

Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

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New York

President: Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield/Ms. Shea (United States of America)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. Dharmadhikari
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. George
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2024/876)

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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/2024/876)

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, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan 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; Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Roya Mahboob, Chief Executive Officer and co-Founder of the Digital Citizen Fund.

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/2024/876, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting the Council will hear briefings by Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Mr. Tom Fletcher, Ms. Roya Mahboob and Ambassador Andrés Efren Montalvo Sosa, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

I now give the floor to Ms. Otunbayeva.

Ms. Otunbayeva: As we move well into the fourth year of Taliban de facto authority rule over Afghanistan, we are facing an important test of our engagement efforts. The Security Council has mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support Afghanistan's social and economic stabilization. We have sought to help create the necessary space for millions of women, men, girls

and boys to receive life-saving humanitarian and basic human needs assistance. Through the generosity of donors, the United Nations in Afghanistan has been able to provide assistance to 15.3 million people this year.

The de facto authorities' restrictions on Afghan women working for national and international non-governmental organizations or for the United Nations have been an obstacle, requiring strong advocacy and coordinating mitigating action. At the same time, the de facto authorities have continued to allow humanitarian access to every area of the country. My colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher, will provide more information on that effort in his briefing today, including details on impediments to the provision of aid and how they are being addressed.

Through our principled and steadfast engagement, including with the de facto authorities, we have sought to build a platform for constructive dialogue in support of peace and stability in Afghanistan, while also adhering to the international principles that we are mandated to uphold. The objective is an Afghanistan that is reintegrated into the international community and upholding its international obligations. There are areas in which our engagement and assistance have had a meaningful impact on the lives of Afghans and strengthened their resilience, mitigating the risks of outmigration and a deterioration of the security situation. It has also opened up new opportunities, and I will expand on that later. But there are also clear limits to our influence and the international community's leverage where the de facto authorities' further cooperation is essential.

Since my previous briefing to the Council in September (see S/PV.9726), the de facto authorities have continued to resolutely pursue their vision of an Islamic system and their interpretation of Afghan culture, which continues to be characterized by unprecedented restrictions on women and girls. Nearly 1,200 days have now passed without girls having access to formal education beyond sixth grade, with women and girls facing a progressive erasure from almost all walks of life. In early December, the de facto authorities announced that female students would be barred from attending medical institutes and classes of higher education. If fully implemented, that would have negative implications for women and girls in particular — but also for men and boys, entire communities and the

country as a whole — by denying Afghans a functioning healthcare system that is open to all. I have strongly urged the de facto authorities to reconsider.

Our recent reporting on the implementation of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice has highlighted constant infringements on the rights of all Afghans. Its enforcement is evident across the country, with Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice inspectors at checkpoints and monitoring the offices of non-governmental organizations, mosques, bazaars, educational institutions and weddings and more generally occupying the public space. With the expansion of general monitoring activities by the Law's inspectors, many Afghans choose to self-regulate rather than risk punishment. The enforcement of the Law has had an impact women's already constrained freedom of movement and access to public services, with the de facto Law inspectors limiting women who are unaccompanied by a *mahram* from travelling in vehicles, even for short distances from their homes, and from accessing healthcare facilities. There has been a notable expansion of de facto Law inspectors' enforcement of the requirements on men's beards and Western-style haircuts, in the form of visits to mosques and other public places to advise on the requirements of the Law, the arrests of barbers and men identified as having shaved their beards and the forced closure of barbershops. Stricter segregation of women in business activities has further constrained their livelihoods and mental health, with serious consequences for their families, particularly children.

In the report released on 26 November (S/2024/876), we documented the widening pattern of restrictions on the media, which undermine journalists' and media workers' ability to serve as a cornerstone of a well-informed, inclusive, vibrant and developing society. The space for public debate, including on key issues, such as the rights of women and girls, continues to shrink, given the restrictions of political parties and civil society activities. Political decision-making by the de facto authorities is increasingly opaque, and they continue to deal with their internal dynamics. As demonstrated by this week's suicide attack on the de facto Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, in which the de facto Minister and others lost their lives, there are continued threats to Afghanistan's security and stability.

That is the complex and challenging context in which we work. However, we have been consistent in our approach, which is to demonstrate the advantages to

the Afghan people of their country's reintegration into the international community. That is something that UNAMA and other parts of the United Nations system in Afghanistan have been continuing to do through our engagement and through the United Nations-convened meetings of special envoys.

There has been some progress in finding avenues for constructive discussions. Last month, we convened an inaugural working group meeting on counter-narcotics as a follow-up to the third meeting of special envoys, bringing together Member States and the de facto authorities. Several participants acknowledged that the de facto authorities have significantly reduced opium poppy cultivation, a long-standing demand of the international community, which has had an impact on rural livelihoods. During that meeting, I was encouraged by the broad international participation and constructive approach of the de facto authorities. That is the beginning of a process intended to build confidence and produce results. The first meeting of the private sector working group and a follow-up to the third meeting of special envoys are planned for early next year. Our human rights team has held constructive discussions with the de facto authorities on the broader issues of human rights norms and standards, as well as specific issues of detainee access.

