



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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Security Council Briefing on Afghanistan

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Your Excellency Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, President of the Security Council,

Your Excellency Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by thanking Norway as President of the Security Council for organizing this high-level briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for its continued peace mediation efforts while upholding and protecting human rights principles including the rights of women and girls, promoting the women, peace, and security agenda, and advocating for the protection of civilians in Afghanistan.

I would also like to thank SRSB Lyons for her candid and powerful remarks about the ongoing situation in Afghanistan and for her crucial role in leading UNAMA in this critical juncture. I also wish to thank His Excellency Mr. T.S. Tirumurti Chair of 1988 Sanctions Committee and Ms. Mahbouba Seraj for their insightful statements.

Mr. President,

I am speaking on behalf of the people of Afghanistan who have gone through 4 unbearable decades of conflict and on behalf of 28 million Afghans, including women and girls, who are suffering from hunger, poverty, and deprivation of their fundamental human and Islamic rights, and who must not be abandoned.

I am speaking on behalf of Afghanistan's civil servants from different Afghan institutions including career diplomats, who for the past 2 decades worked with integrity for a common vision: implementing a republican system that would serve the national interests of Afghanistan and its people in partnership with the international community.

I am speaking to legitimately represent the shared values and achievements made in Afghanistan and the blood and treasure sacrificed by our people and the international community since 2001, to voice before the Council, the rightful demands and concerns of the people of Afghanistan over the uncertain future and the fate of our country.

I would like to underline that I am not representing the former government of Afghanistan led by Ashraf Ghani, that has lost its national and international legitimacy, nor representing the interest of any political group.

Mr. President,

It has been more than 40 years that my countrymen and women have been suffering from relentless wars and violence and there is no end to their pain, suffering, and misery. I am almost the same age as the war going on in my country and as an Afghan who was born and raised in Afghanistan, I have experienced the adverse impacts of war firsthand. The brutal conflict caused bloodshed, poverty, and the destruction of infrastructure in the country. I have seen how millions of Afghans, including women and children, have lost their lives, become disabled, and were forced to leave their homes, their families, and the country they love. We were hopeful that after decades of pain our country would finally achieve a durable and inclusive peace that would lead to a new age of prosperity and development for our country. Unfortunately, our aspiration to achieve this remained no more than a dream.

Mr. President,

The last five months have seen an intensification in the dire humanitarian, political, economic, and social crisis in Afghanistan.

This is happening in the aftermath of shared failure and inaction by all sides but largely due to the continuous disruption of intra-Afghan peace talks by Former President Ashraf Ghani and his government and finally their irresponsible and sudden flee from the country that led to the collapse of the Republic. This event sealed the definitive failure of the peace talks that could have achieved a negotiated political settlement supported by national, regional, and international partners, and also enabled the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban and the disastrous consequences of destroying the common achievements of the past 20 years and the immediate hopes for a better future in Afghanistan.

As a result, today more than half of the Afghan population including men, women, and children are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance as they are faced with a lack of food, shelter, and essential health services in the harsh winter.

The people of Afghanistan will never forgive traitors for their betrayal of Afghanistan's national values and interests and of the sacrifices made by national and international civilian and military victims of war in Afghanistan, as well as the consequences on their families.

Politically, the Taliban de facto authorities has not been recognized by the international community as they fail to fulfill their commitments, including the formation of an inclusive and accountable government to provide essential services to the Afghan people, and respecting the human rights principles including the rights of women and girls and other minorities.

Mr. President,

Against this backdrop, I would like to share the following points for consideration of this Council to save the Afghan people from the current situation:

Firstly, I would like to underline the urgency of addressing the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as a top priority. I would like to support and echo the call by the UN Secretary-General to find practical ways to rapidly inject cash into the Afghan economy to pay the salaries of public sector officials, teachers, and health care workers, and to prevent the banking sector from collapsing. The delivery of humanitarian aid is crucial to saving the lives of the Afghan people. It should be channeled and delivered to vulnerable Afghans based on transparent mechanisms.

Let me express our deep appreciation to the UN, regional and international donors for their great steps taken so far, including the generous humanitarian support provided and the hosting of Afghan refugees, the unanimous adoption of Resolution 2615 providing a humanitarian exemption for the provision of life-saving humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan, and the launch of the 2022 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan on January 11 by the UN and its humanitarian partners. I urge you to support the funding of the HRP and to continue your humanitarian support for the sake of the Afghan people.

Secondly, while humanitarian aid delivery is key as a stop-gap solution, I would like to highlight the importance of channeling development aid to Afghanistan to avoid regression of progress made so far and to resume the economic development projects so that it creates job opportunities and helps further sustainable development. This requires a legitimate state through the formation of an inclusive and accountable government based on integrity, competence, and merit with professional and committed people to national interest of Afghanistan, including women. Your support for the formation of an inclusive and accountable government in your engagements with the Taliban is imperative.

