



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8759th meeting

Tuesday, 15 September 2020, 12.25 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Abarry. (Niger)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Dominican Republic	Mrs. Cedano
Estonia	Mr. Auväärt
France	Mr. De Rivière
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Hunter
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2020/809)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.25 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2020/809)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Afghanistan to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2020/903, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Germany and Indonesia.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2020/809, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2543 (2020).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): At the outset, we would like to welcome the start of the Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha last Saturday. It is a major achievement, which we have all been awaiting for many years. We would like to thank and congratulate all

sides involved, especially our Qatari friends for their facilitation of the first round of negotiations.

Now that the peace negotiations have started, it is indeed in Afghan hands to define the future path of the country, just as it should be. The United Nations and regional and international partners will do their part to support and facilitate this process. At the same time, it is essential to send a signal of international unity and support to the negotiating parties and to all Afghanistan. In this respect, we welcome today's unanimity — all 15 countries voting in favour of resolution 2543 (2020).

Germany, as the co-penholder in the Security Council, is the second-largest donor and the second-largest troop-contributor but, as a close friend of Afghanistan's for many decades, also remains firmly committed to finally achieving peace. The economic, social, political and development gains made in the past two decades, including in the field of human rights, especially the rights of women, children and marginalized groups, must be protected and built upon. Together with our friends from Qatar, Norway, Uzbekistan and our co-penholder, Indonesia, we will do our best to facilitate future rounds in the Afghanistan peace negotiations.

I have said it many times, and I will say it again — the violence must stop now, in particular now that the peace negotiations have started. There has to be a sustainable ceasefire. The lives of innocent civilians, among them many women and children, must no longer be at risk. We particularly condemn the recent attack targeted at the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which claimed the lives of at least 10 people. This is an unacceptable assault against the constitutional bodies of the Republic. But, of course, any attack targeting civilians or hospital, medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities is unacceptable. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who lost family members and loved ones over the past month.

As all members know, sustainable peace can be achieved only through an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process that includes all relevant stakeholders, including women. Women must be equally and meaningfully represented at all levels and all stages of the peace process. In this respect, I must say that it is worrisome to see from the pictures of the peace negotiations that there is not a single woman participating in the process on the Taliban side.

The text of today's resolution is balanced and strong and the result of very hard collective work by all of us. It welcomes the start of inclusive Afghanistan peace negotiations. It includes strengthened references to the rights of women, youth and minorities, as agreed upon in last year's resolution 2489 (2019). It underlines the importance of international and regional cooperation. It lays out the threat posed by the coronavirus disease and that the international community must assist Afghanistan in tackling the pandemic. It makes us aware of the terrorist threats and of the important goal of going after the narcotics trade. Finally, and most important, the resolution gives the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan a strong mandate for another crucial year.

As co-penholders, Indonesia and Germany invested a lot into this resolution. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my neighbour, Mr. Dian Triansyah Djani, and the Indonesian delegation for the wonderful and very good, close cooperation during the past 20 months.

We have invested a great deal in previous resolutions, press statements and other Council products. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all present for the trust they have placed in us. We will have another meeting on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in December, but this is presumably the last time that we will be adopting a resolution together. It is really a joint effort, and we should be proud of it.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): After hearing the statement made by my dear brother Christoph Heusgen, it seems that we are already leaving the Council.

But on a more serious note, I would also like to echo my fellow co-penholder, Christoph from Germany, as Indonesia expresses its sincere appreciation to all members of the Council for their support on resolution 2543 (2020), on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as the support extended to us as co-penholders. The unanimous adoption of the resolution renewing UNAMA's mandate sends a strong signal of support to the people of Afghanistan from the Security Council and the international community. The spirit of cooperation and solidarity shown during the negotiations on the resolution was profound. We take pride in this collective effort and the wisdom of the Council, which has resulted in a comprehensive, robust and timely renewal of the mandate of UNAMA.

Indeed, this is a critical moment in history. The peace negotiations started on 12 September in Doha. It is the start of a process that Indonesia welcomes with the fervent hope that it will lead to the fulfilment of the long-awaited aspiration of all Afghans to a peaceful, prosperous and united homeland. We wish the negotiators and interlocutors the very best in their work.