On climate and environmental issues, I have been encouraged by constructive expert discussions and a seriousness in tackling the existential threat to the lives and livelihoods of the Afghan people. Representatives of the de facto National Environmental Protection Agency participated as observers at the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Baku, as Afghanistan struggles to address the harmful consequences of multiple climate and environmental shocks. I have seen that first hand across the country, where communities are struggling to access water. In Kabul city, with a population more than 5 million, the available groundwater may be completely depleted as soon as 2030 according to some sources. Those pressures ultimately have the most drastic impacts on women and children.

UNAMA has also convened discussions with the de facto authorities and private sector on microfinance. The aim is to have a nationwide microfinance movement to unlock financial access for people trapped in poverty, especially women entrepreneurs, all of whom are crucial for Afghanistan's economic recovery.

The examples I have given show that despite the lack of trust in the outside world and internal pressures, there is a willingness to engage on the part of the de facto authorities. I believe that willingness should be taken at face value and reciprocated as part of a constructive, step-for-step approach, in line with the independent assessment of November 2023 (S/2023/856, annex), of which the Security Council took positive note in its resolution 2721 (2023). As I have stressed before, engagement is not normalization or recognition. It is a way of consistently communicating the advantages of rejoining the international system. It is a way of preventing Afghanistan's isolation — or worse, a return to conflict. Across Afghanistan, many people tell us that they want us to engage more with the de facto authorities and help them to engage more.

It is tempting to recoil in condemnation at policies that the de facto authorities have adopted against their own population and progressively disengage from a crisis in which there are no easy or quick solutions. Some say that engagement has not worked because those decisions keep coming despite international condemnation. However, pressure and condemnation do not seem to be working, and if pursued without forward-leaning principled engagement, they will lead to Afghanistan's isolation. Isolation is not the solution, and we must continue to engage to build trust for the benefit of the Afghan people. We must be both patient and pragmatic, while also strong and resolute in our principles. But, above all, we must be resolute in our support of the Afghan people.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Fletcher: I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her leadership. Although too rarely in the headlines, Afghanistan remains in the grip of a staggering humanitarian crisis. Let me therefore provide the Security Council with some other headlines.

Almost half the population lives in poverty. The climate crisis has caused thousands of Afghans to lose their livestock, crops and homes this year. More than one third of the population does not have access to health services. One in three Afghans is food insecure. Malnutrition rates are alarmingly high and continue to increase. The continuing return of Afghans — more than 1 million this year — from neighbouring countries is putting further pressure on already-overstretched

services. In all, therefore, half the population needs our support, making Afghanistan the second-largest humanitarian crisis in the world right now.

On top of all that, as we heard, the authorities have now banned Afghan women from attending public and private medical institutes and completing their end-of-semester exams. That was the last remaining sector in which Afghan women could pursue higher-level learning, following the ban on girls' higher education in December 2022. The directive will cause serious and lasting damage to healthcare for Afghan women and girls. It will prevent more than 36,000 midwives and 2,800 nurses from entering the workforce in the next few years. Rates of antenatal, neonatal and maternal mortality will dramatically increase. That is in a country where one third of women already give birth without professional medical support and in which preventable maternal complications claim the life of a woman every two hours. The troubling news comes hot on the heels of the so-called Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, promulgated in August. Since the adoption of the Law, the proportion of Afghan women humanitarian workers who report being prevented from attending their vital work rose from 22 to 47 per cent between September and December. Likewise, the proportion of humanitarian organizations reporting that their female or male staff were stopped by the so-called morality police has increased from 18 to 40 per cent.

Humanitarian assistance remains essential in Afghanistan. In 2024, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners provided life-saving support to almost 18 million people across the country, including 5.1 million women and 8.3 million children. That is an impressive achievement given the challenges. But underfunding for humanitarian support has forced the closure of hundreds of medical centres this year, depriving 3 million Afghans of healthcare. Almost 6 million people have lost monthly food distributions since May. Ration sizes for many others have had to be halved. The de facto authorities' interference in our programming undermines and delays the delivery of such essential support.

In that context, the humanitarian exception in resolution 2615 (2021) plays a critical role in facilitating expenditures and payments necessary for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The payments include bank transfers to line ministries for rent; withholding tax of national staff, landlords or contractors; cash

payments for international visas at the airport; and cash deposited at Da Afghanistan Bank for humanitarian organizations' licensing and registration fees. As reported in previous briefings, none of those payments is new. They are being made to the same line ministries and via modalities already shared with the Council. All were made under the previous Administration of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan prior to August 2021 and have not been introduced by the de facto authorities. They constitute predictable, budgeted operational costs necessary to maintain the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. Without them, operations would cease. Humanitarians in Afghanistan continue to make every effort to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable. That includes direct monitoring, spot checks, third-party monitoring, systems and procedures for due diligence and the implementation of robust risk management frameworks. Where a diversion occurs, we take swift action by immediately ceasing distributions, engaging with the relevant entities at the central and regional levels, establishing clear compliance criteria for the resumption of aid and ensuring that donors are kept fully informed.

