



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

*Provisional*

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Friday, 21 June 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

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*President:* Mr. Hwang. . . . . (Republic of Korea)

*Members:*

Algeria. . . . .	Mr. Bendjama
China. . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador. . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
France. . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana. . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan. . . . .	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta. . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique. . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation. . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone. . . . .	Mr. Scotland
Slovenia. . . . .	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland. . . . .	Mrs. Chanda
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America. . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2024/469)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.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/2024/469)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Ms. Manizha Wafeq, civil society representative.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2024/469, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Ms. Otunbayeva.

**Ms. Otunbayeva:** The stability in Afghanistan that the de facto authorities have continued to maintain despite what I perceive as growing signs of popular discontent should not hide the fact that, as an international community, we are still in crisis-management mode. In order to move towards solving the structural problems between the international community and Afghanistan, which were identified in the independent assessment issued at the end of 2023 (S/2023/856, annex), all stakeholders must recommit to the objectives identified in that assessment.

On the economic front, the de facto authorities continue to implement their policy of self-reliance through the private sector and public investments. It is positive that that private sector focus also makes some space, albeit limited, for women entrepreneurs. More

support could be provided to female entrepreneurs through financing or even visas to allow them to visit trade fairs outside the country. Afghan private sector actors generally note an improved environment, including better security and reduced corruption for business activities, while citing concerns regarding the lack of a clear legal framework, low demand and ongoing difficulties in making international banking transactions and gaining access to international markets.

More than \$7 billion have been provided by international donors for humanitarian assistance, and more than \$4 billion to support the basic human needs of the Afghan people since the Taliban took over. Yet Afghanistan remains beset by massive poverty, which leaves the population even more vulnerable to the many natural disasters that we have seen over the past few years as a result of climate change. Afghanistan has a near-zero carbon footprint but is the sixth most vulnerable country to climate change and the least prepared to address climate shocks. International assistance resources are unfortunately decreasing, in part owing to competing global demands on diminishing donor resources. The 2024 appeal of some \$3 billion is only 20 per cent funded. Donors would be more assured of the effectiveness of their assistance if the de facto authorities removed restrictions on women working for non-governmental organizations and the United Nations and provided greater transparency on how much revenue they are raising and on what it is being spent.

The engagement of the region in promoting greater trade, diplomatic contacts and economic investments has improved stability in Afghanistan. Those advances have been aided by much-improved security and reduced corruption. The region has valid concerns about the potential threats of terrorism or extremism emanating from Afghanistan, as well as the need for greater cooperation on counter-narcotics, but those efforts to promote stability through pragmatic engagement, especially in the economic field, are positive and necessary and should continue.

I highlight those developments for two reasons. The first is to underscore the amount of engagement and cooperation that actually exists among Afghanistan, the region and the wider international community despite the non-recognized status of Afghanistan's de facto authorities. Secondly, many outside Afghanistan tend to underestimate the positive developments that have taken place in the country, including ongoing

humanitarian access, while the de facto authorities tend to underestimate the contributions of the international community to the successes that they claim.

On the surface, political stability has been maintained. On the other hand, there is little space for internal dissent. Political parties and civil society organizations have been banned, and there are increasing restrictions on the activities of some prominent non-Taliban political actors. The media also faces constraints on what it is allowed to report. A stability that depends on the suppression of opposing ideas is inevitably fragile.

Since my most recent briefing (see S/PV.9565), there have been several popular protests against the policies of the de facto authorities, especially those policies that have affected people's already strained livelihoods, including the ban on opium cultivation. That is a relatively new phenomenon. In some cases, attempts to repress those protests have led to deaths owing to heavy-handed responses of the de facto security institutions. That highlights the fact that the de facto authorities lack predictable, transparent and consistent institutions for receiving feedback from the population, in which they can approach the de facto authorities without fear. Such institutions are essential for internal political legitimacy. As has often been said before, domestic legitimacy is critical for international legitimacy.

The continued application of corporal punishment, often for crimes against the de facto authorities' rigid definitions of morality, is also of concern. Public executions of individuals sentenced to the death penalty is in contravention of international human rights standards. The Secretary-General strongly opposes the death penalty, which is incompatible with the right to life, and urges all States that maintain it to establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to prohibiting their use altogether.

Ongoing restrictions on women and girls — who have now endured more than 1,000 days out of school — have tragic direct effects on the lives of half of the Afghan population and an indirect impact on the population at large. United Nations engagements with Afghan women reveal growing levels of depression among women who, apart from being denied education and restricted in their movements, also feel that they are becoming less respected in their homes and less involved in decision-making. Information has emerged

that Afghan civil servants who have been forced to stay at home are facing a drastic cut in their salaries, provoking concerns that they will not be able to pay their rents or support their families. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is seeking clarification with the de facto authorities on the validity of that instruction.

Those restrictions deprive the country of vital human capital that it needs to implement the Taliban's own policy of self-reliance. They contribute to a brain drain that undermines Afghanistan's future. By being deeply unpopular, they undermine the de facto authorities' claims to legitimacy. And they continue to block diplomatic solutions that would lead to Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community. UNAMA raises those arguments on every occasion with the de facto authorities. But we receive no convincing explanations as to why those policies continue, only vague, unfulfilled and increasingly unbelievable promises that they are being addressed. I would also like to note with gratitude the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which, through its regular contacts on the ground in Afghanistan and high-level visits, including those of prominent Islamic scholars, has continued to advocate for a reversal of those bans and reiterate that they have no basis in Islam.

The larger picture, however, is that the relative stability the de facto authorities have maintained since the takeover and the stated interest in rejoining the institutions of the international community remain an opportunity that must continue to be tested through patient and thoughtful diplomacy, while keeping international standards at the fore. The mechanisms for that engagement are largely in place. They have not been sufficiently exploited, however, by either the international community writ large or the de facto authorities.

One of those mechanisms, the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan held in Doha, is scheduled to take place in nine days. That meeting has generated significant expectations that cannot realistically be met in a single meeting. We are trying to establish a process and preserve an important mechanism of consultation. We must be realistic about how much each meeting in that process can deliver, especially at this early stage in which confidence and trust are insufficient. For the process to truly begin, it is essential that the de facto authorities participate at Doha. We welcome recent statements from the de facto authorities that they are

preparing to attend. At the same time, it is vital that we maintain the basic international consensus established at the first meeting in that format in May 2023. That is that there is no substitute for engagement with Afghanistan, and there is no interest in seeing instability emerge in or from Afghanistan. We must also remain focused on the objective stated in the independent assessment of an eventual full reintegration of Afghanistan into the international community while respecting its international legal commitments. It cannot be repeated enough that this sort of engagement is not legitimization or normalization. Only engagement through a common, coordinated and principled international position can provide a strong incentive for the de facto authorities to adopt policies that would allow for their reintegration into the international community.

I would like to stress that this position is shared by the Afghan population. Over the past weeks, in preparation for the third Doha format meeting, UNAMA has met with hundreds of Afghans, and especially women, around the country. Those consultations have revealed a broad agreement that it is important for the de facto authorities to attend the meeting, but that there should also be no recognition of the de facto authorities until the issues of women's rights, girls' education and an acceptable constitution were broadly addressed. There were high expectations that restrictions on women's rights would be forcefully addressed at that meeting. Economic concerns also featured prominently in those discussions, including the need to find employment opportunities for youth.

UNAMA will continue its ongoing engagements around the country at all levels. We appreciate the increasing number of visits by representatives of countries that do not have a constant presence in Afghanistan. We have seen in some areas where ongoing engagement has led to some flexibility by the de facto authorities. It has at the very least led to greater understanding and trust-building on all sides. We hope that in Doha key stakeholders will convene around the table, speak to each other face to face, reinforce the principles underlining the consensus to engage and agree on next steps to alleviate the uncertainties that face the Afghan people, as prescribed in last year's independent assessment. That will happen only if there is greater flexibility among all stakeholders and a clearer political willingness on all sides to move beyond crisis management to addressing the larger problems within Afghanistan and among Afghans and those between Afghanistan and the international community.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Otunbayeva for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

**Ms. Doughten:** Humanitarian needs in Afghanistan remain alarmingly high. More than 50 per cent of the population — some 23.7 million people — require humanitarian assistance this year, the third highest number of people in need in the world. Half the population lives in poverty. One in four Afghans are uncertain where their next meal will come from. Nearly 3 million children are experiencing acute levels of hunger. Since 15 September, more than 618,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan. Almost 80 per cent are women and children, and many of them need humanitarian assistance.

The particularly acute effects of climate change in Afghanistan are deepening the humanitarian crisis. Extreme weather events are more frequent and more intense. Some areas in Afghanistan have warmed at twice the global average since 1950. Decreasing rainfall and recurring drought-like conditions have contributed to a large-scale water crisis. Annual droughts are now predicted to be the norm by 2030. The likelihood of flash flooding has also increased, even when rainfall is not especially heavy.

