



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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Madam President,

Thank you very much for convening us all today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. I thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefings and thank Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh, co-founder and President of the School of Leadership Afghanistan (SOLA) for touching and inspirational remarks, she is an icon and a symbol of inspiration, resilience and valor for millions of Afghan women who are faced with dark forces in Afghanistan.

We appreciate the remarks of Security Council members in reaffirming the commitments to continue supporting the fundamental human rights of the people of Afghanistan particularly women and girls and the efforts for ensuring peace, stability, and security in Afghanistan.

We also thank the member states, donors and the UN entities, NGOs and all actors for their continued life-saving support specifically in response to the humanitarian crisis.

Your Excellencies,

We are nearing the two-year mark since the Taliban came to power, and there isn't the slightest ray of hope for a positive future for the people of Afghanistan, including the 28 million people that are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Among them are millions of Afghan refugees, IDPs, disabled people, youth and women and girls - who comprise half of Afghanistan's population.

In these last two years the international community has collectively engaged with the Taliban in dialogue and discussion, hoping for a positive response on the shared demands of the people of Afghanistan and international community. However, they not only have they not met those demands, but are in complete denial, trying to justify and cover their actions under the guise of a distorted and self-interpreted version of religion and culture.

On the international stage, they have resorted to a policy of blackmail and extortion with the UN and NGOs. Nationally, they have returned to the draconian policies of 1990s, - consolidating their power and authority through acts of intimidation and repression, imposing restrictions as well as isolating the people of Afghanistan.

And two years on, the situation in Afghanistan has not improved by any measure of progress. What we are seeing is a worsening of the situation from a humanitarian, human rights, security and political standpoint.

Madam President,

The economic and humanitarian situation has worsened, with the majority of the population deprived of basic needs and humanitarian assistance. 97 % of the population lives in poverty

with two thirds needing humanitarian assistance just to survive. 20 million people face acute hunger. The unemployment is rising and influx of migration despite numerous challenges, hardships and risks of being drowned, persecuted, arrested and deported is continuing. Despite Taliban's claims of increased national revenue collection from taxation, customs and fees, there is no change in the lives of ordinary people, and no accountability and transparency on utilization and expenditure of national budget and domestic revenue.

Madam President,

The people of Afghanistan and international community share a common anguish. Nearly two decades after women regained their rights, women and girls in Afghanistan have again been banned from receiving a quality education, from entering amusement parks, gyms, and sports clubs. Women have been banned from working in NGO offices, they quite literally have been wholly excluded from public office and the judiciary.

Today, Afghanistan's women and girls faced with a gender apartheid and gender persecution. They are required to adhere to a strict dress code and are not permitted to travel more than 75 km without a male guardian. The Taliban is systemically violating the rights of women and young girls while regressing with time and resorting to using draconian, cruel, and inhumane practices.

The people of Afghanistan look to the international community to adopt a united and coherent approach about the increasing erosion of human rights, ongoing arbitrary arrests, extrajudicially killings, forced disappearances and torture of former Government officials and security forces, human rights activists, journalists, protesters, as well as civilians under the pre-text of having links with ISIL, constituting violations of the Taliban's amnesty decree and crimes against humanity.

Further, corporal punishments were carried out, often in public, constituting torture and ill treatment under international law, in concert with a greater stifling of media and civil society.

As per a recently released Amnesty International report, the Taliban have directed collective punishment, particularly upon communities where they have established and deployed their forces. They have retaliated against captured fighters and targeted the civilian population to force submission and compliance, especially those suspected of being associated with the former government.

The list of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Taliban is long: torture, extrajudicial executions, hostage-taking, the intentional burning of civilian homes, forced evictions and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. However, beyond each individual act designed to instill fear, this conduct in sum constitutes collective punishment, which in itself is a war crime.

Many of these concerns were validated once again at meeting of the Human Rights Council on situation of human rights in Afghanistan two days ago. The Special Rapporteur, Afghan women activists and member-states and other participants spoke in detail about the grave and systematic human rights violations ongoing in the country.

We thank Special Rapporteur Richard Bennet for highlighting, what he rightfully referred to as the “suffocating” plight of Afghan women and girls resulting from the Taliban’s actions and policies, as well as other human rights violations against broader segments of society.

At the same time, we hope to see new and decisive measures by the international community for ensuring accountability for the grave human rights violations.

Madam President,

Taliban have broken their promises of trying to be more inclusive, break with terrorist groups, respect universal human rights, and take measures that prevent Afghanistan from posing a security threat to other countries. As the recent Monitoring Team report confirmed, the Taliban continues to maintain links to Al-Qaida in addition to nearly 20 other terrorist entities. The presence of foreign terrorist fighters and harboring and relocation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to northern provinces of Afghanistan are extremely alarming. Any acts of forced evictions and attempts to demographic changes based on ethnic and religious purposes will intrigue deep hostility and conflict in the country.