The critical role of resolution 2615 (2021) is undeniable. Since 15 August 2021, the resolution has facilitated around \$6.7 billion in humanitarian support and \$3.2 billion to meet basic humanitarian needs. It has contributed to a 14 per cent reduction in food insecurity, a 21 per cent reduction in morbidity from diarrhoeal diseases and a 41 per cent reduction in civilian casualties, thanks to mine action interventions. But in order to make a meaningful difference, the resolution must be accompanied by the delivery of significant humanitarian support. Therefore, my three asks of the Security Council are: first, increased funding for humanitarian operations, with \$2.4 billion being needed in 2025; secondly, the Council's support to reduce aid obstruction and restrictive measures, especially those against women; and, thirdly, investment and support for Afghans beyond humanitarian assistance, in agriculture, healthcare and other vital services.

Afghans face immense challenges, but they have not lost hope. They have not stopped striving for their rights, freedoms and futures. Therefore, nor should we. As Afghans navigate this tough period, we must continue to support them with international solidarity and genuine humanity.

The President: I thank Mr. Fletcher for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Montalvo Sosa.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to once again address the Security Council and provide an update on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), in accordance with paragraph 56 of resolution 2255 (2015). I would also like to thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their invaluable support to the 1988 Sanctions Committee. Similarly, I would like to express my appreciation to the Monitoring Team and the Secretariat for their dedicated efforts in supporting the Committee's work concerning the implementation of the 1988 sanctions regime in Afghanistan over the past year. As we navigate this critical period for Afghanistan, the 1988 Committee, under new chairmanship in 2025, looks forward to maintaining a close partnership with UNAMA and with Member States.

Let me start this briefing by recalling that the primary objective of the 1988 sanctions regime is to deter threats to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan by employing measures such as asset freezes, travel bans and arms embargoes. The need to ensure that the current sanctions regime contributes effectively to the ongoing efforts to bring about sustainable and inclusive peace in Afghanistan was reiterated in resolution 2716 (2023), which reaffirmed the demand that the territory of Afghanistan should not be used to threaten or attack any country, plan or finance terrorist acts or shelter and train terrorists, and that no Afghan group or individual should support terrorists operating on the territory of any country. As is noted in the fifteenth report of the 1988 Committee Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (see S/2024/499), it has been three years since the Taliban takeover, and while the security situation in the country has improved and the incidence of violence has largely decreased, Member States are nevertheless concerned about the fact that Afghanistan remains a source of insecurity for Central Asia and the region and beyond, owing to the Taliban's continued tolerance of a range of terrorist groups in many of the country's provinces, creating the conditions for terrorism to spread into neighbouring countries. Terrorists' access to weapons from Afghanistan poses a grave threat, especially to States in the region.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to maintain a presence in Afghanistan and the capacity to conduct large-scale terrorist attacks such as were seen in Kerman, Iran, and Crocus City Hall in Moscow, as well as its ability to recruit new members. ISIL-Khorasan remains the greatest threat to security and stability in the country. In that regard, the Taliban's counter-terrorism operations against ISIL-Khorasan have had a significant effect, but some Member States have described them as tactical rather than strategic. The Taliban have continued to maintain ties with Al-Qaida, as well as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It has been observed that while the Taliban have seemingly constrained Al-Qaida, the latter continues to engage in low-profile activity in a place that it regards as a haven. And Member States have assessed that despite the significant pressure exerted on the Taliban, the Taliban has proved unwilling or unable to manage the threat from the TTP, whose attacks in Pakistan have greatly intensified.

As noted in the Monitoring Team's report, the production and trade of illicit drugs, including opioids, methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs, remains Afghanistan's largest illicit economic activity. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported an estimated 19 per cent increase in such activity, as well as the fact that in 2024 the areas of cultivation have shifted from their traditional centre in the south-west to the north-east, although they are still far below the levels reported in 2022 prior to the ban enforced by the Taliban. Furthermore, the Monitoring Team's report also states that some key Taliban figures remain deeply involved in drug production cartels and trafficking networks. Meanwhile, ordinary Afghan farmers are struggling to switch to alternative cash crops.

Resolution 2716 (2023) further emphasized the importance of establishing a truly inclusive and representative Government, while underlining that Afghanistan must respect its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Among other things, the resolution expressed concern about the continued erosion of respect for the rights of women, girls and members of ethnic and religious minority groups, which is undermining the country's prospects for peace, stability and prosperity. The Taliban leadership, of which at least 61 officials of the so-called interim Government have been sanctioned, continues to be overwhelmingly Pashtun-centric in its distribution of

power among Taliban factions and in rewarding its cadres. Moreover, the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations remains in place, in addition to their new edict further restricting women's freedom of movement and ability to participate in public life. The efforts to increase pragmatic engagement on matters of common interest with the Taliban have continued, led especially by States in the region. The Doha meetings aim to contribute to achieving the goal of an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully integrated into the international community and abiding by its international obligations.