In April and May, almost 120,000 people were affected by flash flooding and mudslides, primarily in Afghanistan's northern, north-eastern and western regions. Entire villages were destroyed, and more than 340 people were killed. Livestock and tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land were also lost. Afghanistan remains wholly unprepared to deal with these increasingly persistent threats and will require significant investments in early warning and early response systems. Efforts are already under way to establish anticipatory action programmes to trigger support ahead of predicted climate events, but these will need to be sufficiently staffed and funded to bear fruit.

Afghanistan will soon enter its fourth year under the Taliban de facto authority. No one has felt the impact more profoundly than women and girls. Decrees limiting their movement and participation in public life have left no part of their lives unaffected. It has been more than 1,000 days since girls over the age of 11 were banned from attending secondary school. That is equivalent to the amount of time needed to obtain a university degree, a warning of an inconceivable future without Afghan women doctors, teachers or engineers.

The ban on girls' education is fuelling an increase in child marriage and early childbearing, with dire physical, emotional and economic consequences. Reports of attempted suicides among women and girls are also increasing.

Despite restrictions on their ability to work, as well as the risk to their personal safety, Afghan women continue to participate in the humanitarian response. According to a March 2024 survey on the operational impact of the ban, 72 per cent of respondent organizations are either partially or fully operating with both women and men. Half of respondent organizations have been able to secure localized arrangements so as to allow the involvement of Afghan women staff in field activities — up from 41 per cent in July 2023.

This is the fifth briefing of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Council since the adoption of the humanitarian exception in resolution 2615 (2021). The resolution continues to play a critical role in enabling life-saving humanitarian action, which last year allowed some 28 million people — more than 60 per cent of the population — to receive assistance.

The humanitarian exception covers important eligible expenditures that are necessary to deliver that assistance. That includes rent on State-owned premises and warehouses; withholding tax on national/international non-governmental organization (NGO) staff income, rent and suppliers; visas and work permits for national/international NGO staff; fees for imports; utilities such as water and electricity; licenses for NGO registration, communications equipment and municipal charges; and the payment of programme implementation costs, such as per diems for transportation and lunch for awareness-raising, training sessions and monitoring missions.

Recipient line ministries and departments include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Energy and Water, the Customs and Revenue Departments and the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, among others.

The nature and modality of payments made under the exception have not changed in the past three years. Indeed, they are identical to those made under the pre-August 2021 Administration of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. For example, customs charges remain at around \$23 per container or shipment, a rate that has not changed since the time of the Republic.

All payments made under the exception constitute predictable, budgeted operational costs necessary to maintain the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. As payments necessary to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs, they are expressly allowed under resolution 2615 (2021). They are in line with payments we make in every humanitarian operation globally.

Resolution 2615 (2021) has also helped to reduce difficulties with processing payments and transferring funds into Afghanistan for those humanitarian purposes. The number of reported issues with financial transactions by United Nations agencies and NGOs has dropped from 87 per cent in November 2021 to 40 per cent in June 2024. The use of hawalas to transfer funds has consequently dropped from 68 per cent in November 2021 to 32 per cent in June 2024.

Yet challenges remain. Our partners report ongoing limitations on both the transfer and withdrawal of funds, as well as delays in transferring funds. Some 18 per cent reported having a financial transaction to Afghanistan refused. Those challenges continue to affect the humanitarian response, with agencies having to delay project implementation, suspend programmes or assist fewer beneficiaries.

We continue to strengthen and expand risk management procedures in Afghanistan. The Contractor Information Management System that we referred to in December's Council meeting (see S/PV.9227) is now up and running. This System facilitates information-sharing on the partners, contractors and other providers of goods and services used by various United Nations agencies in Afghanistan. It aims to minimize duplication of efforts and provide a quick reference source on new contractors. It allows contractors and service providers acting contrary to the United Nations code of conduct to be blacklisted. Importantly, United Nations agencies are able to share data and information on partners and other contractors before they are engaged. Humanitarian organizations also make every effort to ensure that aid reaches its intended beneficiaries.

Steps are taken at various stages in the assessment, planning, distribution and monitoring phases of operations. Those include, but are not limited to direct monitoring and third-party monitoring to correlate reported performance delivery with actual outputs and reported expenditures; on-site financial verifications



on segregation of duties, accounting procedures, cash management, procurement and contracts, personnel contracts, internal monitoring, fraud prevention and test complaint and feedback mechanisms; and in-person and desk reviews to check the accuracy of financial reports, as well as review partner general ledger data and bank reconciliations. Humanitarian actors are also benefiting and contributing to the robust risk management system in place.

Despite the many challenges, 9.9 million people in Afghanistan received at least one form of assistance from January to March 2024. However, six months into this year we have received only \$649 million — just over 20 per cent of the \$3 billion required to meet the huge levels of humanitarian need. Life-saving programmes have had to close due to the lack of funds, including 150 mobile health and nutrition teams. A further 40 teams are at imminent risk, potentially depriving 700,000 children under five of vital nutrition treatment services for severe acute malnutrition.

The lack of funds is also imperilling the last two mine clearance and a mine victims' assistance programme in Afghanistan. Those programmes will cease in the coming month if additional funds are not received. This is at a time when 3.4 million people live within one kilometre of explosive ordnance contamination, including 475 schools and 230 health-care facilities. I could go on, but the list of programmes on the verge of shutting down is simply too long. Council members will find the full list in the recently published critical funding gaps analysis.

Afghans continue to feel the compounding impacts of climate change, poverty and oppression. Millions of people depend on humanitarian assistance for their everyday survival. We urge donors to fully fund the appeal for Afghanistan so that we can continue to provide this life-saving support.

But there is a risk of a slide into even greater hardship. We must also find ways to support the Afghan people with longer-term solutions to help lift them out of poverty and withstand a deepening set of climate-related shocks. Nothing is easy in Afghanistan, but with sustained assistance, we can support people in the realization of a life with peace, stability and hope.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Doughten for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Wafeq.

**Ms. Wafeq:** I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council on the economic situation of women in Afghanistan.

I am Manizha Wafeq, co-founder of the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Executive Director of Global/Afghanistan Women's Trade Caravan and convener of the Peace Through Business programme, a long-serving programme that trains and mentors Afghan women entrepreneurs.

Today I would like to focus on the impact of the Taliban's takeover on Afghanistan's economy, the impact of their repressive measures on women's rights and on women's ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from the economy and, most importantly, why respect for women's rights is essential not only to restoring Afghanistan's economy but also to the future of the country.

According to the World Bank, Afghanistan's economy experienced an unprecedented 27 per cent contraction by the end of 2022. Almost three years under Taliban rule has all but destroyed the economy because of a lack of inclusive governance and declining international and development aid owing to the Taliban's egregious human rights record, all of which has hampered essential public services, exacerbated poverty and unemployment and led to food insecurity for millions of Afghans. An estimated 23.7 million people — more than half of the country's population — will require humanitarian assistance to survive this year.

The Taliban's enforcement of gender apartheid has had specific consequences for women. Thousands of women who used to work in the public, private or non-governmental sectors have lost their jobs and the opportunity to earn a dignified income. According to the United Nations, that exclusion of women from the workforce has resulted in a loss to Afghanistan's economy of approximately \$1 billion annually. The bans on girls' education beyond the sixth grade, women's employment in the public sector and non-governmental organizations and restrictions on their mobility and presence in public spaces have significantly harmed women's livelihoods. That has increased their economic dependence on men, leading to detrimental effects on women's mental health and human dignity and an increase in domestic gender-based violence, which contributes to women losing their agency, causing the Afghan society to remain in unending intergenerational poverty and a continued contraction of national gross domestic product.

Afghan women have always been the backbone of the economy, acting as economic drivers rather than mere beneficiaries. Establishing a Women's Chamber of Commerce was one of our groundbreaking acts as economic catalysts at the forefront of the economy. According to the Chamber's data, almost 2,500 licensed businesses were owned and run by women. Almost half of those businesses operated in non-traditional sectors, such as information technology, media, logistics, construction, manufacturing and exporting dried fruits and spices, among other sectors. In addition, more than 54,500 informal businesses nationwide were being run by women. Together, those enterprises created 130,000 jobs for men and women and supported more than 100,000 women artisans in rural areas, who sold their products in urban markets. And our Chamber's democratic approaches as a non-profit, non-governmental and non-political entity supporting women's entrepreneurship facilitated the transition of informal businesses to the formal economy, thereby contributing to economic growth.

Now, that is not the case. Not only has the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry lost its autonomy, but so too have all the Chambers in the private sector. According to a UN-Women report, businesses owned by women are disproportionately affected — 42 per cent of women-owned businesses have closed, whereas the figure for men is 26 per cent. Enhancing women's economic participation to revitalize their and the country's economy is directly tied to restoring their rights, including the right to education and freedom of movement, to work in all sectors — private, public and non-governmental — and to contribute to decision-making at all levels.

Before I discuss recommendations to enhance opportunities for women's economic participation, it is important to recognize the uncertainty of whether the Taliban may impose further restrictions on women's economic activities or exploit the international community's focus on the economy and private sector for their own political and economic gains.

