

**Statement By H.E. Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
The International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, Germany**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Honourable Chancellor Angela Merkel,

Honourable Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

Excellencies Foreign Ministers, and distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a tremendous honour to join you, Madam Chancellor, in welcoming the distinguished participants to this International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn. This city is where, ten years ago, Afghanistan began a journey of historic significance – a journey out of the dark decades of oppression and neglect towards a future of promise and hope. You have all been our companions in this journey, and it is a great privilege to have you here today to mark the tenth anniversary of our shared commitment and efforts.

I am enormously grateful to Germany for the age-old friendship we have enjoyed, and in particular for Germany's solidarity and commitment over the past decade. I also thank the people and Government of Germany for the generous hospitality extended to us on this occasion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ten years ago today, Afghanistan turned a new page in its relations with the international community. Since then, Afghanistan has brought the world together in meaningful cooperation, in pursuit of shared goals. Together we have spent blood and treasure fighting terrorism, and taken

steps to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan after decades of conflict. Today in Bonn, history is again being made as a sovereign and democratic Afghanistan comes together with the international community to deepen and broaden this critical partnership for security and cooperation in the region and beyond.



For Afghanistan, the past ten years have brought opportunity, growth and improvement in people's lives on a scale never before seen in our history. We have created an inclusive political process, brought Afghans together in unity, and ensured that Afghanistan once again becomes the home of all Afghans. We have revived Afghanistan's shattered national and local institutions of governance, and laid the foundations of a pluralistic, democratic system of government. Basic rights and freedoms of citizens, including the right to free expression, assembly and political participation, are guaranteed by our Constitution. Our security institutions, the destruction of which in the 1990s was perhaps the most dispiriting blow to Afghan sovereignty, have been reconstituted. Afghan women have come out of total seclusion during the Taliban rule to take their rightful place in the society, making 20 percent of our civil service, 27 percent of our parliament, and 39 percent of students in our classrooms.

At the same time, rule of law has steadily grown, as has the delivery of public services to the population. The coverage of basic health services has increased from 9 percent of the population to over 60 percent; school enrolment has grown from under one million to 8.4 million. We have built more roads in the last ten years than in the entire history of the country. Starting from zero in 2001, today 60 percent of Afghans own a phone. The media sector has seen phenomenal development – there are today 50 private TV networks, 150 radio stations and over 800 newspapers and periodicals in the country. Thousands of new enterprises have been created, and there are more Afghans employed in the private sector than ever before in Afghanistan. In

short, starting from a dismal baseline ten years ago, our economy has seen tremendous growth as our GDP has almost tripled.

I hasten to say, however, that our shared goal of a stable, self-reliant and democratic Afghanistan is still far from being achieved. Indeed, the challenges that remain are significant and have the potential to derail our progress and reverse our achievements. Poverty and under-development are still our top challenges. Our young democracy remains fragile and the Afghan people are yet to see their aspirations realized through strong, effective and accountable national institutions. Chronic under-investment for state capacity building, the existence of parallel structures and the permeation of corruption and a culture of impunity have undermined the development of institutions in terms of strength and credibility.

Our biggest challenge, of course, arises from insecurity, which has taken a massive toll on the lives of our people, and blunted our progress in all other areas of recovery, reform and development. Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, of course, have been significantly weakened. However, the wider regional dimensions of the terrorist threat have been neglected and the problem of sanctuaries outside Afghanistan has remained unaddressed. As a result, terrorists continue to wage a vicious war against peace and tranquility. While this remains the case, Afghanistan's stability will continue to be at grave risk, as will the long-term security of the entire region and the wider world.



Ladies and gentlemen,

We in Afghanistan will continue to move on the path we have chosen, and are determined to overcome the remaining challenges on the way ahead. Allow me, Ladies and Gentlemen, to share my vision for the future of Afghanistan, and set out the steps we will take to achieve that vision. We Afghans have a fervent desire to live in a peaceful country where we can enjoy a

dignified, happy and prosperous life in unity and harmony. We want to build Afghanistan into a stable, democratic and prosperous country, a country that is the peaceful home of all Afghans, and that enjoys friendly, mutually rewarding relations with all its near and extended neighbors and beyond. We are determined that Afghanistan will never again fall to the hands of those who will turn it into a source of threat and harm to others. We want our country to be a genuine asset to security and peace in an integrated region.

