Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to thank you Mr. President for making it possible for the Secretary General to brief us this afternoon.

India condemns in the strongest possible terms the dastardly terrorist attack in Kabul on the UN’s premises that killed five UN staff members and injured several others.

Our own Embassy in Kabul has been attacked on two occasions, with the last one being only some weeks back. We have lost colleagues in these attacks with several more injured and loss of many innocent Afghan lives.

We share the sense of grief of the UN community and offer our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, not only in this but similar attacks on the UN in this region and elsewhere.

The terrorist attack, for which the Taliban has claimed responsibility, is a desperate attempt of those opposed to lasting peace and security in Afghanistan and aimed at disrupting the Presidential run-off elections scheduled on November 7, 2009. We could not agree more with the Secretary General that the UN was targeted because of its support for the elections.

The successful conclusion of elections would be an important milestone in Afghanistan’s evolution as a democracy. All stakeholders – the Afghan Government, the international community and the UN must redouble their efforts
and work in close coordination towards the organization of these elections as per schedule.

We commend the UN’s resolve and determination not to be deterred by this tragic incident and to carry on its Mission in Afghanistan. We also express our solidarity with the people and Government of Afghanistan and commend their resolve to confront the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. President,

We affirm our full support to all the measures outlined by the Secretary General for strengthening safety and security of the UN personnel and its facilities. There is no doubt in our mind for the need for stepped up safety and security measures and their rigorous implementation on the ground. I would be remiss, therefore, if I did not respond to the SG’s demand for additional resources to meet the needs for enhanced security. I want to assure the Secretary General that these requirements will have our most favourable consideration in the shortest possible time-frame.

We firmly believe that an expanded and enhanced UN presence on the ground is critical for effective coordination of international efforts. There is no substitute for the coordinating role of the UN in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

This incident once again clearly underscores the security challenges in Afghanistan. The challenge from a resurgent Taliban and Al Qaeda is real, and it is one that threatens us all. We need to confront this ‘head on’ as we are doing right now. The fight against terrorism cannot be compartmentalized.

Given the recent dramatic decline in security, there is need for an intensified focus on security, governance and development by the Afghan Government and here the international community should do what it can to assist. Failure in Afghanistan’s stabilization will entail a heavy cost for both the Afghan people and the world at large.
When we speak of recommitting ourselves to helping Afghanistan defeat the forces that seek to destroy all that has been achieved since 2001, it is important to recognize that all of us have an abiding interest in the success of this endeavour. What we believe Afghanistan needs is a long-term commitment, even while remaining mindful of the challenges. The Afghan people have displayed resilience and a survival instinct even against the greatest odds. We must do our utmost to support them.

Thank you