I share the following points with members for their consideration following consultations with Afghan women entrepreneurs and professionals in the country. During those consultations, I learned of another setback to women's economic rights. The Taliban issued a circular reducing the salaries of women employed by the former Administration to 5,000 afghanis, which is \$70, per month, regardless of their roles as educators

or medical personnel. That amount fails to cover basic living expenses, such as monthly rent. So, first and foremost, the Taliban must reverse all bans on the rights of girls and women, including on education, their employment in the public and non-governmental sectors. The Taliban must remove restrictions on women's mobility and their presence in public spaces, as those elements are fundamental to their economic participation. It has been three years since we have had any female high school graduates — graduates who could have pursued higher education and professions needed in Afghanistan's social and economic affairs. I would like to remind members of resolution 2681 (2023), which called for the swift reversal of all restrictions on women's rights.

To achieve genuine socioeconomic equality and inclusion, it is essential for the Taliban to respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, girls, children and marginalized ethnic and religious groups, such as the Hazara and Shia, and the international community, including the Security Council, must hold them accountable for doing so. Afghan women need and deserve the full support and solidarity of the international community in their struggle. That includes increased funding for women-led initiatives in all sectors in order to shape an inclusive and equitable Afghanistan. I would like to be clear: the participation and rights of Afghan women are essential and non-negotiable. There is no future for this country without us. I urge the Security Council and the international community to do everything in their power to ensure that women and women's rights are front and centre in their deliberations on Afghanistan and that nothing they do normalizes or legitimizes the Taliban or their treatment of women and their rights.

As the Council works towards that goal, I would like to offer some practical recommendations that can support women's participation in the economic sector in the short term. In the private sector, where there are currently no restrictions on female employment, efforts should be made to expand opportunities for women and to maintain the current workforce. Initiatives such as safe working environments and transportation can be pivotal in achieving that. It is critical to prioritize the promotion of youth and women's entrepreneurship. That can be achieved through capacity-development initiatives, foundational training in business management and mentorship programmes. To enhance women's access to finance, one should not rely solely

on expensive microfinance or one-time grants, but rather long-term, low-interest loans combined with comprehensive training and mentoring. Establishing sectoral associations for women's businesses can facilitate their collective strength in economies of scale — an approach that enhances product quality and expands market reach both domestically and internationally.

Within the realm of entrepreneurship, it is important to emphasize the digital economy's use for Afghan women, even though it may seem far-fetched. The use of digital means will facilitate access to global markets, networking and attending regional and international events. Digital literacy and equipment should be provided to all women-run businesses — formal, informal, non-traditional, traditional, home-based and agricultural. It is not enough to rely on facilitating virtual participation in training, business conferences and other events. Countries of the region and beyond should provide special visa support and travel sponsorship for women business owners and women employees in the private sector.

Long-term programmes are needed to help women's home-based and agricultural businesses expand beyond their homes and villages to reach districts, cities and beyond. Without reversing current restrictions on girls' education, higher education and mobility, those home-based businesses could stagnate or remain dependent indefinitely. That underscores the importance of providing strategic support to women's markets and business hubs across all provinces. They are spaces outside women's homes that can enable women business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs and female employees in the private sector to convene, network and establish local markets for goods and services produced by women.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the upcoming third meeting in Doha of special envoys on Afghanistan with the United Nations as a critical opportunity for Member States to make human and women's rights a priority on its agenda. Afghan women's participation in discussing the country's economic, social and political situation will be crucial to ensuring the legitimacy of the decisions taken. Afghan women must be present, and our voices must be heard. During the Doha meeting it is vital that the international community maintain a clear and united stance for any future cooperation, economic development or engagement with the Taliban that is based on a commitment to upholding the rights of women, girls, children and ethnic and marginalized religious groups.

As all the members of the Council are once again discussing the situation of women in this Chamber today, millions of Afghan women and girls are imprisoned in their homes in a state of despair, enduring isolation and acute mental health issues, erased from society with no hope for the future. It has been three long years. Let us restore Afghan women's rights, dignity and freedom.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Wafeq for her briefing.

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

**Mr. Yamazaki (Japan):** I would like to thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Director Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for providing informative updates on the situation in Afghanistan. I also thank Ms. Wafeq for her enlightening briefing on the challenging status of Afghan women.

In two months, three years will have passed since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. Although there have been some positive developments, such as an overall improvement in the security situation and a reduction in poppy production, the human rights situation remains severe and continues to be a concern for the international community. The humanitarian situation also remains dire, while the constraints on resources have been exacerbated by earthquakes, flash floods and the return of Afghan citizens on a massive scale. In that regard, we are deeply saddened by the large number of casualties and extensive damage caused by the floods in May, and we would like to express our condolences to the victims and their families. Japan provided emergency assistance in response to the flood damage. As was said in the stake-out just led by the Republic of Korea, the impact of climate change is having various negative effects on the people of Afghanistan.

The wide-ranging challenges that Afghanistan is facing are certainly not limited to climate change and cover every front from combating narcotics and terrorism to the economy and the education and employment of women, among other things. However, they cannot be successfully addressed by Afghanistan itself or its neighbours alone. We, the international community, can and should help Afghanistan ease the suffering of its people. Building confidence between the international community and Afghanistan through concrete cooperation on "no regret" issues is a prerequisite for that. The Doha format is the only platform we currently have for moving that process



forward. At the upcoming third meeting of special envoys in Doha, Japan is keen to have a candid exchange of views on how we can advance concrete cooperation. The voices of various actors, including women, are also important. Japan stands ready to make positive contributions in any area that will be conducive to improving the situation.

Human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, are critical. Japan will not compromise on those aspects. Recognizing the third Doha meeting as a starting point for our concrete engagement with the Taliban, we very much hope that they will acknowledge that education and employment for women are essential requirements for the development of Afghanistan. We also continue to urge the Taliban to rescind its repressive measures and achieve an Afghan society where women's rights are upheld.

In addition to issues related to women's rights, the Secretary-General mentioned in his report (S/2024/469) that there have been public protests in multiple provinces expressing concerns about economic and livelihood issues. As our Embassy in Kabul has said directly and repeatedly, if the Taliban wants to call itself a responsible governing entity, it must respond to those people's plight and take action. That is why the Taliban should listen to the views of the participants in the third Doha meeting and work to create an environment that can enable the international community to devote its resources to Afghanistan. We, the international community, should send that message to the Taliban with one voice. That is a long-term process, and someone will have to manage, facilitate and coordinate our efforts. The situation in Afghanistan needs such a person, not because it is a country in conflict but because the international community wants an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting its international engagements.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Japan's full support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, whose role is essential and has broad support, as evidenced by the unanimous renewal of its mandate in March (see S/PV.9577). We appreciate the United Nations for its efforts in preparation for the third Doha meeting of special envoys, including the visit to Afghanistan by Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo in May, and for its coordination aimed at striking a balance among the various stakeholders. Our appreciation also goes to the Government of Qatar for its generosity in

hosting the Doha meeting once again. We very much hope that it will be a meaningful occasion for the future of Afghanistan. We must seize the opportunity. Japan, as the penholder on this file and as a country with a presence on the ground, will continue to actively address issues related to Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely Algeria, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, and my own country, Guyana (A3+).

The A3+ thanks Special Representative Otunbayeva and Director Doughten for their briefings. We also listened carefully to Ms. Wafeq.

The people of Afghanistan continue to face multiple challenges, particularly the increasing challenges on the climate and economic fronts, as well as deepening inequalities and a difficult humanitarian situation. The A3+ once again emphasizes that if sustainable development, stability and durable peace are to be achieved in Afghanistan, there must be an inclusive approach underpinned by respect for fundamental freedoms and ensuring human rights for all. We are concerned about the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/469) describing shrinking political and civic spaces and the limitations that the Taliban are imposing on freedom of speech and association.

Women in Afghanistan continue to be excluded from public life, and their right to work and freedom of movement remain significantly restricted. We reiterate our call to the Taliban to swiftly reverse all policies and practices that discriminate against women and girls, infringe on their enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and limit their ability to contribute to Afghanistan's development. The A3+ is also gravely concerned about the fact that the fundamental right of girls in Afghanistan to a quality education remains curtailed. The continued ban on girls' education beyond sixth grade is resulting in irreversible learning losses. We call on the Taliban to swiftly reopen all schools and universities so that women and girls can have access to all levels of education. In that regard, we welcome the Banjul Declaration adopted on 5 May at the Islamic Summit Conference of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in which the OIC expressed support for a peaceful, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan and stressed the importance of addressing

the challenges faced by Afghan people, including problems related to the humanitarian situation, human rights, ethnic groups, security and terrorism, narcotics and social issues. The OIC also stressed the importance of full respect for the human rights of all Afghans and the need to protect the fundamental rights of Afghan girls and women, especially the right to education and work, and called for more communication with the Taliban on those issues.

We believe that countries and regional organizations play an important role in raising awareness of the importance of compliance with international norms. The involvement of other regional stakeholders is also important to improving Afghanistan's economic situation. We welcome the efforts to improve Afghanistan's bilateral as well as multilateral diplomatic engagements with countries in the region.

