

In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate

Your Excellency, Mr. Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan;

Distinguished guests;

Your Excellencies Speakers of both Houses of the Parliament;

Your Excellency Chief Justice;

Members of the National Assembly;

Distinguished Jihadi Leaders, Tribal Elders and Respected Ulemma;

Members of the Diplomatic Corp;

Members of the Press;

Members of the Cabinet;

Ladies and Gentlemen!

May peace be upon you all!

I thank Almighty Allah (SWT) for bestowing upon our nation the ability and success to proudly come out of another major test. The participation of millions of citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in presidential and provincial elections once again demonstrated that the Afghan nation has reached a stage of political maturity of which we can be proud.

I would like to thank and express my heartfelt gratitude to my country's men and women, who despite threats, made sacrifices to take part in this great national process. I also applaud all of the candidates for their participation in the election process; this process has moved our country one step further towards democratic maturity. Let me also commend all the candidates for their peaceful campaigns and rallies. The conduct of the election campaigns in shaping opinions and giving direction to the people's votes were major strides towards stabilizing and ensuring the people's preeminence in our young democracy.

The notable characteristic of the recent elections was that it broke all ethnic boundaries. Widespread participation by our people in the elections showed that they, irrespective of their political affiliation, came out and voted for the president on the basis of national interest. Looking at the combination of votes, one finds that ballots were cast in a more national and Afghan spirit than ever before.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to sincerely thank the Independent Election Commission (IEC). Taking the current difficult situation into consideration, these elections would have been impossible without the great sacrifice and effective management of the IEC. We must learn from our good and bad experiences in these elections and put all our energy to ultimately fully Afghanize the process. The election law has to be ratified and enforced as soon as possible, and Afghan voters must know and be assured that it is only the people's vote that can give legitimacy to the government.

In the same vein, let us remember the services of all the members of the national army, the national police and other security services, as well as the soldiers of our allied countries who put their lives in danger to make possible the participation of our people in the elections. I pray for those who lost their lives and wish a quick recovery for those who suffered injuries.

Distinguished Guests, Sister and Brothers!

Arguing and disputing our political ideas and beliefs are famously embedded in our Afghan character. However, we stand united when it comes to defending our fatherland and our national values. Using this opportunity, I would like to invite all the presidential candidates, including my brother Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, who is here with us today to come together to achieve the important task of national unity, and make our common home, Afghanistan, proud and prosperous. I believe that the obligation of patriotism and loyalty to Afghanistan, its political system, and its state must remain the highest values we believe in.

Honorable Guests, Dear Compatriots

With international support, Afghanistan has had many successes in the past eight years; these successes have been the result of sacrifices made by our people and the peoples of our allied countries.

I do not want go over all of the successes of the last eight years. I do, however, want to state that during the last eight years, we were able to bring Afghanistan out of a situation where it did not have a responsible government and the necessary legal foundations. Today, we have a law-based state along with institutions that are at the service of the people of our country.

We are proud of Afghanistan's achievements in providing its sons and daughters with access to education and health services. Today, Afghanistan enjoys an open and free media, a developing civil society, a rehabilitated economic infrastructure, a set of well-conducted monetary reforms and a budding free-market economy.

Grasping the opportunity of today's august occasion, I would like to talk about Afghanistan's tomorrow. We have to learn from the mistakes and shortcomings of the past eight years. It is through this self evaluation that we can better respond to the aspirations and expectations of our people.

At this point, I would like to set out the priorities that will serve as the basis for our future endeavors:

1. ***Peace and Reconciliation:***

Securing peace and an end to fighting are the most significant demands of our people. For the last thirty years, our people have offered continuous sacrifices to achieve peace.

It is a recognized fact that security and peace cannot be achieved through fighting and violence. This is why the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has placed national reconciliation at the top of its peace-building policy. We welcome and will provide necessary help to all disenchanted compatriots who are willing to return to their homes, live peacefully and accept the Constitution.

We invite dissatisfied compatriots, who are not directly linked to international terrorism, to return to their homeland We will utilize all national and international resources to put an end to war and fratricide.

We will call Afghanistan's traditional Loya Jirga and make every possible effort to ensure peace in our country.

At this point, I am compelled to note that His Majesty King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has made many commendable efforts towards peace and national reconciliation in Afghanistan. We thank His Majesty, the Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques, and hope that he will continue his endeavors for this cause.

2. *Security:*

Defending our country and providing security for our nation is the duty of all Afghans. The state's monopoly over security forces and the leadership and organizational role of our security forces can ensure security for our country.

Based on the state monopoly of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan over the defense and security forces of our country, and other imperatives of national sovereignty, we want to organize and improve the national army and our other security forces in quantitative and qualitative terms, in consonance with the defensive needs of Afghanistan. Our country, consistent with our financial capabilities, should be able to provide for needs of our national army and security forces.