Regarding the implementation of the travel ban, the past year has seen a steady increase in the number of requests for travel exemptions for listed Taliban individuals as well as in the number of unintended violations of the ban, mainly owing to late confirmations received from Kabul. That reflects the growing need for further engagement between the international community and the Taliban. The Committee has continued to approve travel ban exemptions when they serve the goals of promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan or advancing humanitarian objectives. In 2024, the Committee approved 24 travel ban exemptions and one extension of an existing exemption, enabling listed Taliban individuals to travel to a total of eight Member States. Nevertheless, concerns persist regarding unauthorized travel, as well as late requests and notices issued after the fact, which underscores the importance that Member States attach to ensuring full compliance with the travel ban sanctions and respect for the Committee's guidelines. Some members are of the view that a comprehensive discussion of the travel ban exemption mechanism is warranted. Others are increasingly concerned about the fact that a standing travel ban exemption has not yet been reinstated. In resolution 2716 (2023), the Security Council highlighted the importance of ensuring that the Monitoring Team can travel to Afghanistan to meet with relevant stakeholders. Initial steps have been taken in that regard, and it will be up to the next Chair and members of the Committee next year to determine the next steps as they see fit.

The Monitoring Team's fifteenth annual report encouraged Member States where possible to attach to their exemption requests copies of passports, photographs, financial details and other relevant documentation, in order to enable the 1988 sanctions

list to be updated accordingly. Accurate biometric identification and travel documents remain essential for updating the United Nations-INTERPOL Special Notices in order to enable Member States to enforce sanctions measures. I reiterate my recommendation for Member States requesting exemptions to the travel ban to comply with that.

Using the existing exemption request documentation and additional information received from Member States, and in accordance with paragraph (b) of the annex to resolution 2716 (2023), the Monitoring Team also completed its annual review of the 1988 sanctions list with a view to reflecting the current individuals listed as accurately as possible. I want to underscore the importance of Member States engaging in cooperation and information-sharing with the Monitoring Team, particularly in the light of the Team's need to rely on external information sources, owing to the situation in Afghanistan. I urge all Member States, including their intelligence and security services, to uphold the annexes to resolutions 2255 (2015) and 2716 (2023), engage confidentially with the Monitoring Team and strengthen the implementation of the sanctions measures.

As the discussions aimed at promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan continue, there is a continued need for additional reporting and monitoring on the activities of the Taliban, as well as individuals and entities subject to the 1988 sanctions regime, in order to ensure compliance with the sanctions measures. I want to once again express my gratitude for the opportunity to address the Council for the final time in my capacity as Chair of the 1988 Committee in order to provide it with an update on the work of the Committee and the challenges that we face in the current context and going forward.

The President: I thank Ambassador Montalvo Sosa for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mahboob.

Ms. Mahboob: Today marks 1,183 days since girls were banned from attending secondary schools. Having witnessed both Afghanistan's darkest hours and its glimpses of hope, I stand before the Council as an advocate fighting against my country's descent into gender apartheid.

My story begins in 1996. I witnessed how the Taliban came to our homes, collecting all our books and even our small television, setting them on fire in an open field near our house. From my window, I watched

as knowledge and freedom were reduced to ashes. That marked the beginning of five years of darkness for me and my family. My country was trapped in an oppressive regime that denied women education, silenced us and immiserated us. Never again.

After the Taliban's fall in 2001, women gained rights to education and work and contributed beyond the home to society. They became doctors, engineers, policymakers and entrepreneurs. I was one of them: I studied computer science, launched a business and led a robotics team that built ventilators and ultraviolet disinfection systems during the pandemic. Some 63 per cent of our population is under the age of 25. Yet today 1.4 million girls are out of school. I am reminded of the darkest days of my childhood.

My key message is this: Afghanistan is not at peace with itself. The Taliban regime is waging a civil war against women that is undermining national, regional and global security. But this is not just about women, it is about the societal impact at home and abroad. It is also not just about secondary education — last week, they banned us from training as nurses and midwives. Who will help birth and care for the future sons and daughters of Afghanistan? Men are not allowed to treat women patients or teach girls. Consider what that means for this generation and the next and the compound effects. Our daughters will grow up without role models, without dreams or hope.

The Taliban are condemning Afghanistan to misery once again. Our country is suffering from the climate crisis, from droughts and earthquakes and from an economy governed by a group of men obsessing over whether women should be allowed to go to a park or have a beauty salon, rather than caring about how to resolve the hunger and homelessness of our people. The United Nations Development Programme estimates that restrictions on women's livelihoods cost Afghanistan as much as \$1 billion just last year, at a time when 85 per cent of Afghans live on less than \$1 a day. Almost half of employed women lost their jobs because of the Taliban. As a result, many women were forced to beg, but the Taliban banned that too, throwing women into jails where they are raped and abused. Economic hardship and the school ban have driven a 25 per cent rise in child marriages, while maternal mortality risks have jumped 50 per cent. As domestic violence worsens, nearly all girls and women suffer

from depression, anxiety and isolation. Their household decision-making power shrinks every year and suicide attempts and deaths continue climbing.

That is neither Islamic nor about protecting women. It is about the systematic oppression of Afghan women and girls, gender segregation, preventing our full development, causing us bodily and mental harm and denying us our basic human rights and freedoms. It is gender apartheid. By removing women from the workforce and education, the Taliban are deliberately crippling Afghanistan's economy. That in itself is a security risk, as desperate communities become more vulnerable to exploitation by criminal networks and extremist groups that operate across borders. I therefore repeat that not only are they harming women, but they are also creating an environment in which children and young people are at risk of radicalization. The Taliban's focus is on indoctrinating children in madrasas and encouraging girls to become good mothers for jihadists. What will that do to how young men grow up and their views on women? The economic crisis and patriarchal thinking are exploited by extremist groups that the Taliban either fight, protect or tolerate. Al-Qaeda affiliates, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province recruit disillusioned young people, often from marginalized communities. Extreme poverty and ideology are mixing.