However, the security challenges in Afghanistan remain concerning. We note the growing number of incidents undermining security compared with the same period in 2023, including a 97 per cent increase in narcotics-related incidents. Continued efforts must be made to eradicate the cultivation of opium poppies. We are convinced that the ban must be accompanied by support for alternative sources of income, and we take note of the alternative development programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which is supporting thousands of farming households through the construction of small-scale irrigation canals and the establishment of citrus orchards.

We have also taken note of the increase in armed clashes near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have resulted in casualties, including women and children. We call on all to show restraint and respect the protection of all civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure. The A3+ acknowledges and commends the continued efforts of the Taliban to address the illicit accumulation and diversion of small arms and light weapons through their weapon registration campaign. However, we are concerned about the large numbers of children who have been killed and maimed, including by explosive ordnance. In that regard, we echo the recommendation of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict's recent conclusions on Afghanistan that all parties immediately take all preventive and mitigating actions necessary to avoid and minimize harm and better protect children, as well as measures to ensure explosive ordnance clearance and risk reduction.

The recent flooding in Afghanistan caused loss of life and property and has exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation. More than half the population of Afghanistan needs humanitarian assistance, as we heard from Ms. Otunbayeva. We commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other donors for their delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, and we encourage international donors to increase their support. We also urge the Taliban to lift the restrictions on Afghan women aid workers, including for the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations, in recognition of the fact that they are limiting the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. The A3+ also remains deeply concerned about the climate challenges facing Afghanistan, emphasizing the critical importance of investment in mitigation and adaptation efforts. We would like to express our condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the recent floods.

As we approach the third meeting of special envoys in Doha at the end of this month, we note the Taliban's announcement that they will be represented. We believe that constructive and inclusive engagement on critical issues would benefit the people of Afghanistan. In that regard, the A3+ calls for issues affecting children and the rights of women and girls and the excessive restrictions on them to be part of the discussions, including in the context of the economic, social, political and humanitarian situations, and for Afghan women to meaningfully participate in the Doha process.

In closing, we reiterate our full support for UNAMA and Ms. Otunbayeva for their important work in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Žbogar** (Slovenia): I would like to thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Director Doughten and Ms. Wafeq for their briefings and messages. Let me begin by commending the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for the activities it has undertaken in the latest reporting period. UNAMA's presence in Afghanistan remains crucial, particularly through its work on human rights, humanitarian assistance and a continued political dialogue with the Taliban. While Afghanistan continues to face a wide range of challenges, I would like to focus on three points.

First, Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change has severe humanitarian effects. It is experiencing recurring climate-related extreme weather events

and natural disasters, while the level of response preparedness remains low. Those conditions are only worsening the dire situation in the country and are directly affecting people's livelihoods, health and food and water security. According to comprehensive risk analysis conducted by UNAMA, the pressure created by scarce natural resources creates local competition and elevates the risks for already marginalized communities, including minorities, internally displaced persons, women and girls. Inclusive and effective early-warning systems for droughts and floods should be a top priority in any mitigation efforts and humanitarian assistance programmes.

My second point is about the dire human rights situation. The plight of Afghan women and girls is the starkest example of the ongoing repression in the country. I believe the Council is united in rejecting restrictive policies that prevent the people of Afghanistan from enjoying their human rights, and that we all demand that such policies should be rescinded. I believe we all agree with Ms. Wafeq's call for the restoration of Afghan women and girls' rights and dignity. The systemic human rights violations have a direct impact on the security situation.

My third point is about the way forward. Slovenia supports the United Nations-led processes and of our Organization's centrality and long-term engagement in this area. The upcoming third meeting of special envoys in Doha can be an opportunity to start making progress. We agree that the scope of the United Nations approach could be cautiously widened with a view to ensuring an attainable impact on the ground. Women should have a voice in those processes, as well as a central place in any intra-Afghan dialogues, because their fate represents Afghanistan's future.

My country supports a coherent and structured engagement on Afghanistan, with an approach that helps the Afghan people and brings stability, security, prosperity and sustainable peace. It should be one that includes women and listens to the voices of civil society, and that understands the requirement that Afghanistan respect its international obligations. We say that in a sincere desire to help all Afghans on a road to prosperity and their country's inclusive future development.

**Mrs. Chanda** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva and Ms. Lisa Doughten, the Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. We are also grateful to Ms. Manizha Wafeq for her clear and powerful testimony. We continue to be deeply concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. Today I would like to focus on three main points.

First, as the Secretary-General emphasizes in his report (S/2024/469), Afghanistan's economic situation is still disastrous and its population still hugely dependent on humanitarian aid. In that context, the Taliban's continuing restrictions, especially on women and girls, including through their systematic exclusion from public life and from access to a quality education, are obstructing the Afghan people's ability to achieve security and prosperity. As we heard from Ms. Wafeq, and as affirmed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Mr. Richard Bennett,

"The Taliban's institutionalization of its system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls, and the harms that it is continuing to entrench, should shock the conscience of humanity" (A/HRC/56/25, para. 127).

Switzerland reiterates its firm condemnation of such acts and will maintain its solidarity with the Afghan people, particularly women, girls and ethnic and religious minorities. Respect for their human rights, fundamental freedoms and participation in public life should continue to be a priority for the international community. Without it there can be no pathway towards an Afghanistan at peace with itself, enjoying lasting economic growth and bringing security and stability to its entire population.

Secondly, children, who should be especially protected, are particularly vulnerable in Afghanistan. Switzerland welcomes the relevant conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and believes firmly that they are vital to strengthening the protection of children in Afghanistan. We call on all the parties to implement them and on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to actively support those efforts.

Thirdly, the problem of climate change is another crisis that deserves our full attention. Frequent droughts, flash floods, melting ice, rising temperatures and soil degradation are having serious consequences, displacing millions of Afghans, threatening their survival and increasing the burden on an already fragile

economy that is largely dependent on agriculture. The New Agenda for Peace reminds us that it is important to highlight the challenges presented by climate change and the inequalities it creates, both for the benefit of our planet as well as for the promotion of development, human rights and our shared goals in peacebuilding. That has particular resonance in Afghanistan and its region, where growing competition around water supplies has the potential to very quickly become a factor in instability and insecurity that could worsen conflicts. It is only by strengthening regional and international cooperation, combined with continued support to local communities, that we will be able to mitigate those challenges. We therefore encourage UNAMA to step up its role in promoting dialogue and cooperation at the local level on the effects of climate change on populations and their means of subsistence, and to strengthen the durable management of water resources.

As the third meeting of special envoys in Doha approaches, we believe it is vital that the people of Afghanistan in all their diversity, especially Afghan women and girls, be included in all the processes related to the future of the country, including the implementation of the recommendations of the independent assessment. Their voices must be heard, and it is therefore important to ensure that both men and women representatives of civil society are systematically invited to the Doha meetings and that adequate space be reserved for discussions of human rights, especially the rights of women and girls.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Ms. Dougherty and Ms. Wafeq for their briefings. I would also like to thank the entire team of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its work to build a stable, prosperous, inclusive, and secure Afghanistan. We appreciate UNAMA's commitment in the face of many, many challenges.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2024/469) underscores the many political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges that the Afghan people continue to face. We echo his call for unimpeded access to aid workers. Assistance must go to the designated beneficiaries. The report also highlights the serious deterioration in people's ability to exercise their human rights in Afghanistan, reinforcing last week's report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/HRC/56/25). Separate and independent

United Nations bodies are now calling out the Taliban's systemic human rights abuses and their absolute disregard for the Charter of the United Nations. Those reports outline in stark detail the Taliban's institutionalized efforts to erase women from society, their sweeping persecution of people based on their gender, their callous treatment of persons with disabilities and their human rights abuses directed at members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as LGBTQI+ people.

The international community must continue to stand with the Afghan people, especially women, girls and members of marginalized communities. We must insist on reversing those oppressive measures, pushing for justice and accountability for abuses and making it clear that human rights must not be siloed or deprioritized. The harm caused by the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls cannot be overstated. As the Special Representative said, it has now been more than 1,000 days since the Taliban banned girls from secondary schools. If such restrictions are allowed to continue, the pervasive and harmful effects will affect Afghans throughout the country for many years to come. We must ensure that women and civil-society participants have a voice in Doha at the third meeting there of special envoys, which will be hosted by the United Nations in a few weeks. Their concerns must be highlighted in all deliberations on Afghanistan's future. The United States supports sustained dialogue with a range of Afghan stakeholders, including business leaders and entrepreneurs seeking to build an inclusive economic system for the benefit of all Afghan civilians. The recent tragic floods in Afghanistan highlight the need to engage with conservation and environmental civil society organizations.

Finally, we continue to believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in Afghanistan's reintegration into the international system. As a part of that, the Secretary-General should appoint a United Nations focal point to begin producing a road map, as called for in resolution 2721 (2023), and should ensure that the person appointed has the resources and independence needed to perform that function effectively. As the Secretary-General noted, Afghanistan's stability and development hinge on its cooperation and connectivity with its neighbours. However, regional connectivity and cooperation alone are not enough. The international community has a role to play. A United Nations focal point will be important to addressing the sizeable humanitarian, economic and human rights needs in Afghanistan today.