As Afghanistan embarks on this new journey towards reconciliation and peace, the role of UNAMA becomes even more important. A number of aspects of the mandate of UNAMA have been laid out in the resolution. They all are vital, and hence continued attention to and support for them will promote conducive conditions in the country and foster the flow of peace negotiations. These range, among other things, from supporting the Government of Afghanistan on future elections and electoral reform processes to supporting regional cooperation for peace and stability, as well as from supporting the Government on the protection and promotion of human rights, including strengthening safeguards for children and women, to supporting the Government in undertaking governance reforms and development. UNAMA's contribution will certainly be essential.

We hope that the Council and other partners will continue to accord befitting support to Afghanistan and to UNAMA.

Indonesia is honoured to have been the co-penholder along with my colleagues from Germany, and, as a long-standing supporter of peace and well-being in Afghanistan, we will continue to do what we can for our Afghan brothers and sisters, be it through our multisectoral capacity-building and training programmes or as a dialogue facilitator to assist them in realizing the peaceful and prosperous country that they fully deserve.

Our patience, our undertakings, our support and our love for the people of Afghanistan have been a vital part of our contribution during our terms in the Security Council. Rest assured that Indonesia, during the remainder of its term in the Council and beyond, will continue to work tirelessly to garner support for Afghanistan bilaterally and multilaterally. We are convinced that the dawn of a new era in which all people in Afghanistan can once again live in peace and harmony is nearer than it appears.

Before closing, we would also like to commend our co-penholder, Germany — I was not yet counting, but he mentioned 20 months, which seems like a short time — as well as the experts and the political coordinators, whose contribution and support have been invaluable.

I thank all the experts who have engaged in the negotiations constructively, and, as I mentioned earlier, the resolution before us has been made possible by the combined and collective wisdom and efforts of the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to say to the representatives of Indonesia and Germany that sometimes it is when there is a stoppage in play that the best goals are scored.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): The United States commends the penholders for the cooperative spirit in which they led this process and specifically both the Ambassadors for their personal commitment and their teams' personal commitment to the future of Afghanistan. We thank them both.

The United States remains deeply committed to Afghanistan and to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons' work and leadership at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

As the Mission sustains support to the people of Afghanistan during this pivotal period in the country's history, and as the parties embark on peace negotiations on a political solution to end the conflict, the United States supports the objectives of promoting accountability in Afghanistan and addressing Afghanistan's legacy of large-scale human rights violations and abuses.

Of course, we would have serious concerns if, contrary to our understanding, UNAMA were to interpret resolution 2543 (2020) to mandate UNAMA to support the International Criminal Court's (ICC) illegitimate investigation against United States personnel. The United States reiterates that it is not a party to the Rome Statute and has consistently rejected ICC assertions of jurisdiction over United States personnel. We will not tolerate any attempts to subject Americans to the ICC's jurisdiction.

The United States remains committed to the promotion of accountability, but the ICC and parties to the Rome Statute must respect the decisions of the United States and other countries and not subject their

personnel to the ICC's jurisdiction, consistent with the respect of sovereign prerogatives.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2543 (2020), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and would like to thank Germany and Indonesia for the efforts they made in their capacity as co-authors of the resolution. The resolution sends a strong signal as the peace talks begin.

First, the peace process can be sustainably successful only if the democratic and human rights accomplishments of the past 20 years are preserved, including in particular the full, active and effective participation of women in the process and the protection of children.

Secondly, a reduction in the level of violence is necessary for dialogue. The Taliban must honour its commitments by publicly cutting their ties with international terrorist organizations, in particular with Al-Qaida, as they did with Da'esh, in line with the Doha agreement of 29 February.

Thirdly, only a combat against the scourge of drug trafficking coupled with efforts to support in parallel the country's economic and social development will result in the sustainable development of Afghanistan.

Lastly, the peace negotiations, which France stands ready to support, must take into account the interests and rights of the victims of the conflict and of terrorism in Afghanistan. These are the conditions that are necessary for the lasting stabilization of the country and for the security of one and all.

Mr. Auväärt (Estonia): Estonia welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank co-penholders Germany and Indonesia for their hard and efficient work. We believe that resolution 2543 (2020) is well balanced and highlights the Council's priorities and the most important aspects of UNAMA's present and future activities.

We welcome the start of intra-Afghan negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban in Doha on 12 September. This is a groundbreaking moment. It is now more important than ever for the United Nations, including UNAMA, to fully support Afghanistan so that the peace negotiations

can lead to an inclusive political settlement. A stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in all Afghans' and our interests.