Education is the answer. At the age of 14, I first learned about computers and the Internet. It sparked my journey to become a technology entrepreneur — first addressing local needs, then expanding internationally. I then started the Digital Citizen Fund. For more than a decade, we established science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics innovation centres, teaching thousands of girls about coding, financial literacy and science. I then started the Afghan Girls Robotics Team, in which girls aged 12 to 18 learned robotics and competed internationally. Their success transformed their communities' perceptions of women's capabilities. Our graduates launched hundreds of businesses — it would soon have been thousands of businesses if not for the Taliban.

With Internet access now reaching every province, the Digital Citizen Fund adapted to delivering online education programmes, while supporting homeschooling and safe in-person learning. Our graduates have become engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs, winning international scholarships and competitions. We dreamed of transforming

Afghanistan into a hub of technological innovation — a nation defined by progress and potential, rather than terror and war. Our young people are full of talent and determination, envisioning a future in which they can contribute to rebuilding their homeland. Despite all adversity, our hope for a brighter future stays alive. Despite everything, the Digital Citizen Fund is trying its best to serve our people, but the demand is far greater than what we can currently support.

The Taliban's harsh policies have led to the arrest of some of our local partners who dared to continue providing education to girls. That is what our educators and students face every day. We push forward regardless. Education is not just about knowledge — it is a lifeline for the future of Afghanistan. Let us think about the compound effects of those bans on current and future generations.

I urge Council members to consider the message they send when they meet with the Taliban in Doha without women or civil society present. They enable them. They enable gender apartheid. Women's rights are not just about women, they are about human rights and understanding how without them there can be neither peace nor security. Excluding half the population from governance, education, healthcare and the economy undermines all stability. The Taliban's policies create systemic vulnerabilities, making the entire region fragile while dismantling decades of institutional knowledge and capacity, worsening our own fragility. Those governance vacuums, that narrowing of views and ideas about the problems Afghanistan faces creates a deliberately divided and economically crippled country. That is why I say that the current regime is waging a civil war against women, constantly restricting their roles and rights instead of addressing the real issues facing Afghans.

I call on the international community to formally recognize gender apartheid as a crime under international law, establishing a duty of States to suppress gender apartheid. Members of the Council and the General Assembly should also support the creation of a special tribunal to investigate the Taliban's crimes and provide justice for the victims of gender-based violence and human rights abuses. It is important to engage with the Taliban, but I think it is important for such engagement to be conditional on concrete progress on women's rights, including the meaningful — not tokenized — participation of Afghan women and civil society in policy forums. We require more than private

meetings and limited or tokenized representation to address our exclusion. The United Nations should develop strategies for women's participation across all forums. It is essential to support education initiatives and invest in women-led initiatives, underground and remote education, international scholarships, e-learning platforms and women-led businesses, providing flexible and predictable funding to sustain the grass-roots efforts that are critical to Afghan women's education and livelihoods.

If Council members care about the impact on our mental health, they must do their part to change the environment in which we suffer. We Afghan women are not just victims — we remain leaders and contributors. But this is not our battle alone. The world has united against racial apartheid. Today I ask Council members to stand with Afghan women and girls, united against gender apartheid.

The President: I thank Ms. Mahboob for her briefing.

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

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their updates. I also thank Ms. Roya Mahboob for sharing her experience and views on the difficult conditions, as well as prospects for Afghans, especially women and girls. My appreciation also goes to Ambassador Montalvo Sosa of Ecuador.

This is the last mandated meeting on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) of the year. The Security Council adopted resolution 2721 (2023) in late December last year to promote the implementation of the recommendations contained in the independent assessment report (S/2023/856, annex). Since then, two meetings of special envoys were convened by the United Nations in Doha in order to discuss how the international community should address the many challenges faced by Afghanistan. The most recent meeting was attended by Taliban officials and was recently followed up by a technical working group, both of which we believe were useful to build confidence among relevant parties.

However, I regret to say that this constructive atmosphere was undermined by new restrictions on women and girls. Three months have passed since

the announcement of the so-called morality law, and it appears that this directive has actually been implemented and enforced on the ground, which makes people increasingly anxious and fearful. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/876) also mentioned that the law has impacted aid delivery by constraining the activities of Afghan women.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the reported new edict banning women and girls from receiving education at medical institutions. If implemented, the directive would not only further restrict women's and girls' rights to education and access to healthcare, but would also have a negative impact on Afghanistan's social and health system, as well as its development. We call on the Taliban not to put that directive in place.

As I stated in the previous meeting (see S/PV.9663), those restrictions are not only about human rights. They also undermine efforts to tackle the country's wide-ranging challenges, including international engagement and the Taliban's own initiatives. That is why Japan will continue to strongly urge the Taliban to reverse all policies and practices that restrict the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. I also would like to reiterate the need to ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan, as called for in resolution 2681 (2023).