**Mrs. Frazier** (Malta): I too thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Director Doughten and Ms. Wafeq for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Afghanistan in today's meeting.

Malta commends the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as it continues to work to build a peaceful, prosperous, secure, and inclusive Afghanistan, despite the many challenges it faces. The latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/HRC/56/25) characterizes the Taliban's institutionalized system of gender oppression as gender apartheid. The climate crisis, entrenched poverty and the Taliban's new restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as their ban on Afghan women working for NGOs and the United Nations, have further constrained humanitarian access to those in greatest need. We stress that the participation of women in society, as well as their important contributions, will help create a more resilient Afghanistan. That is especially relevant considering the estimates that 23.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2024.

We reaffirm our steadfast support to UNAMA's joint work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in countering narcotics in Afghanistan. We remain committed to the efforts to address disorders related to drug use in Afghanistan, especially by supporting evidence-based drug-treatment services, an area where Malta has contributed financially to UNODC's health and drug demand reduction programme in Afghanistan. We are also concerned about the continued grave violations being committed against children. We reiterate our full support to the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, which includes UNAMA and UNICEF. We further call on all the parties to fully implement the recently adopted conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The Purging Commission has dismissed several Taliban members from their positions in security institutions. There are reports that some of them have been recruited by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP), which has continued its attacks on the Taliban. That undermines Afghanistan's own peace and security, as well as that of the region and internationally, owing to the terrorist threat posed by ISIL-K.

As the third meeting of special envoys in Doha approaches, we believe that a solution for Afghanistan's present or future will not be possible without a legitimate and inclusive political process in which the rights of women and girls are addressed substantively throughout the agenda, and in which the diversity of Afghans is represented. It cannot disregard what UNAMA has characterized as one of the world's starkest examples of the regression in women's rights. Clear strategies and human rights-based parameters should also guide our interactions with the Taliban.

We also urge the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe engagement of Afghan women, human rights defenders and civil society in all related political processes, including the implementation of resolution 2721 (2023). In closing, we reiterate our full support for UNAMA's robust mandate. Through its full implementation, we can help improve the situation in Afghanistan for the benefit of all its people.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Roza Otunbayeva, Ms. Lisa Doughten and Ms. Manizha Wafeq for their briefings.

For the past 1,000-plus days more than 1.5 million girls have been unable to go to school in Afghanistan. In addition to that grim figure, which will have serious consequences for the country's future, there are other increasingly serious violations of the fundamental rights of women and girls in the country. This month we were concerned to learn of reports that the salaries of some female civil servants had been cut almost in half, in yet another discriminatory measure added to a sadly long list. That systematic discrimination is part of a policy of segregation that France firmly condemns. It will have disastrous consequences for the country's economic future and stability. We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and the specialized teams of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their remarkable work. We note with concern that the rights as a whole of Afghans are being flouted on a daily basis, including through the return of large-scale and public corporal punishment.

The security situation also remains very fragile. Terrorist groups are still active, as the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team has noted regularly. Da'esh-Khorasan and Al-Qaida continue to

pose a threat to regional and international security. As we know, those groups have found refuge in Afghanistan and do not hesitate to threaten or strike foreign interests, even beyond the country's borders. The cultivation and trafficking of narcotics also remain key concerns.

Against that backdrop, France continues to advocate for coherent, united action on the part of the international community. That should be based on clear principles and commitments. France remains mobilized to meet the needs of the Afghan population, particularly women and girls, in the areas of health, education and food security. We have provided more than €160 million in humanitarian aid since 2021, and we are committed to relocating Afghan women in France through the Global Refugee Forum's women-in-danger scheme.

France supports the continuation of the dialogue process initiated in Doha, as it serves all Afghan women and men and aims to ensure that Afghanistan respects its international commitments. But we must ensure that the architecture of that dialogue process is inclusive and allows genuine exchanges on human rights issues. The international community must continue to demand that the Taliban fulfil their obligations. Resolutions 2593 (2021) and 2681 (2023) established clear expectations, and their implementation is a prerequisite for any form of normalization.

I would like to express France's support for UNAMA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and all the relevant United Nations agencies and their partners, which are doing remarkable work on the ground.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Director Doughen for their briefings. I also listened carefully to Ms. Wafeq's statement.

The third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan is scheduled to take place in Doha from 30 June to 1 July. The interim Afghan Government has confirmed its participation. China commends the United Nations for its preparations for the meeting and supports the arrangements in place. We hope that the relevant parties at the meeting will take the opportunity to increase their exchanges and communication with the interim Government and move closer to one another, with a view to ensuring that the meeting can achieve results-oriented outcomes in such areas as microfinancing, enterprise development, countering narcotics and

alternative agriculture, and that it can unleash a new chapter of international engagement and cooperation with the country. We hope the Council will be briefed on the meeting without delay. We also hope that based on the meeting's outcomes, the Council will take more impactful measures to assist Afghanistan in its response to its development challenges and in helping its integration into the international community. I would like to share four observations.

First, the Council should support dialogue and engagement with the interim Afghan Government. The international community must respect the political reality that the Afghan Taliban is running the country. Through patient engagement and communication, we should convince the interim Government to gradually become more trusting of the outside world and address the international community's concerns by taking positive initiatives in areas such as inclusive governance and the protection of women's rights and interests. As a crucial step in building trust, the Council should immediately reinstate the blanket travel-ban exemptions for the interim Government's relevant personnel, make adjustments to the 1988 sanctions regime in a timely manner based on the dynamics on the ground and facilitate the interim Government's engagement with the international community.

Secondly, the Council should support Afghanistan in its response to humanitarian difficulties. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/469), an estimated 23.7 million Afghans will need humanitarian aid this year, with 90 per cent of households struggling to feed themselves. A mere 16.2 per cent of the required humanitarian funding of \$3.06 billion is in place. The Council should urge donors to continue their humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, refrain from substantial cuts in funding and translate their concern for the Afghan people into effective, meaningful action. The United States' military intervention in Afghanistan resulted in a major catastrophe for the Afghan people, causing them serious trauma, and the United States should make a genuine effort to assume its historical responsibility by increasing its assistance and financial input to Afghanistan rather than deserting the country once and for all.

Thirdly, the Council should help Afghanistan overcome its development bottlenecks. Economic cooperation, trade and connective initiatives between countries of the region and Afghanistan have promoted its economic recovery and enhanced livelihood. That said, the Secretary-General's report also notes that

regional cooperation alone cannot adequately address Afghanistan's development funding gaps or fully integrate the country into the international economic and financial system. It is concerning that the illegal unilateral sanctions that some countries have imposed on Afghanistan have seriously disrupted its financial system, hindering normal business operations and interfering with international trade and economic exchanges. They have become a major obstacle to Afghanistan's development. The Council should urge those countries to immediately and unconditionally end their illegal unilateral sanctions and return frozen Afghan overseas assets in full in order to provide the necessary resources for Afghanistan's development.

Fourthly, the Council should support the interim Afghan Government in its resolute fight against terrorism. Terrorist forces such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement are currently still rampant, threatening security both in Afghanistan itself and internationally and regionally. The Council should urge the interim Government to fulfil its commitments in good faith and take vigorous measures to resolutely combat all terrorist acts and ensure that no terrorist forces are given sanctuary. The international community must also assist Afghanistan in bolstering its counter-terrorism capacities. In that process, it is particularly important to abjure ideological prejudice, resist double standards and eliminate selective counter-terrorism.

China thanks Ms. Otunbayeva and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their unwavering efforts during this reporting period. We support the Mission in its ongoing role in forging closer communication and cooperation between the international community and Afghanistan to help the Afghan people address their most pressing needs and achieve sustainable development. As a friendly neighbour, China has always firmly supported peace, stability, development and prosperity in Afghanistan and we remain committed to assisting its people to the greatest possible extent.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva and by Ms. Lisa Doughten, the Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and to Ms. Manizha Wafeq, representing women and civil society. I welcome the presence here today of the representatives of Afghanistan, Iran, India and Pakistan.

The Secretary-General's quarterly report (S/2024/469) warns of the grave economic situation and humanitarian challenges that the civilian population in Afghanistan continues to face and addresses the serious human rights and terrorism issues that compel us to examine the situation in Afghanistan.

In the area of human rights, the reality for women and girls is becoming ever more serious as they continue to be denied their most basic rights to education, employment and participation in society. Millions of Afghan girls and young women have now been prevented from attending secondary school and university for more than 1,000 days, increasing their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage and domestic abuse. It is urgent that a way be found to reverse the edicts preventing them from returning to the classroom.

On the humanitarian front, aid organizations are dealing with operating difficulties owing to the ban on employing female staff. That has been compounded by the de facto authorities' decision to arbitrarily reduce the salaries of the women who are still working in order to force them to resign. The situation has deteriorated to a point where half of the population requires humanitarian assistance to survive, the number of children suffering from infectious diseases has doubled and the efforts of teams on the ground are constrained by the gap in timely and sustainable funding.