The Taliban’s association with terror groups isn’t a concern only for Afghanistan’s neighboring countries but for the international community as well. It is vital to ensure - at the regional and international level - a comprehensive, unified, and coherent counterterrorism strategy with zero tolerance against all terrorist groups - without distinction and preferential short-term approaches. There are no good or bad terrorists. The people of Afghanistan have always been the prime victim of terrorism., Terrorism is the antithesis of human rights, independence, and development.

Madam President,

Politically, Taliban shut the doors for inclusivity, engagement, or dialogue with the people of Afghanistan. The Monitoring Team report states how the Taliban reverted to the exclusionary, and autocratic policies of 1990s. The Taliban are not representative of any particular ethnic group in Afghanistan, nor representative of true Islamic values and cultural traditions of Afghanistan. However, their discriminatory policies based on extremist ideology, will result in increased societal and internal tensions and further complicate and deepen the crisis in the country.

The claims of counterterrorism and counter-narcotics are a paradox and self-contradiction by the Taliban. Taliban's senior leaders are involved in narcotics and the production and smuggling of drugs, including opium, heroin, and methamphetamine, have become a significant part of Afghanistan's illicit export under Taliban rule. Despite some speculation about a discord or disagreement within the Taliban, the majority of the Taliban share the same extremist ideology on human rights and women rights issues. In fact, there is no tendency to break the current national and international impasse and take Afghanistan out of isolation. They are content with taking advantage of the status quo and to continue to utilize the funds and national resources for personal benefit without taking into account the interests of the people. The reality is that the dissent and disagreement truly is over division of power and resources. The people of Afghanistan are paying a heavy price for the imposed and forced rule by an autocratic and extremist group.

Despite the difficult situation, the people of Afghanistan are determined to overcome the crisis and achieve a point of stability. We know that bringing peace to our country is a responsibility that primarily belongs to us - the people of Afghanistan. Over the past two years, Afghans from all walks of life and age groups - inside and outside Afghanistan - are tirelessly working and raising their voices in defending their rights, hard-earned achievements of past two decades and national values.

In the past year, civil society; women and youth groups and political movements and parties have mobilized and begun organized political activity. While various groups present diverse views for a solution, the main objective is to converge under a national agenda that is based on "national unity." This effort will not only continue - but will grow stronger with time. However, I cannot stress more how important it is for the international community to play a larger role in helping us overcome this crisis. A legitimate government based on the will of people is the need of the hour.

In light of the current situation, we are of the belief that a new coherent and united approach should be adopted by the international community towards Afghanistan and principled engagement. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the Council regarding the conduct of an independent assessment aimed at ensuring greater coordination and a more integrated international approach and effort for stability in Afghanistan. We look forward to the outcome of the assessment which is to be presented in November. The decision taken for that assessment and the recent UN meeting on Afghanistan with participation of the Secretary General and a broad group of special representatives from many countries, including from within the region, have raised hopes about a growing international consensus on Afghanistan. We hope to see this momentum build and grow stronger in the way forward.

We believe that ensuring participation by representatives of the people of Afghanistan in the follow-up to the Doha meeting and the adoption of the "Road-Map" therein - aimed at achieving

a comprehensive political settlement through “national dialogue,” are both vital issues for progress towards peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Moreover, time and experience has proven that dialogue and engagement - primarily with the Taliban alone - has not yielded results. Thus, it is now time that the international community should begin a structured engagement with democratic political forces to help find a concrete solution to the crisis. The democratic political forces should be given the platform and opportunity needed to help improve - and eventually stabilize the situation, based on the will of the people.

Additionally, and most importantly, international efforts from now on should prioritize the start of a political process towards a political settlement through national dialogue. The crisis in Afghanistan is primarily political in nature - and one that requires a political solution. So far - much of the international community’s attention has concerned the issues of human rights and the humanitarian situation.

While focusing on both these and other issues is important- the political component of the dilemma should not be neglected. It would be most preferable if the international community could unite in creating an environment that is conducive for the start of negotiations.

Madam President,

Yesterday marked World Refugee Day. This occasion is a time to reflect on plight of millions of refugees around the world, and to also honor their strength and resilience to overcome challenge and difficult. We wish to take the opportunity to call on the international community, especially host countries to provide Afghan refugees with the support needed, and to ensure their protection, safety and well-being - especially now, at a time in which they are seeking refuge abroad from difficulty and persecution in their country.

Madam President,

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that current situation in Afghanistan and its security challenges and threats is a great cause for concern to the people of Afghanistan and international community. If it is not addressed, it will have grave implications for Afghanistan, the region and international community at large. Thus, we hope to see the international community, and this Council in particular, act with unity and consensus to prevent Afghanistan from turning into a terrorist hub and to ensure a comprehensive settlement that leads to the formation of a broad-based legitimate political structure and system that reflects the people’s aspirations and enjoys their support so that we can achieve a long term and sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

Thank you.