The international community should not cease its engagement and support for the people of Afghanistan. In addition to severe human rights restrictions, they are enduring a dire humanitarian situation, a fragile economy, widespread poverty and the effects of climate change. All the while, another harsh winter approaches. For its part, Japan decided in October to provide more than \$7 million in support through the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for approximately 160,000 vulnerable people in Kabul and Herat provinces.

As I have repeatedly mentioned in the Chamber, those problems cannot be solved by Afghanistan or its neighbouring countries alone. The international community must remain involved for the sake of the Afghan people. In that context, the United Nations Doha format is the only platform we currently have to address the challenges of Afghanistan as the international

community as a whole. Therefore, the United Nations, in particular UNAMA, continues to play an important role, and we remain fully supportive.

Japan will soon leave the Security Council and its role as the penholder, but it will remain actively involved next year and beyond, including by supporting the full implementation of resolution 2721 (2023), in cooperation with relevant countries and United Nations organizations.

Listening to the voices of the Afghan people, we continue to strive for our common goal: an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully integrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations.

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 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Roza Otunbayeva; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Tom Fletcher; and Ambassador Andrés Montalvo Sosa of Ecuador for their briefings. We also listened carefully to the statement by the civil society briefer, Ms. Mahboob.

The A3+ reiterates its firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan and reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Afghan people.

As Afghanistan grapples with a myriad of challenges, including a fragile economy, poverty, security concerns, the effects of climate change and severe human rights restrictions, the situation of women and girls has deteriorated at an alarming rate, demanding immediate attention. Women and girls in Afghanistan are bearing the brunt of the Taliban's multiple decrees, as well as the recently promulgated Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which restricts their education, employment and freedom of movement and silences their very voices. We are concerned about the intensification of efforts by the Taliban Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice to ensure compliance with and full enforcement of that Law, including through

increased deployment of its inspectors, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/876). We emphasize that the Law is contrary to Afghanistan's international obligations and strongly urge the Taliban to reverse it. We call upon the Taliban to comply with Afghanistan's international obligations for the well-being of the Afghan people and Afghan women and girls, in particular.

We are also alarmed at the Taliban leaders' ban on public criticism of Taliban policies and practices and the limitations on media freedom. The continued implementation of judicial corporal punishment, including for women, is unacceptable.

It has been more than three years since the denial of education for girls beyond sixth grade and two years since women were banned from universities, with no indication of change. Now, women are also not allowed to pursue medical education and training. The A3+ reiterates its urgent call for the Taliban to reopen all schools and universities to ensure that women and girls have access to all levels of education and to swiftly reverse all laws, policies and practices that discriminate against women and girls; infringe their on human rights and fundamental freedoms; and limit their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all spheres of life. The severe restrictions placed on them are not only infringing upon their rights and freedoms, but also stymieing the development of Afghanistan.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains of great concern, with an alarming 39.6 per cent increase in security-related incident reports compared to the same period in 2023. We note with appreciation UNAMA's convening on 28 November of the inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Counter Narcotics as a follow-up to the third meeting of special envoys held in Doha. We believe that this will further contribute to combating opium poppy cultivation and the illicit trafficking of drugs.

We call on the Taliban to sustain efforts to ensure the safety of Afghan citizens and combat terrorism and urge countries in the region to intensify joint efforts to stabilize the security situation in Afghanistan to ensure peace dividends for the entire region.

The A3+ also remains gravely concerned that unexploded ordnances continue to result in civilian casualties, particularly children. We reiterate our call for all parties to take measures to ensure explosive ordnance clearance and explosive ordnance risk education.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains dire for an estimated 23.7 million people, compounded by the growing number of returnees. We note that, despite some improvements attributed to agricultural production, an estimated 12.4 million people are still acutely food insecure, and the 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan is only 37.5 per cent funded. We commend international donors for providing critical support and encourage the scaling up of contributions. We are concerned about the report of a dire public health situation, including tens of thousands of cases of measles, malaria and conflict-induced trauma.

Engagement between the international community and Afghanistan, as well as regional engagement, is crucial to the country's development, economic growth, durable peace and stability. In that regard, we note the assessment of the Secretary-General's report that the introduction of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, shortly after meetings convened by the United Nations in Doha from 30 June to 2 July, has made the building of a constructive engagement framework between the Taliban and the international community more difficult. We urge the international community and the countries in the region in particular to continue to provide their support and to contribute to the lasting peace, stability and development of the people of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we express our sincere appreciation to UNAMA and Special Representative Otunbayeva for their unwavering dedication and commend the crucial support that the United Nations continues to provide to the people of Afghanistan.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) for their briefings, and Ms. Mahboob for her courageous words.