At the same time, terrorism is not abating. Violent incidents attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, which is operating from Afghan territory, are putting the lives and integrity of the civilian population at risk and posing a threat to peace and security in the region.

Against that backdrop, the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, to be held in Doha at the end of June, offers an opportunity, first, to promote an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue, involving the substantive and safe participation of women, ethnic minorities and other social and political sectors; secondly, to encourage bilateral and regional cooperation to improve the living conditions of the population; and thirdly, to explore real possibilities of overcoming the Taliban regime's restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially for Afghan women and girls.

I would like to conclude by affirming that Ecuador supports the personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and reiterates that

the construction of a prosperous, stable, secure and peaceful Afghanistan will be possible only when the civic space is revitalized and dialogue, the rule of law and national reconciliation are prioritized.

**Mr. Eckersley** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva and Director Doughten for their briefings and for all the work of the United Nations on the ground, and Ms. Wafeq for setting out so powerfully the damage done by the Taliban's policies on women and girls and the possibilities for change.

We welcome this opportunity for the Council to take stock ahead of the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, convened by the United Nations, and we call for the following.

First, while we welcome the fact that the Taliban have signalled their intention to attend the meeting in Doha, they must also show that they intend to change how they are acting and listen to the concerns of the Afghan people. The international community should remain united and clear on the urgent need for the Taliban to meet their obligations and reverse all policies restricting human rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan, not least for women and girls. That includes the Taliban's decree banning girls from secondary school, which has now been in force for more than 1,000 days. That is 1,000 days too long, with half of the population left behind. It is a wholly unjustifiable and self-defeating policy. Addressing those restrictions must remain front and centre for the international community in all of our engagement, as Ms. Wafeq said.

Secondly, with the humanitarian needs and response plan for Afghanistan in 2024 only 20 per cent funded, we urge the international community to increase its support. The United Kingdom is on track to deliver more than \$190 million in aid this year, helping to meet basic needs, including through the provision of life-saving food, clean water and sanitation. And in the light of continued restrictions by the Taliban, we continue to support the delivery of education through bilateral and multilateral contributions to non-governmental organizations and United Nations partners.

Finally, nearly six months after the adoption of resolution 2721 (2023), we call on the United Nations to continue to drive forward progress on the recommendations set out in the Special Coordinator's independent assessment (see S/2023/856, annex). A

special envoy is urgently needed to bring together the international community and minimize the risk of Afghanistan's challenges spilling over into the region and beyond.

The United Kingdom stands ready to work constructively with all parties and stakeholders, in Afghanistan and beyond, in this shared endeavour towards an Afghanistan at peace with itself, its neighbours and the international community.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in Afghanistan, for her assessment of the situation in the country. Russia supports UNAMA's activities under her leadership in the framework of the Mission's mandated tasks. We have taken note of Kabul's interest in maintaining and developing contacts with her. We welcome the unwavering commitment of the United Nations to maintaining its presence in Afghanistan and providing the assistance its people need. We listened carefully to Ms. Doughten's briefing and to the civil society representative's remarks, and we are also pleased that regional stakeholders have been given the floor in this discussion. We took note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2024/469) and would like to make the following points.

The Security Council has been discussing the situation in Afghanistan for a number of years now. During that time, the country experienced Taliban rule in the 1990s, followed by a 20-year war that in practice resulted in the country's collapse and the shameful flight of the United States and NATO. Since 15 August 2021 the country has once again been under the rule of the Taliban movement. The loud promises that the interventionists made about building a long-awaited peace have in fact remained empty words. The people of this long-suffering country are still obliged to cope on their own with the entire range of their problems and challenges, against a backdrop of continuing unilateral sanctions and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. It is therefore encouraging that the de facto authorities themselves, contrary to our Western colleagues' predictions about the imminent political and economic collapse of a country that was propped up by international aid for years, have succeeded in making a sober assessment of the situation and betting on a path of strengthening regional cooperation and restoring its socioeconomic potential. They are seeking their own path of independent development for Afghanistan without relying on Western aid.



We share the Secretary-General's assessment of the difficult internal political situation in Afghanistan. We continue to be particularly concerned about the security risks caused by the continuing terrorist activity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan. Despite the de facto authorities' efforts, the terrorists' influence in the country is getting stronger and they are deliberately stirring up the situation with growing numbers of attacks, with the clear purpose of portraying themselves as an alternative force and undermining stability in Afghanistan and the region. Now the victims of their high-profile terrorist attacks are members of religious and ethnic minorities, including women and children. The militants themselves admit to receiving funding from outside and to the presence of foreign terrorist fighters among them. From time to time they change their tactics and try to recruit new supporters to their ranks. Given the numbers of weapons left behind by Western troops, the risk that they could fall into militants' hands and spread throughout the region and beyond is becoming very real. Another issue closely linked to terrorism is the problem of narcotics. The Taliban's efforts in that regard are inadequate, and comprehensive international and regional assistance is essential, including through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Support for Afghan farmers remains key. The production of synthetic drugs is also a concern.

We are particularly focused on the socioeconomic situation in the country. We note the efforts made through the United Nations and regional organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. We emphasize the dedicated work of humanitarian agencies and their staff, who have been willing to remain on the ground and help Afghans regardless of the circumstances. But alas, it is clear that such measures are not enough. The efforts of the United Nations to expand aid beyond basic needs continue to be blocked by Western donors who have categorically rejected the possibility of contributing to the country's development, the restoration of schools and hospitals and the construction of roads connecting provinces or cities to rural areas. My country has been systematically providing targeted assistance to those in need in Afghanistan. On 20 June, aircraft of Russia's Ministry of Emergency Situations delivered more than 20 tons of food and basic necessities to Kabul in what is now our fifth airlift of humanitarian supplies for Afghans.

We also continue to monitor the situation with regard to the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls, and the formation of a truly inclusive Government with

the participation of all ethnic and political groups in the country. We expect to see positive movement on both of those tracks.

We have consistently worked on the assumption that there is no alternative to a realistic, comprehensive approach to Afghanistan. The participants in the Moscow format have also taken that position, based on an objective analysis and a balanced assessment of the situation and the prospects for a settlement. It will continue to be vital for the international community itself to cooperate constructively where Afghanistan is concerned. First and foremost, it must take into account the needs of the Afghans themselves and provide for a patient dialogue with the de facto authorities on a wide range of urgent issues, without blackmail or pressure. That is the key to stability in the country and ultimately the whole region. We can see that the Taliban themselves are also interested in that kind of broad, pragmatic interaction. It is important to make a sober assessment of the realities on the ground and stop trying to make Afghanistan dance to someone else's tune, including under the auspices of the United Nations. The country's history has repeatedly demonstrated that such actions are futile and counterproductive. In that connection, we note the efforts to convene the next meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, scheduled for 30 June to 1 July. We believe that no effective discussion of the situation in Afghanistan will be possible without the direct participation of the de facto authorities.

The Russian Federation fully supports the right and hopes of the Afghan people to live in peace and stability, and order in the entire region depends on that. However, building that long-term and sustainable peace is impossible without cooperating with the de facto authorities on a wide range of issues. There is simply no other way. A speedy resolution of the current impasse and the subsequent international reintegration of Afghanistan depend on it.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Republic of Korea.

I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Director Doughten of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their informative briefings and their tireless work on the ground. My sincere appreciation also goes to Ms. Wafeq for sharing insights from her experience in supporting Afghan women's economic empowerment. I would like to convey the following three messages today.

First, I want to say to all Afghan political actors, mainly the Taliban, that legitimacy results from ensuring the people's welfare, both physical and mental, and human rights are a powerful source of legitimacy in the eyes of civilians. In that context, we see no logic or justification in forcing girls beyond sixth grade out of school, something that has been going on for more than 1,000 days now. As a major donor country that has provided \$74 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan over the past three years, we also find the authorities' increasing interference in humanitarian activities — including violence against humanitarian personnel, ongoing restrictions on women humanitarian workers and new regulations on the management of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — utterly unacceptable. We want to point to and express our sympathy with the observation in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/469) that regional engagements alone cannot yield the immense financial resources required for humanitarian and development assistance or restore Afghanistan's access to international mechanisms. Indeed, Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community is a large-scale project with demands that go beyond what can be done in the region alone, and there is no better entity than the United Nations to facilitate that process. We cannot overemphasize the importance of the upcoming third meeting of special envoys in Doha in that regard. And it has to be made clear that the issue of the well-being and human rights of the Afghan people, especially women and girls, cannot be sidelined or avoided in that forum.

Secondly, my message to ourselves, including the Council and the United Nations generally, is that engagement is an important tool in pursuing the final objective of an Afghanistan at peace while meeting its international obligations. But it is not, and should not be, the goal itself. Building on the commendable efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Secretariat in facilitating international engagement with Afghan stakeholders, we look forward to accelerating discussions on the benchmarks, principles and mechanisms of engagement between Member States, including in this Chamber.