A global ceasefire has been repeatedly called for by the entire international community, the Secretary-General and the Council. We stress once again that both parties must fulfil their commitments and work towards ending the violence in order to save civilian lives. Afghans need a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire to accompany the intra-Afghan negotiations. The fundamental freedoms and human rights guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution, particularly those of women and children, are inalienable and should be of the highest priority on the agenda of the intra-Afghan negotiations.

The meaningful participation of women and minorities is important at all levels of decision-making. The aim should be a country with economic development and growth providing new opportunities for its citizens, and where rights are upheld and women, children and marginalized groups are protected.

Finally, considering the important times ahead in Afghanistan, Estonia recognizes that UNAMA has a crucial role to play in supporting Afghanistan's way towards peace and security. To that end, it is important for UNAMA to work closely with all parties of Afghanistan, the international community and other international organizations, particularly the European Union.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council has unanimously adopted resolution 2543 (2020), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which China very much welcomes. As Afghanistan's close neighbour, China supports UNAMA in carrying out its mandated work and sincerely hopes that the war and violence in Afghanistan will come to an end and the country will soon achieve development and prosperity.

With intra-Afghan negotiations recently launched, a major breakthrough was made in the Afghan peace process. China calls for the parties to the peace talks to adhere to the basic principles of Afghan leadership and ownership. We hope that both parties can seize this opportunity, demonstrate good faith, find an effective political solution to the Afghan issue as soon as possible and reach a broad and inclusive future arrangement.

The withdrawal of foreign military forces should be carried out in a responsible and orderly manner so as to ensure a smooth transition of the situation in Afghanistan and avert the emergence of a security vacuum in the country, which would exacerbate insecurity and have a spillover effect on neighbouring countries. UNAMA and the Secretariat need to remain seized of this matter and report to the Council in a timely manner. All parties should continue to fight terrorism in Afghanistan with determination and prevent the use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities, while strictly adhering to uniform standards throughout the process.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without a solid socioeconomic foundation. Integration, regional cooperation and connectivity are the only way to strengthen the Afghan economy and improve people's livelihoods. In accordance with its mandate, UNAMA should continue to promote regional cooperation and interconnectivity, support peaceful reconstruction in Afghanistan, strengthen coordination and cooperation with regional partners and help Afghanistan tackle long-term problems, such as poverty and narcotics.

Through its promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative, China remains committed to helping Afghanistan forge closer trade and economic ties with countries of the region, especially its neighbours. China supports the Afghan Government in its continued fight against the coronavirus disease, and endorses the effective measures taken to ensure the safety and health of UNAMA personnel.

Lastly, China hopes that the intra-Afghan process will bear fruit and will continue to be a supporter, mediator and facilitator of the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. In addition, China stands ready to join the international community in making unremitting efforts and active contributions to advancing peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2543 (2020), on the situation in Afghanistan. We commend the penholders and all members of the Council for the close collaboration that led to this result. Today's resolution sends a strong and important signal of the commitment of the Council to all parties in Afghanistan at a critical time, given the start of intra-Afghan negotiations last weekend.

In particular, we welcome the fact that the new mandate strengthens the capacity of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to report violations and abuses against children, which will surely bolster the child protection efforts of all parties. That is of great importance in the light of the peace talks under way and the fact that, according to United Nations reports, the conflict in Afghanistan is the world's most violent conflict for children.

We commend the launch of intra-Afghan dialogue and call for an effective and permanent ceasefire that will put an end to the intolerable violence against civilians. We also remind all parties that any agreement reached must protect the rights of all Afghans, including women.

In conclusion, I reiterate Belgium's support of UNAMA and the Afghan people. The United Nations must play a key role at this critical time for Afghanistan.

Mrs. Cedano (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Dominican Republic welcomes the adoption of resolution 2543 (2020) because it is a balanced text that effectively supports the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We commend the penholders for their excellent work throughout the negotiation process.

At a time when intra-Afghan talks have begun and efforts for lasting peace in Afghanistan look promising, it is important that UNAMA continue to play a key role in maintaining and promoting the economic, political and social achievements reached thus far. The success of the peace process in Afghanistan requires not only political will and the vigorous support of the international community, but also the leadership and representation of all sectors of Afghan society, especially young people.

We reiterate our call for initiatives to eliminate violence against women, the implementation of the national action plan in support of resolution 1325 (2000) and the protection of children's rights. We hope that, in a not-too-distant future, the provisions we unanimously adopted in resolution 2535 (2020), on youth, peace and security, can be reflected in UNAMA's mandate.