Thirdly, the fundamental human rights and freedom of expression of all Afghan citizens, including women and girls, and minorities, must not be compromised or negotiated. Unfortunately, there are concerning reports from UN entities, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International that indicate serious violations of human rights by the Taliban in Afghanistan, including gender-based discrimination against women and girls, the detaining of journalists, human rights activists, and peaceful protesters, and the torture, summary executions and forced disappearance of former government officials and members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces across the country. I call on the Taliban to put an end to these human rights violations, honor their “general amnesty”, allow women to work and open the doors of schools and universities for girls.

Let me also express our concern on the disappearance of two Afghan women activists, Tamana Zaryabi Paryani and Parawana Ibrahimkhel, reportedly abducted from their homes overnight by the Taliban a few days ago, and Alia Azizi, a senior female prison official who has been missing for more than three months after she reported for duty in Herat. This is completely unprecedented and in contradiction with the civil, Islamic, and cultural code of Afghan society. We call on the Taliban to provide information on their whereabouts and immediately release them.

Fourthly, in the last 20 years, Afghanistan despite conflict and all other challenges has made tangible progress in different spheres including education, health, and the development of human capital. We must sustain the achievements of the last twenty years and must not let international investments go to waste. If the international community does not act to address the current crisis, Afghanistan will lose all these achievements, especially its human capital through a brain drain and migration. Moreover, more than 70% of the Afghan population is young and if there are no job opportunities and legitimate income sources, there is a high risk for terrorist groups to recruit and misuse this young generation. This is going to promote extremism and fundamentalism and turn Afghanistan once again into a terrorist hub posing a potential threat to Afghanistan itself, the region, and the world. In addition, the influx of Afghan migrants and refugees into neighboring countries will further overwhelm regional humanitarian capabilities.

Fifth, while we appreciate all the efforts of regional and international partners for convening conferences on addressing the situation in Afghanistan and hosting and facilitating dialogues

among Afghans with the Taliban for a political settlement and the formation of an inclusive government, we would like to request for this Council to convene an international conference led by the United Nations for the holding of intra-Afghan talks to start negotiations among key Afghan stakeholders including, personalities not involved in corruption and criminal cases, public figures with good reputation and background, civil servants, career diplomats, civil society and human rights activists to work on a political road map for the formation of an inclusive and accountable government based on national interest paving the ground for amendment of constitution and ultimately enabling Afghan people to elect their leaders and representatives through elections. The intra-Afghan dialogues and negotiations must be held publicly and with conditions based on the supreme interest of all Afghans.

Sixth, I would like to request freezing and confiscating of all Afghan assets illegally transferred to the accounts of former government officials who were involved in corruption and embezzlement of international aid to the Afghan people. They must be held accountable and tried. It is unfair that 28 million people are starving, and mothers sell their children to survive, but these corrupt former government officials live in luxurious houses and villas in different countries in Europe and the US. We also call on you and all international partners not to provide them with asylum and platforms to engage politically or speak about Afghanistan as this is going to further harm the feelings of the Afghan people, the country's national interest, and ultimately undermine the efforts of the international community in achieving any future political settlement in Afghanistan.

Seventh, while grateful to the UN Secretary-General and his dedicated team here in New York, in Geneva, and on the ground for their leadership of the humanitarian response process, I would like to stress that the role of the UN in addressing the current situation in Afghanistan in coordination and delivery of humanitarian aid is now more crucial than ever. We particularly applaud the important role being played by UNAMA and look forward to greater and stronger role of UNAMA mandate renewal in March.

Lastly, I call on the Taliban to comply with its national and international commitments and seek their national legitimacy first from Afghan people by ensuring safety, security, and a dignified life for all Afghan citizens without discrimination and where their social, economic, and political rights are fully respected and protected. This is a time that demands that the Taliban act

responsibly for the sake of the interests, wellbeing, and rights of every single Afghan including women and girls, to save Afghanistan from the ongoing crisis. They must prove their intentions and commitment through tangible actions to benefit the people of Afghanistan leaving no one behind, regardless of gender or ethnicity. Otherwise, their inaction will exacerbate the current crisis and lead to a humanitarian catastrophe.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that achieving sustainable and permanent peace and prosperity in Afghanistan can only be done through dialogue among Afghans based on the national interest and will of the people of the country. An inclusive and durable political settlement must be achieved to ensure the improvement of the humanitarian situation and the protection of human rights in Afghanistan. This is the only way to preserve our collective gains of the past two decades and to ensure that Afghanistan once again becomes a country that is at peace with itself, its neighbors, and the international community at large.

I thank you,