Finally, to the people of Afghanistan, I want to say that the international community is about to initiate in-depth discussions on specific areas of concern, such as countering narcotics, climate change and the private sector, areas that are often referred to as entry points or confidence-building issues. In those discussions, we will always put the suffering and the specific needs of the Afghan people at the centre of our deliberations. For instance, we recently

had an opportunity to connect with a young Afghan woman who leads a network of Afghan youth that aims to address climate change in Afghanistan. We listened to the difficulties related to the restrictions on NGOs, a lack of climate-action financing and a dearth of Afghan representation in international forums. At the same time, we were encouraged that the network is still managing to mobilize volunteers to support local adaptation efforts in various provinces. We believe that we should hear more of those important voices on our way forward. That is also why we invited Ms. Wafeq to this Chamber today.

I would like to close by reaffirming our solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. As a country with its own experience of achieving development out of the ashes of war and one that is now a strong advocate for universal values, the Republic of Korea will not lose sight of Afghanistan, especially its women and girls.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Faiq** (Afghanistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting, and we commend you for your able leadership of the Council this month. I would like to thank for their very important briefings Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Ms. Manizha Wafeq, whom I also thank for her very strong message echoing the voices of Afghan women. I would like to also express our deep gratitude to members of the Council for their unwavering commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. We also thank those members who have expressed their condolences to the people of Afghanistan in the face of the recent flash floods. We are particularly thankful to those who have reaffirmed their support for the Afghan people and highlighted the importance of inclusivity, respect and the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Afghan citizens, especially women, girls and minority groups. Additionally, we thank all donors, the United Nations system and both national and international non-governmental organizations for their ongoing engagement and provision of vital humanitarian and life-saving support to the people of Afghanistan in this time of deep crisis.

The United Nations will host the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan in Doha from 30 June to 1 July, bringing together special representatives for

Afghanistan from various countries. We commend the Secretary-General's efforts to foster international dialogue and enhance coordinated efforts to address Afghanistan's multifaceted crisis. However, it is disheartening to see a diversion from the primary objective of the previous two Doha meetings. The past two Doha meetings, along with resolution 2721 (2023) and the independent assessment report (S/2023/856, annex), underscored increasing international engagement in a more coherent, coordinated and structured manner to achieve an end state of an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations.

That objective cannot be realized without addressing the issue of legitimacy, the political process, the humanitarian crisis and the human rights situation, particularly the rights of women and girls to education and employment under an integrated and holistic approach. The imperative of addressing the political component of Afghanistan's crisis, which remains the lack of an inclusive and representative political system that enjoys support and legitimacy from the people of Afghanistan and the international community, through a political process that includes engagement with all Afghan stakeholders, including civil society and other social and political forces who share a common vision of an inclusive and pluralistic Afghanistan, has long been emphasized by the people of Afghanistan. The commencement of a political process was also reflected in the assessment report of the Special Coordinator.

It is disappointing that the agenda of the third Doha conference does not include the political process or human rights as crucial issues in its thematic discussions and that representatives of civil society and women will not be present at the table. That will be perceived as a shift away from issues deemed essential to the people of Afghanistan and more broadly from the objectives to which international commitment were made, including Security Council resolutions, and it will be viewed as another setback, signalling a normalization without any tangible changes on the ground. We echo the Special Rapporteur's call in his most recent report from June (A/HRC/56/25) to ensure Afghan women are included in all political discussions, including the Doha process.

We believe that a more effective and integrated international approach, as called for in the independent assessment report, requires consistent and parallel focus on issues of political process, the humanitarian crisis and the human rights situation, especially with regard to the rights of women and girls to education and employment.

More broadly, we have consistently emphasized that international engagement should be principled and aligned with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We reiterate that any discussions on the future of the Afghan people will not yield any tangible outcomes without addressing core issues and concerns. Those include national legitimacy; the Islamic and fundamental human rights of all citizens, including women, girls and minority groups; and security threats such as extremism, terrorism and narcotics, which have contributed the current stalemate. Moreover, experience has taught us that without ensuring the inclusivity and balanced representation of all relevant and credible Afghan groups, including representatives from women's and civil society organizations, the youth, diplomats and other democratic forces and movements, we cannot achieve enduring peace and stability in the country.

The Taliban are only one internal stakeholder and do not and cannot represent the people of Afghanistan as a sole entity. We should not disregard the legitimate demands of the Afghan people, especially women and girls, and normalize a gender apartheid regime in Afghanistan. We hope that the Doha process will consider the recommendations of the independent assessment report and focus on forging consensus among all international and Afghan stakeholders. We urge the Secretary-General to seriously consider those points and ensure the inclusion of representatives of women and civil society in all discussions on Afghanistan, including the next Doha meeting. The Doha conference presents a vital opportunity for the Taliban and the international community to discuss and agree on a road map by adopting an action plan or an implementation mechanism with defined objectives and specific timelines. That will support Afghanistan's progress towards becoming an inclusive, united, peaceful and democratic nation.

I would like to reiterate that the people of Afghanistan are tired of conflict and war. They have been longing for durable peace, security and prosperity. That can be achieved only through a legitimate, accountable and inclusive system of governance based on the rule of law, justice and the will of the people, with firm commitments to respecting and protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, as well as Afghanistan's international obligations. That requires joint efforts by the United Nations, international partners and all relevant stakeholders to work collaboratively and in good faith towards a stable, inclusive and prosperous Afghanistan. Only through such comprehensive, coordinated and

unified action can we secure a better future for the Afghan people. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the appointment of a special envoy to ensure dedicated and coordinated international engagement with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan faces a dire situation on the human rights, humanitarian, social, economic and political fronts, worsened by the Taliban's oppressive policies and disregard for international norms. The country is grappling with a complex humanitarian crisis owing to decades of war, displacement, underdevelopment, poverty, food insecurity, natural disasters and climate change. About 29 million Afghans need humanitarian aid. Millions of Afghan refugees and migrants are in need of support in our neighbouring countries. The 2024 Afghanistan humanitarian needs and response plan is severely underfunded. Aid efforts are further hindered by funding gaps, recent flash flooding and the Taliban's restrictions on Afghan women aid workers, as noted by previous speakers.

The human rights situation is equally dire, particularly for women and girls. Reports from UNAMA and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights describe an institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation and exclusion of women and girls from public life. That includes harsh enforcement of dress codes, arbitrary detention of activists and journalists, public executions and corporal punishment. Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are barred from attending secondary and higher education. Those policies and practices are against true Islamic tenets. Those acts not only violate fundamental human rights but also undermine the potential for Afghanistan to achieve social and economic progress. Those violations impact the broader population with extrajudicial killings, torture and displacement. Ethnic and religious minorities face severe discrimination, worsening social tensions. Civic space has shrunk due to increased restrictions, surveillance and harassment of civil society and media, stifling dissent and critical journalism. That is detailed in the report (A/HRC/56/25) by Mr. Richard Bennett, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.

Despite the Taliban's claims of increased revenues, their refusal to comply with international norms and human rights standards has prevented political and economic stability. That has led to withheld aid, worsening the humanitarian crisis, poverty and food insecurity. The lack of inclusive governance has stalled development and perpetuated suffering, with the closing of schools — now for over 1,000 days — to girls beyond sixth grade.

In conclusion, Afghanistan's well-being, prosperity and security are not just domestic concerns but are deeply connected to regional and global stability. At this critical juncture, we urge solidarity and consensus among Security Council members. Unified support and action are essential to addressing Afghanistan's multifaceted crisis. Together, we can strive for a stable, prosperous, inclusive and democratic Afghanistan, ensuring the rights and well-being of its people are safeguarded. The continued engagement and support of the international community, through the United Nations, are essential to achieving that goal.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Iravani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open briefing. I also thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnership Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their insightful briefings. We also listened to the statement delivered by Ms. Wafeq.

Afghanistan continues to face severe economic and humanitarian crises, worsened by a significant reduction in international aid. The situation is profoundly affecting many people, particularly women and children. The Secretary-General's report (S/2024/469) estimates that 23.7 million Afghans will need humanitarian assistance in 2024. That instability is affecting neighbouring countries, highlighting the need for regional and international cooperation and engagement.

Iran remains committed to supporting Afghanistan, keeping its borders open to displaced and refugee Afghans during critical times and throughout the challenges they faced, and we have hosted more than 6 million Afghans, at an annual cost of \$10 billion — despite sanctions. Iran has provided education to 700,000 Afghan students residing in Iran. In addition, in order to promote peace and stability and strengthen the Afghan economy, Iran is maintaining its economic and commercial ties with Afghanistan, focusing on projects like the Chabahar port, railways and alternative crop cultivation to curb drug production.

However, Iran faces significant challenges, such as illegal immigration and drug trafficking, and calls for increased international support. In the past year, Iran seized more than 1,000 tons of Afghan narcotics, with many Iranian law enforcement officers losing their lives. Due to the challenging economic conditions caused by illegal United States sanctions and the lack of international aid, Iran cannot alone manage the influx of Afghan refugees



and drugs, which impacts the entire region. The Iranian public is frustrated by the lack of international support in managing the refugee and drug trafficking crises.