This is the vision of every Afghan— it is a vision that drives our ambitions, and motivates our untiring efforts towards a better and secure future. In moving towards achieving this vision, we will consolidate the accomplishments of the past decade and continue our efforts with determination. We will work to fight corruptions more effectively and further reform government institutions to render them more efficient, transparent, and accountable. We will enforce the rule of law and pursue further judicial reforms. In particular, as I promised to the Afghan people at the recent Traditional Loya Jirga, we will focus on reforming the civil service so that it is apolitical, secure and capably at the service of the Afghan people. We will reform and Afghanize the electoral process to ensure that future elections are transparent, free, and insulated against fraud and interference

Last week, the second phase of the Security Transition began in Parwan Province. Hopefully we will complete this second phase by the end of February 2012, whereby Afghanistan's national security forces will have full responsibility for nearly 50 percent of the population. Transition is not only a solid security objective, but also an imperative that responds to the Afghan people's desire for self-reliance. Therefore, I reiterate today that we are fully determined to complete the Transition process as planned by 2014. At the same time, we call on the international community, in particular our allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to continue and expand the scope of training and equipping Afghanistan's security forces in order to enhance their capacity to defend the country's sovereignty and protect its citizens.



We will also continue to pursue the peace and reconciliation effort as the surest path to a durable peace in Afghanistan. Regrettably, our peace efforts suffered a tremendous setback with the unfortunate assassination last September of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former president of Afghanistan and the Head of the High Peace Council. I recently consulted the representatives of the Afghan people at the Traditional Loya Jirga about the future of the peace process, and was pleased to see that the Afghan people want us to pursue the peace efforts, including our bilateral cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Our principles for the peace process and a negotiated outcome remain unchanged. The political process will continue to be inclusive, open to Taliban and other militants who renounce violence, break ties with international terrorism, accept Afghan Constitution and return to peaceful life. I would like to reiterate our eager desire for Khadem-e- Haramain Sharifain ,His Majesty King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to continue to guide and support the Afghan peace effort.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we look to the Transformation Decade beyond 2014, Afghanistan will require continued financial support from its international partners in order to consolidate the gains of the past decade and to realize greater security and economic sustainability. The people of Afghanistan are looking to this Conference for a clear affirmation of commitment to make security transition and economic progress irreversible.

In the months ahead, we must also engage in a serious debate with our international partners about the future economic development of Afghanistan. I thank the Government of Japan, another friend and steadfast supporter of Afghanistan, for the decision to host a conference next year in Tokyo focusing on Afghanistan's future economic agenda. Consistent with the Kabul Process, the international aid strategy must shift from stabilization to long-term development, with aid effectiveness as a top priority.

We will give priority to implementing large-scale infrastructure projects, creating jobs, and developing Afghanistan's productive sectors, particularly agriculture, energy and mining. Our country sits on trillions of dollars worth of under-ground resources, and we are working hard to exploit them in the interest of our long-term growth and prosperity.

Ultimately, of course, the future of Afghanistan will depend on the prospects of economic integration in the region of which Afghanistan is the centre. Thanks to its location, Afghanistan has a key role as a land bridge for transit, trade and connectivity. A stable, secure and developed Afghanistan is not just a noble desire by Afghans and our international friends, it is a necessity if the region is to achieve security and meaningful economic integration. Afghanistan is ready to embrace the region in friendship, solidarity and partnership.

Last month in Istanbul, thanks to the leadership of our friend the brotherly Republic of Turkey, twelve of Afghanistan's near and extended neighbours came together to discuss the challenges within the region that prevent cooperation and the need for greater confidence building. I hope that the Istanbul Process will continue to generate even greater momentum for cooperation at the regional level when the region meets again at the Ministerial Conference in Kabul in June 2012.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Many of us around this table have met before at similar conferences on Afghanistan. But this conference is unlike others. Today is the culmination of a decade of joint struggle, shared efforts and many sacrifices on both sides. As we gather in Bonn today, we have reasons to celebrate ten years of partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, the truly significant achievements we have had together, and the difference they have made to the lives of the Afghan people. We Afghans are grateful to the international community, to all of you around this table, for helping us on this path, and for the sacrifices you have rendered alongside the Afghan people.

At the same time, since the journey for Afghanistan still continues, the Afghan people ask of friends and partners to continue to remain committed to the vision of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan, and to stay the course with us as we reach that vision. Last month in Kabul, over 2200 delegates to the Traditional Loya Jirga, men and women from all corners of Afghanistan, spoke in total unison for lasting relations with the international community. The Jirga gave a resounding affirmation of our efforts to engage in enduring partnerships, and set out conditions that will have to be met as the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community evolves. The aim of these partnerships is to help safeguard Afghanistan's security and stability as well as assist our future economic development. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the European Union to enter into negotiations for a long-term partnership with us.. We believe that such partnerships will be beneficial not only for Afghanistan but also for the region, and shall not be a threat to our neighbors or any other country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Responsibility for the future of Afghanistan rests with Afghans, and we Afghans will not fail or falter in assuming that responsibility. However, your continued solidarity, commitment and support will be crucial, particularly in the period between 2014 and 2024, so that we can consolidate our gains and continue to address the challenges that remain. The Afghan people do not wish to remain a burden on the generosity of the international community for a single day longer than absolutely necessary. But to make our success certain, and our progress irreversible, we will need your steadfast support for at least another decade.

Thank you.