The adoption, three quarters of a century ago, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we commemorated on Tuesday, is a painful reminder that the situation in Afghanistan is a stark example of the gap that separates us from realizing those universal rights. Indeed, last week, the Taliban shut down the last pathway to higher education for women by denying them access to the medical profession. That exclusion of women from the health sector, in contempt

of their dignity and aspirations, will exacerbate the already critical shortage of essential services. The humanitarian crisis is worsening. Coupled with other restrictions, that step further compounds the world's worst women's rights crisis, depriving Afghanistan of economic, social and political prospects. When half of the population is excluded from education and public and economic life, the consequences reverberate throughout the entire country. Poverty is exacerbated, communities are destabilized and confidence in governance and public institutions is undermined. We call on the Taliban to immediately reverse those decisions, which we strongly condemn.

The Council recognized the independent assessment (S/2023/856, annex) as a basis for moving forward, and its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and its mandate remains strong. However, we must do more to ensure that the rights of all Afghan women and men are restored and that Afghanistan can embark on a sustainable path to peace, stability and prosperity.

Reflecting on Switzerland's two years as a member of the Council, I would like to highlight the following key points.

First, the human rights of all Afghan women and men must be respected. Afghanistan cannot achieve stability, prosperity or peace as long as systemic violations persist. Women must be able to take their place at the negotiating table and participate in decision-making. To that end, a solid education is essential. My delegation is committed to ensuring that Afghan women are included in shaping the future of their nation. In December 2023, we organized a closed-door, Arria Formula meeting to facilitate dialogue between Afghan women and the members of the Council. In September, we amplified the voices of those women, who have dedicated their lives to building peace within their communities, in the presence of our President and the Secretary-General. Their courage must continue to inspire and guide our actions, and we must not abandon their hopes and aspirations. UNAMA's human rights component is essential to documenting violations, helping to ensure accountability and preserving dignity. Switzerland has contributed more than \$2 million to support that crucial work, and we call on the Council to reaffirm its commitment to human rights when UNAMA's mandate is renewed in March. Without human rights, a peaceful, secure and prosperous Afghanistan will remain out of reach.

Secondly, investing in climate resilience today will save lives tomorrow. Afghanistan is one of the countries most affected by climate change, with droughts and other extreme weather events displacing entire communities, depleting already scarce resources and exacerbating regional tensions over access to water and natural resources. Last year's meeting of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, co-chaired by Switzerland, highlighted the need for innovative solutions and greater resilience. We welcome the appointment of a climate adviser to UNAMA, which will help to strengthen the Mission's efforts in that area.

Thirdly, humanitarian action must be protected. More than 23 million people in Afghanistan are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. We cannot allow them to be deprived of the aid they need. Humanitarian access and the protection of humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed at all times, in accordance with international humanitarian law and resolution 2730 (2024). We echo the Secretary-General's call on the Taliban to guarantee unhindered access, refrain from arbitrary interference and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. For its part, Switzerland aims to open a humanitarian office in Kabul in the near future to be able to contribute to the humanitarian needs of the Afghan population in distress.

Responding to crises in Afghanistan requires a determined, coordinated and sustained commitment. UNAMA remains a pillar of international efforts, and its mandate is essential to the future of the country. As Switzerland's term on the Council draws to a close, we reaffirm our solidarity with the Afghan people and our unwavering commitment to defending their rights and freedoms. Switzerland will remain steadfast in its support for peace, stability and dignity for all Afghan women and men.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Ambassador Montalvo Sosa in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) for their briefings. I also listened carefully to the statement made by the civil society representative.

Currently, Afghanistan is at a critical stage of peaceful reconstruction. The security situation remains stable, the economy and people's livelihoods have gradually improved, and regional cooperation has become deeper and more solid. At the same time, issues on the humanitarian and development front, on terrorist

threats and regarding women's rights and interests remain prominent. As the end of the year approaches, we must take stock so that the international community can play a better role in solving the problems still facing Afghanistan. I would like to highlight the following points in that regard.

First, the Afghan people are facing complex challenges, such as food shortages, displacement, natural disasters and contamination from explosive ordnance. Almost 24 million people need humanitarian assistance. However, less than half of this year's humanitarian funds have been received, and many assistance projects, such as food and demining projects, have been put on hold. Humanitarian relief concerns the vital interests of all Afghan people and must not be used as a bargaining chip for political pressure. We call on traditional donors to increase financial investments. In particular, we call on the United States to unconditionally unfreeze and fully return overseas assets that belong to the Afghan people.

Secondly, over the past three years, the Afghan interim Administration has made efforts to promote economic reconstruction and strengthen economic ties, trade, investment, connectivity and cooperation with countries in the region. Tax revenue has increased significantly. Exchange rates remain largely stable, and female entrepreneurs are participating in trade affairs in Kabul. Those positive developments are encouraging. At the same time, there is still a long way to go to restore economic vitality. The international community should increase its financial, technical and capacity-building support to enhance Afghanistan's ability to develop independently.

Afghanistan's banking system, affected by unilateral sanctions, has been isolated from the international financial system for a long time and is dealing with a severe liquidity crisis, which has become a major obstacle to Afghanistan's development. The relevant countries should immediately and unconditionally lift their illegal unilateral sanctions and support Afghanistan in rebuilding its financial system and unleashing its development potential. Meanwhile, the international community should also support Afghanistan in carrying out alternative cultivation and drug rehabilitation projects in order to consolidate the results of drug control and prevent a resurgence of drug cultivation.

