

Enforce Taliban, al-Qaida sanctions to combat resurgent threats to Afghanistan: India

16/03/2016 21:48 by admin

United Nations: India has called for strictly enforcing the Security Council sanctions on the Taliban and al-Qaida to combat the resurgent terrorist threat to Afghanistan.

India's Permanent Representative Syed Akbaruddin told the Council Tuesday that the effective implementation of the sanctions "will go a long way in imposing restrictions on the listed entities/individuals' movements, assets and arms embargo."

He was speaking at a Council debate on UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), which had its mandate renewed. The meeting heard a dire warning from Nicholas Haysom, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative for Afghanistan that in "2016, survival will be an achievement for the National Unity Government" as the nation "is being severely tested."

Cautioning against the Taliban expanding territorial reach, Akbaruddin said, "We urge the Security Council to look into the security situation and the means to contain it with a sense of urgency."

"The distress signals are unremitting-a worsening security situation; an increase in the tempo of insurgent activities; a greater toll of civilian casualties; and a deteriorating humanitarian situation," Akbaruddin said. "All point to the need for greater engagement by the international community."

For India's part, he said it "is working to support the Afghan Government and people." New Delhi was ready to expand training programs for Afghan military and security forces at its institutions, he said.

On the economic front, Akbaruddin said Kabul would be able to achieve its full potential if it is allowed the freedom of transit to major South Asian markets. "We are working with Afghanistan and Iran to develop trilateral transit and participation in the development of the Chahbahar Port which will augment our connectivity with Afghanistan," he said. While cooperating with Iran in developing the port, New Delhi is building roads in Afghanistan to link to it.

He referred to the National Assembly Building built with Indian aid that was dedicated in December by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ashraf Ghani. "The Parliament complex is a symbol of the resolve of Afghanistan to shape its future through votes and debates and the belief that terror and violence cannot be the instrument to shape Afghanistan's future or dictate the choices the people of Afghanistan make," he said.

During the debate Afghanistan and Pakistan traded charges over cross-border terrorism. Afghanistan's Permanent Representative Mahmoud Saikal demanded an immediate end to incursions from across the Durand Line that marks their border.

There have been at least 56 instances of violation of Afghanistan's territory from across the border, he said adding, "This jeopardizes Afghanistan-Pakistan relations at a time when making peace with Pakistan is essential to making peace with the Taliban."

Pakistani Permanent Representative Maleeha Lodhi responded that Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists were coming in from Afghanistan. Asserting that "we have a long border which is not easy to control," she said that "there has been opposition to Pakistan's creation of border barriers."

Saikal sounded a warning about the threat from the Islamic State or Daeish, al-Qaida, and other violent extremist and terrorist groups, in addition to the Taliban. "Everything we cherish - equality, democracy, justice and human rights - is under attack from their daily onslaught of violence," he said.

He called on Islamabad to help facilitate the direct talks between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government citing Pakistan Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser's assertion that his government had "influence on the Taliban."

Lodhi claimed that "Pakistan condemns all terrorism" and said that there should be no "unrealistic" deadlines or preconditions for the talks between the Taliban and the government.

India along with most countries expressed support for talks. But Akbaruddin said participants in "the Afghan government-led reconciliation process" must respect the redlines" against violence and should accept the constitution of Afghanistan."

Speaking to reporters after the Council session, Haysom said that so far Pakistan was cooperating with the Afghan peace process. Initial indications were that they were doing "some heavy lifting" to facilitate the talks, he said and added that Islamabad realises that it will be accountable.

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