The international community must provide swift, sufficient and continuous support to host countries, like Iran. Terrorist threats from within Afghanistan continue to pose significant concerns. Iran doubts the de facto authorities' ability to combat those threats effectively. Having said that, continuous international engagement with de facto authorities is crucial for regional peace and stability.

Iran actively engages with regional initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue with Afghanistan, such as neighbouring ministerial meetings and the Moscow format. Iran supports Pakistan's initiative to convene meetings of foreign ministers from Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, with four rounds already held and a fifth scheduled in Ashgabat.

At Iran's initiative, a regional contact group was established. It includes representatives from Iran, Pakistan, China and Russia. Two rounds of meetings have been conducted so far. During the second meeting, held on 8 June in Tehran, the participants expressed deep concern about the situation in Afghanistan, particularly with regard to the ongoing foreign-backed terrorist threats emanating from the country and affecting neighbours and the region. They emphasized the de facto authorities' responsibility to combat terrorism. Iran advocates addressing extremism, terrorism and underdevelopment in Afghanistan and stands ready to play an active role in its reconstruction. Iran welcomes the next round of the Doha process, scheduled for 30 June and 1 July 2024.

Iran recognizes the vital role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and supports the Special Representative's efforts in that regard. During the Special Representative's recent visit to Tehran on 11 May, discussions focused on assisting the Afghan people and strengthening peace and stability.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that humanitarian aid to Afghanistan must remain impartial and unconditional. Any politicization of aid will harm the Afghan people. As such, frozen assets should be returned unconditionally, and sanctions should not hinder economic revitalization efforts. Western countries, having occupied Afghanistan for over 20 years, must honour their commitments to the country's reconstruction and the fight against terrorism.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Akram (Pakistan):** First of all, let me commend the delegation of the Republic of Korea and Ambassador Joonkook Hwang for their successful presidency of the Council this month. I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, for her very cogent and thoughtful briefing and to express our appreciation for the work she is doing in Afghanistan in an extremely challenging environment. I would also like to thank Ms. Lisa Doughten, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Wafeq for their insightful thoughts at this Council meeting. We take note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2024/469).

Pakistan has consistently advocated sustained engagement with the Afghan interim authorities in order to normalize the situation in Afghanistan. We are encouraged that the Afghan interim Government has announced its decision to participate in the Doha meeting at the end of this month, which represents an opportunity for constructive dialogue on all key issues relating to Afghanistan.

It is essential that both the international community and the Afghan interim Government should be clear about the overall objectives they seek. Unless we know where we are going, we will never get there. The Special Coordinator for Afghanistan, Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu, in his report last November (S/2023/856, annex), outlined the major issues that need to be addressed in order to normalize the situation in Afghanistan. He envisaged the formulation of a realistic road map with reciprocal steps taken by the interim Afghan Government and the international community towards the normalization of the situation in Afghanistan and the country's integration within the international community.

For its part, the international community is obliged to help the 23 million Afghans who need urgent humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the Afghanistan humanitarian needs and response plan has received only 16.2 per cent of the \$3.06 billion required for the 17.3 million Afghans targeted. The plan must be fully funded from all possible sources. And it is equally important to take adequate measures to support a restoration of the Afghan economy and find pathways for sustained development in Afghanistan. That requires reviving the Afghan banking system and restoring commercial activities,

including private-sector investment. Most critically, we must explore ways to create the necessary conditions for releasing Afghanistan's frozen assets and transferring them to its Central Bank. It is also important to kick-start the planned infrastructure and regional connectivity projects. Pakistan remains committed to expanding trade and economic relations with Afghanistan. In March, Pakistan and the interim Afghan Government signed a nine-point agreement on trade and transit issues to help promote economic relations.

On the other hand, the interim Afghan Government must also take steps to abide by its obligations under international law and established norms. The world remains concerned about the restrictions imposed on women and girls in Afghanistan. They do not conform to international law or the tenets of Islam. The interim Afghan Government is expected to ensure the right of women and girls to education and work, as well as other human rights. We also hope that progress can be made towards promoting greater political inclusivity. We support the efforts that UNAMA is making in that direction. That will help to stabilize Afghanistan.

The top priority for the international community, Afghanistan's neighbours and Afghanistan itself remains the elimination of terrorism within and from Afghanistan. While the interim Afghan Government is fighting Da'esh-Khorasan and has made some progress, there are a number of other terrorist groups in Afghanistan — Al-Qaida, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan — against all of which the interim Government must take effective and sustained action, including in order to comply with several Security Council resolutions. The impunity that some of those terrorist groups seem to enjoy within Afghanistan poses a dire and direct threat to all of its neighbours and the international community. Ultimately, those groups will pose a threat to the interim Government itself and to its economic and social development objectives. While the terrorists operate in and from Afghanistan, private-sector investment in Afghanistan will remain limited, and it will not be possible to smoothly implement any connectivity and infrastructure projects. And counter-narcotics policies will be frustrated, since several of those terrorist groups are involved in drug trafficking and trade.

Among those terrorist groups, the TTP poses the most direct and serious threat to Pakistan. The TTP and its associates have been responsible for numerous cross-border attacks on Pakistan, resulting in hundreds of civilian and military casualties. It has acquired

sophisticated weapons, intensifying the lethality of its attacks. Pakistan has repeatedly conveyed to the interim Afghan Government, at very senior levels, that it must act decisively to halt the cross-border terrorist attacks by the TTP and its associates, disarm TTP fighters and capture and hand over TTP terrorists to Pakistan. Unfortunately, despite promises, there has been no meaningful action so far. TTP safe havens remain close to Pakistan's borders and cross-border attacks have continued, including one by a TTP associate that killed several Chinese engineers working on the Dasu hydropower project. On 16 March, TTP terrorists belonging to the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group conducted a cross-border terrorist attack that resulted in the martyrdom of a number of Pakistani soldiers. On 18 March, Pakistan carried out intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations in border regions inside Afghanistan to defend our territory against such cross-border attacks by TTP terrorists. Terrorists were killed, but no civilians.

The Security Council has condemned several of those terrorist attacks on Pakistan. The Council should call on the interim Afghan Government to sever its links with the TTP and its associates, prevent them from carrying out cross-border attacks on Pakistan, disarm the TTP terrorists and capture the TTP's leadership and hand them over to Pakistan. We also expect the United Nations to take a similar position, consistent with Security Council resolutions and reports submitted to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. The United Nations should also investigate how the TTP acquires its advanced weapons and its sources of funding, including from external sources, which enable it to maintain 50,000 fighters and their families. While UNAMA does not have a counter-terrorism mandate, that should not imply inaction by the United Nations. The relevant United Nations entities must be activated to enable the Organization to play its part in putting an end to the terrorist menace that has once again emerged from Afghanistan.

Pakistan enjoys close bonds of ethnicity, history, faith, language and culture with Afghanistan, our immediate neighbour. Pakistan has a national motivation to promote peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, and we will continue to work at all levels — bilateral, regional and international, and with the United Nations — to achieve those objectives.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of India.

**Mr. Ragutthalli** (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We appreciate the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva on the situation in Afghanistan, particularly recent developments. The insights provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the civil society representative were also very useful.

India is a contiguous neighbour of Afghanistan with historical and civilizational ties to its people, and those long-standing connections continue to guide our relations with the country. India is closely monitoring developments in Afghanistan, given their impact on neighbouring countries like us. Our objective is to establish Afghanistan's long-term peace, security and stability and the well-being of its people. In that context, I would like to make some observations.

First, the benchmarks set by the Council through its resolution 2593 (2021) should continue to guide the international community's approach to Afghanistan. Our common priorities include the importance of combating terrorism, bringing in inclusive governance, safeguarding the rights and interests of women, children and minorities, countering narcotics and prioritizing humanitarian assistance for the welfare of the country's people. It is also important to ensure that Afghanistan's territory is not used to spread instability in the region or encourage extremist ideologies.

Secondly, India has been a trusted partner of Afghanistan for many years in development and humanitarian assistance. India has delivered material

humanitarian assistance consisting of 50,000 metric tons of wheat, 250 tons of medical aid and 25 tons of earthquake relief aid. We have continued providing educational scholarships for more than 4,000 students, including 600 Afghan girls. We have also partnered with various United Nations agencies, including the World Food Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in their humanitarian efforts. Our development partnership has included more than 500 projects spread across all of the country's 34 provinces in the critical areas of power, water supply, road connectivity, health care, education, agriculture and capacity-building.

Thirdly, India has been participating actively in the meetings of special envoys on Afghanistan hosted by Qatar in Doha. We strongly support the consensus that the international community must move forward on all issues pertaining to Afghanistan in a consultative and transparent process.

Fourthly, our bilateral trade and commerce are ongoing, including through the port of Chabahar in Iran. The recent signing of a contract to develop the Chabahar port is a testament to our commitment to realizing its potential as a connectivity hub for Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the people of Afghanistan. India will continue to extend full cooperation to every initiative to help Afghan society.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*