In conclusion, only a strong resolution, like that adopted today, can confirm our commitment to peace in Afghanistan and recognize the sacrifices and challenges that the entire personnel of UNAMA faces on a daily basis.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2543 (2020). We thank Indonesia and Germany, as well as Qatar for facilitating the peace process. We hope that this is the beginning of a phase of stability and prosperity for Afghanistan. We also hope that the role of women and the protection of children will be enhanced, and that these will lead to our desired goals.

Mrs. Raz (Afghanistan): Afghanistan extends its appreciation to the Security Council for the adoption today of resolution 2543 (2020), extending the mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another 12 months. The unanimous adoption of the resolution sends a very clear, strong and unequivocal message of the Council's support for Afghanistan at one of the most critical times in our contemporary history.

Just a few days ago, the intra-Afghan negotiations finally began in Doha. We convey our gratitude to our friends and allies in facilitating the talks, especially Qatar for hosting the first round. The negotiating teams of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban sat down to discuss Afghanistan's long-lasting desire for peace. We are optimistic that these talks will help bring an end to a very long period of conflict and result in a dignified and sustainable peace that protects the rights of all Afghan citizens, including women and minorities, as reflected in our Constitution.

We thank the members of the Security Council for highlighting in the mandate the importance of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned element in our national processes, especially the peace process. I would like to express our gratitude for the Council's emphasis on the rights of women, youth and minorities, the importance of protecting the economic, social, political and development gains made in the last 19 years, and an immediate reduction in violence that leads to a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire.

The Council's recognition of our Government's dedicated efforts aimed at addressing the coronavirus disease pandemic, and the initiatives taken by the Afghan President to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs for those affected are of great importance at a time when resources are extremely limited. The Council's acknowledgement of the brave decision taken by the Government of Afghanistan and its strong and commendable efforts towards implementing confidence-building measures for peace

and the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations is noted with appreciation. Consistent with what I have said in the Security Council before, the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners was not a simple and easy decision for the Government and the people of Afghanistan to make, but we have accepted this difficult compromise in order to achieve an end to violence and conflict.

The important role of regional partners, neighbours and our international allies and friends, especially the United Nations, is crucial in our peace talks and in Afghanistan's sustainable economic development. Regional cooperation and connectivity are important for Afghanistan's prosperity and for fulfilling our vision of being the central hub of Central and South Asia. Our fight against narcotics requires a comprehensive and consolidated approach, with the Afghan Government's leadership and ownership, and we know that any post-peace development strategy would be incomplete if this shared challenge were not addressed.

Resolution 1401 (2002) initiated a strong relationship between Afghanistan and the United Nations, which has helped to bring us to this culmination in our journey as a young democracy. This collaboration has contributed to the consolidation of our democracy, the strengthening of the rule of law and the creation of stronger institutions that will help us to continue our efforts aimed at achieving self-reliance and sustainability.

At this time, allow me to also take a moment to pay tribute to all the United Nations staff members who have sacrificed their lives for our common dream of building a peaceful and prosperous nation from the

ground up. Our nation values their sacrifice, and we will continue to build on their legacy.

Consistently when taking the floor at the Security Council, I have spoken about the new Afghanistan — a country that emerged from darkness two decades ago and which is today being led by Afghans from different segments of our society, including women and youth, and which comprises a diversity of ethnic groups that make up our rich and unique national identity. Through its pursuit of peace, this new Afghanistan will demand that our ideals be upheld and that our country become a thriving nation, a leader and example in our region.

The new Afghanistan is no longer a dream, but a reality built through the strength and resilience of Afghans. We pledge to protect this reality during the negotiations with the Taliban. Afghans want peace — a peace that maintains the hard-won rights embodied in our Constitution, a peace that provides freedoms and opportunities to all Afghans, a peace that preserves our inclusive and representative republic, our free and energetic media, and our strong regard for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Finally, I would like to express my very sincere gratitude and appreciation for the invaluable hard work of the delegations of Germany and Indonesia as the co-penholders who led the Council towards the unanimous adoption of resolution 2543 (2020) today. We are grateful for them and for the collaborative spirit of all members of the Security Council, who unanimously supported the resolution. We look forward to continuing to work together towards the fulfilment of our common aspiration for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.