to be fully utilized, including the Afghan Support Group.

We look forward to the outcome of consultations currently underway in Brussels among the Afghan Reconstruction Steering Group, and the forthcoming donor conference in Tokyo.

Recent returns by Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries reflects the optimism which many Afghans share about their countries future.

We recognize and appreciate the burden which neighbouring countries have shouldered over the last 20 years, in meeting the needs of displaced Afghans.

We encourage countries hosting Afghan refugees to continue to provide protection to those Afghans in need, and to co-operate fully with the UNHCR in facilitating their safe and voluntary repatriation once conditions in the country permit.