

Remarks given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker
before the U.N. Security Council Open Debate
on the situation in Afghanistan
Thursday, May 23, 2002

Thank you Mr. President.

Our debate today comes at a time of great change and great hope for the Afghan people.

During the last five months, the people of Afghanistan have amply demonstrated their commitment to bringing an end to decades of conflict and, at long last, to rebuilding their country and their lives. It is clear that they want to build a country where terrorists find no home.

Canada is committed to helping rebuild a stable government and society in Afghanistan in order that the aspirations of the Afghan people can be realized. We should not and cannot let them down.

We owe it to them and to the people who died on September 11 and in terrorist attacks elsewhere to ensure that extremism finds no fertile ground on which to spawn evil. This will require a long term commitment by us all.

The progress made since the fall of the Taliban regime is a testament to the resilience, determination, and optimism of the Afghan people.

Six months ago, we would not have imagined that millions of Afghan girls and boys would now be in school, that Afghan warlords would watch their opium poppy fields burn, or that hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees would be returning to their homeland to begin to rebuild. We also would not have imagined six months ago that a traditional Afghan administration would win, by its effective leadership under the most difficult of circumstances, the confidence of the international community.

Yet all these things have happened.

We applaud the work of the Afghan interim administration.

We also applaud the effective help provided to the Afghans by UN Special Representative Brahimi and his UNAMA team in Afghanistan.

These welcome developments have prompted Canada to reaffirm its longstanding commitment to the people of Afghanistan with new, concrete support.

Canada provided some \$160 million (\$100 million US) in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan between 1990 and the end of 2001.

We have also committed \$100 million (\$70 million US) more in humanitarian and reconstruction aid in 2002/3.

\$30 million of this amount has already been disbursed, focussing on humanitarian assistance to address urgent needs, and de-mining and victim assistance programs to mitigate the consequences of decades of land mine use by parties to Afghanistan's many conflicts.

We note with concern UN reports that show that shortfalls in humanitarian assistance still exist.

The basic needs of the Afghan people must be met before reconstruction can become our focus.

We therefore urge the international community to take all possible steps to meet the goals of their Tokyo pledges as soon as possible.

Canada is also contributing to the security of Afghanistan through our participation in the coalition force.

Some 2,000 Canadian Forces personnel, deployed as part of *Operation Apollo* in the coalition campaign against terrorism, are tasked with multiple missions including force protection of coalition assets, de-mining assistance, and combat operations directed against remaining pockets of Taliban and Al Qaida resistance.

Earlier this year, Canada deployed a Battle Group to Afghanistan for a six month mission.

These troops will remain in place until late July or August.

Canada will continue to contribute to the coalition campaign through special forces, and through a sizeable sea and air presence in the region.

We agree with Under-Secretary-General Prendergast that security is an absolute prerequisite for the success of the political process and of the reconstruction effort.

The G8 countries, which Canada chairs this year, have been working with the Afghan Administration and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan to develop strategies and marshal resources to help the Afghan people create a national army and a national police force, to re-build the justice sector, as well as to assist in the demobilization of ex-combatants and to address illicit opium production.

Our collective goal must be to develop a sustainable and comprehensive strategy to restore stability and security to the people of Afghanistan.

Within the context of the United Nations, the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul under the auspices of the Security Council has been one of the most visible examples of the international community's commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

Under strong UK leadership, the International Security Assistance Force has proven to be an important stabilizing influence in Afghanistan during a critical time in the country's development.

Coalition and ISAF forces have complementary missions: to help create the conditions necessary for Afghanistan's long term stability and security.

We strongly support the ISAF's ongoing presence in Afghanistan and are pleased that Turkey has agreed to lead this force into its second mandate.

We believe that the renewal of the ISAF mandate will permit ISAF to play its part effectively in ensuring that delegates to the *loya jirga* in a few weeks' time are free to express their views and to represent the interests of their constituents.

The *loya jirga* represents the first opportunity the Afghan people have had in decades to set their own course towards multi-ethnic, representative and democratic governance.

We hope that the *loya jirga* will prove to be a turning point where the people of Afghanistan, building upon the tremendous progress they've achieved recently, lay the groundwork for their country's future peace and prosperity.

We urge the Afghan authorities to ensure that the *loya jirga* process accommodates wide-ranging ethnic and tribal interests.

We are pleased to note that the level of female participation in the Loya Jirga process to date has been high, and are particularly pleased that female delegates have not only been named but have now in at least one case been elected.

We hope that this trend continues, and that Afghan women and that Afghan women continue to be included at every level of decision-making.

Respect for human rights is fundamental to the successful rebuilding of Afghanistan.

We urge both the Interim Administration and the international community not only to support the human rights of all ethnic groups in all areas of Afghanistan but also to seek accountability for those who would abuse these rights.

We believe the people of Afghanistan want to be heard, and to be governed by leaders of their own choosing.

This is a indeed a hopeful time for Afghanistan and a rare opportunity.

- Canada looks forward to working with the new Afghan authorities and will continue to support the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to rebuild their nation.

Thank you.