Within the next three years, Afghanistan, with continued international support and in line with the growth of its defense capacity, wants to lead and conduct military operations in the many insecure areas of the country. As they already have in Kabul, our own security forces should be able to take control of security of other provinces as well, and thus the role of the international troops will be gradually reduced and limited to support and training of Afghan forces. We are determined that by the next five years, the Afghan forces are capable of taking the lead in ensuring security and stability across the country.

The detention and prosecution of suspects is the authority and responsibility of the Afghan government. We have to strengthen the security of our prisons and detention centers, and expedite further the reform process within our justice system. We will continue to discuss this issue with the United States of America to ensure that detention and legal prosecution of suspects will be the responsibility of the government of Afghanistan alone.

Civilian casualties continue to remain an issue of concern to the people and government of Afghanistan. I am pleased to see that our continuing discussions with NATO and ISAF, and our joint operational measures, have resulted in a considerable reduction in the number of civilian casualties. We would like to

expand and enhance such measures, so that casualties among our civilian population to be avoided.

The goal of a powerful national government can be realized by the stronger presence of national security forces in all parts of the country. Within the next two years, we want operations by all private national and international security firms to be ended and their duties delegated to Afghan security entities.

3. *Good Governance:*

A fundamental prerequisite for good governance is to ensure individual and social security of the people. Security and the rule of law can only be effectively ensured when both the government and the citizens are equal before law.

It is noteworthy that our people throughout the long years of conflict never felt safe even in their home out of fear of government security agencies. People have the right to be safe and we are responsible to provide them with the safety.

Good governance can be practiced by good and authoritative executives. We must use full care and foresight in appointing all government officials and members of the administration. The ministers of Afghanistan must possess integrity and be professionals serving the nation. All senior officials, especially the ministers, governors and deputy ministers have the duty to declare and register their moveable and unmovable assets. To prevent corruption, we will adopt a law in consultation with the National Assembly for making it obligatory for senior government officials to identify the sources of their assets and to declare their properties in a transparent manner.

Strengthening administrative reforms and improving the capacity-building of the civil administration from center to the district level, are those future measures that we will pursue with great seriousness. As a first step, in line with these reforms, fifty thousand teachers were asked this week to undergo aptitude tests. Afghanistan's civil administration, its diplomatic corps, national army, national police, and national security forces must be non-political and act as true public servants.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to end the culture of impunity and violation of law and bring to justice those involved in spreading corruption and abuse of public property. To do this, will require effective and strong measures. Therefore, alongside an intensified judicial reform, all government anti-corruption efforts and agencies have to be strengthened and supported. Particular attention will be given to building the capacity and upgrading the High Office of Oversight for the Implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy . Measures for supporting the anti-corruption agencies include: increasing the scope of their authority, improving their capacity and resources for detection and investigation, expanding their organizational structure, as well as reforming the relevant anti-corruption laws and regulations.

Since some time, the media has widely reported on corruption in our country's offices and administration. Whatever the truth may be, these allegations have given the Afghan administration a very bad reputation. Corruption and bribery constitute a very dangerous problem. We want to follow this issue seriously. To conduct research on this problem, we will soon organize a conference in Kabul so that we can find new and effective ways to combat this problem. We consider combating this difficulty our duty. In the same vein, combating moral corruption has its own place in our programs.

Cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs is another serious threat that is directly intertwined with terrorism and corruption. The government has the duty to decisively fight against the cultivation, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs. The Government of Afghanistan considers it to be its responsibility to dismiss all government employees who are connected to the cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs, and to deliver them to the hands of the law.

We seriously ask for close coordination within the international community, as well as cooperation from the international community with the Government of Afghanistan to fight illicit drugs.

For the purpose of strengthening oversight over government decisions, we want to organize district level elections in addition to the parliamentary elections next year. For the purpose of better city management, mayoral elections will be held soon.

In addition to its previous efforts, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan considers it to be its duty to secure the rights of women in the three branches of government, so that the condition of women and their rights in our society can be further improved.

4. Economic Development:

We have had numerous economic achievements during the last eight year. Between 1381-1386, our country experienced an average economic growth rate of 15%. This is good news about the resilience of our expanding economy.

Economic development and growth, as well as the creation of a legitimate national economy, consistent with the realities of the Afghan society, can be achieved only within the framework of a market economy.

For the purpose of achieving economic growth, we will continue our endeavors towards strengthening agriculture, livestock, irrigation, energy, and education. Moreover, we will also build more highways and make further efforts towards the improvement of our infrastructure.

With the goal of developing the rural areas, we support the National Solidarity Program and other similar programs. We will provide our youth with vocational training based on the reconstruction needs in Afghanistan. This will enable us to provide thousands of job opportunities for our citizens.

With the aim of implementing a new operational program during the next five years, we are seeking a new cooperation framework with the international community. This cooperation will be based on Afghan ownership. In light of the principle of Afghan ownership, Afghans will have the central role in prioritizing, designing and implementing development projects.

Currently, only 20% of international funds are spent through the government budget. This percentage should be raised. We ask the donor countries to raise this percentage to 40%, and increase it to 50% over the next two years.

Transparency in spending international aid is another important issue. Lack of transparency and accountability in aid spending reduces people's trust and causes the spread of administrative corruption.

5. Regional Cooperation:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Strong regional cooperation is a major contributor to social, economic and cultural growth of countries. With the cooperation of our neighbors and the rest

of the world, we intend to expand regional solidarity through practical measures in regional trade and transit, aiming to position Afghanistan as a bridge between the countries of Central Asia, South-East Asia, and the Middle East.

Afghanistan has the potential to become a transit corridor for goods and energy between north and south Asia.

Connecting Afghanistan to the region's railway networks, and linking the countries of the region through Afghanistan to regional roads and sea ports, present some of the real opportunities that can bring the countries of our region together.

6. Foreign Policy and Affairs:

During the last eight years, the United Nations has had the civilian leadership of the international community in organizing international conferences as well as coordinating the world's efforts in Afghanistan. Afghanistan appreciates the role of the United Nations and asks for a strengthening of the role of this organization in the areas of agreement.

Dear Guests,

We believe that our friendship with the United States of America is not limited to our joint struggle against violent extremists and the forces of division and destruction; rather, it is based on Afghanistan's long-term interests towards the consolidation of stability and tranquility for our people in this region.

America is the largest contributor in the provision of security, economic development, and good governance in our country. I am fully confident that this friendship will further expand. The people of Afghanistan will never forget the sacrifices made by American soldiers to bring peace to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is determined to take all the necessary steps towards strengthening US-Afghan relations through initiation of dialogue and discussions on the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the United States-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership. Afghanistan hopes to acquire the status of a major non-NATO ally of the United States

We express our thanks to the member countries of the European Union, NATO, Canada, Australia and all the other allies of Afghanistan who, during the past eight years, have participated and made sacrifices in strengthening our state

institutions, supporting our reconstruction, and providing security. Following past contributions, the recent \$5 billion aid pledge by Japan deserves our heartfelt thanks.

We are fully confident that members of NATO will take effective steps towards accelerating the task of training and equipping the Afghan national army and police. It is only through this process that Afghanistan's hope with regard to a quick return of our friends' soldier to their countries will be realized, enabling us to take full responsibility for our security.

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are always directly affected by positive and negative changes in the Islamic world. For this reason, our relations with the Islamic world are akin to relationships based on values within a single family. We are thankful for the efforts of Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, other sisters and brothers of the Islamic Community, and members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)

Our relations with our neighbors are based on mutual respect and genuine friendship. We will make efforts to expand and strengthen these relations. We are thankful for the assistance of our neighbors in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, particularly Iran and Pakistan.

We enjoy strategic relations with the Republic of India. India has contributed \$ 1.3 billion to Afghanistan's reconstruction. Thousands of Afghan students are educated in Indian universities.

The People's Republic of China is our good neighbor and partner in the development process in Afghanistan.

The Republic of Turkey has been a loyal and historic brother of Afghanistan in the course of history. The presence of Turkey's soldiers in Afghanistan and the efforts made by Turkey's leadership towards peace and security in our country are highly appreciated.

Our relations with the Russian Federation are expanding rapidly and we thank Russia for supporting us in international forums.

The presence of my brother, His Excellency President Zardari in this gathering is a sign of friendship and brotherhood between the peoples of our countries, and the commitment of the Government of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism as a common threat. I have full confidence that the democratically-elected governments of our two countries will soon overcome the problem of terrorism.

Excellencies,

Dear Guests, Fellow Citizens,

Ladies, Gentlemen

The next five years, while short in the context of the ancient history of this country, confront us with great responsibilities and duties.

Taking advantage of all national and international opportunities and facilities, we will endeavor to implement social and political reforms in our country.

I consider myself responsible to Almighty Allah and to the people of Afghanistan to carry this heavy burden on my shoulders and to truthfully take it to its destination.

Our people have the right to enjoy security and a comfortable life in the light of a democratically-elected system of governance. Recognizing this right of my people, for the next five years, I want Afghanistan to become a country that is capable of defending itself, and where peace reigns across the whole nation. With the help of the Almighty God, Afghanistan will be in the possession of a strong democratic order for the next five years.

Tens of thousands of Afghan youth will be employed in reconstruction of their country and management of its affairs. All cities and some rural areas will have electricity. Road networks will be asphalted and completed, and work on building railroads will begin.

In the next five years, lawlessness will end with the help of our people. The task of establishing security and protection of peoples' lives will be taken over by the state to the full extent, and the state of Afghanistan will be bound by and operate on the basis of law.

To open a new chapter in cooperation and assistance between Afghanistan and the international community, soon an international conference will be

organized in Kabul. This conference will reiterate the mutual responsibilities and commitments of Afghanistan and the international community towards each other.

I ask Almighty Allah with great humbleness to bestow upon Afghanistan and the whole world peace and tranquility, and wish my people comfort and pride.

Success belongs to the Almighty God.

{End of Speech}