Thirdly, the international community expects the Afghan interim Administration to govern moderately, build an inclusive Government and protect the basic

rights and interests of all people. The impact of the morality law has attracted a great deal of attention. We hope that Afghanistan will heed the reasonable concerns of the international community and protect women's rights in the areas of education, employment and public life. At the same time, we should realize that the issue of women's rights is not Afghanistan's only problem or indeed the main source of its current challenges. What is essential is supporting the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan, eliminating the root causes of instability and creating conditions conducive to the protection of the rights and interests of all people, including women.

Fourthly, terrorist forces in Afghanistan such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement/Turkistan Islamic Party remain a major threat to international peace and security. We call on the Afghan interim Administration to take measures to eradicate the breeding grounds for terrorism and prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a hub for terrorist organizations. The international community must insist on zero tolerance of terrorism and reject double standards and selective counter-terrorism.

With the support of the United Nations, the Doha process has made positive strides this year, achieving a good start in the international community's engagement with the interim Administration. We welcomed the recent convening of the first meeting of the Working Group on Counter-Narcotics, an initiative of the third Doha meeting, and look forward to the successful launch of the working group on private-sector development. We hope that all parties will work with the interim Administration to deepen dialogue and cooperation, continue to enhance mutual trust and facilitate the country's gradual and well-planned integration into the international community.

We support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, under the leadership of Special Representative Otunbayeva, in continuing to play its role as a bridge to help Afghanistan respond effectively to challenges in various areas, such as humanitarian issues and development. The Security Council must adapt to the evolving situation, resume travel ban exemptions for relevant personnel of the Afghan authorities as soon as possible and address the 1988 sanctions mechanism in a timely manner to meet the needs of the Doha process.

As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China is willing to continue to work with countries in the region, Security Council members and other relevant parties

to make a greater contribution to promoting long-term peace, stability, prosperity and development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Dharmadhikari (France) (*spoke in French*):

First of all, I would like to thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ambassador Andrés Montalvo Sosa and Ms. Roya Mahboob, co-Founder of the Digital Citizen Fund, for their briefings.

The situation that the briefers described today is extremely bleak. The Taliban have shown a determination that has increased with each day to implement their policy of segregating and persecuting women and girls, even to the point of disregard for their most basic right to life. The so-called morality decree promulgated four months ago bans women from travelling, speaking and existing in public space. To reinforce the edifice of segregation they have built, the Taliban are now barring Afghan women from attending medical school. That new measure will restrict the already limited access of women and girls to healthcare, because male medical personnel do not have the right to treat women who are not accompanied by a male relative. By preventing women from studying medicine, the Taliban have signed a death warrant for many Afghan women. France condemns in the strongest terms those massive and systematic human rights violations, which will have devastating consequences for Afghanistan's future and stability.

Recent reports of the Secretary-General show that the security situation has been deteriorating from several months. The terrorist threat remains high. The Islamic State-Khorasan Province has been affecting regional security. It is capable of projecting itself into Central Asia and of activating branches as far away as Europe. The Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) stresses that Al-Qaida remains active in Afghanistan. The ongoing settling of scores within the regime adds to that instability.

The demands on the Taliban laid down in resolutions 2593 (2021) and 2681 (2023) are clear. Their implementation remains an imperative prerequisite for any form of normalization. The international community has initiated a dialogue with the Doha process. We have met and exchanged views. We have

listened to all the stakeholders, including the Taliban. However, the Taliban have shown no progress in responding to our expectations and have added to their provocations. Our commitment must be conditional on their implementation of their international obligations. We should not allow this process to ignore respect for international law and human rights in the name of the desire to move forward.

France reaffirms its commitment to the Afghan population, more than half of whom depend on humanitarian aid. We support concrete humanitarian projects carried out by United Nations agencies and programmes and non-governmental organizations on the ground, in the areas of education and health and for Afghan women and girls. We have provided more than €160 million in humanitarian aid to the Afghan population since 2021. I reiterate France's support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, all United Nations agencies and their partners working on the ground for the benefit of the Afghan people.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Ambassador Montalvo Sosa for their briefings. I also want to thank Ms. Mahboob for her insightful and sobering remarks.

At the most recent Doha meeting, the international community expressed genuine willingness to continue the process of establishing a more coordinated and coherent global approach to Afghanistan and addressing all the pressing challenges that Afghanistan continues to face. Soon after Doha, the Taliban further restricted human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls with their Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, and intensified its enforcement. The Taliban's commitment to the full implementation of that so-called Law continues to instil fear and dread in Afghans, in particular women and girls.

In November, despite the previous setbacks, the international community again showed its readiness to continue with the implementation of the agreements made at the third Doha meeting. Again, just a few days after the first meeting of the Working Group on Counter-Narcotics convened by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Taliban ordered all educational institutions in Afghanistan to suspend medical education for women and girls. We condemn in the strongest terms this latest directive and repeat our

call on the Taliban to reverse all their discriminatory policies and practices and uphold their obligations under international law as the de facto authorities.

This most recent ban will have devastating consequences, not only by deepening the humanitarian crisis, but also on the already extremely fragile healthcare system in Afghanistan. It will further limit and even prevent women and girls' access to health services and prevent a new generation of medical professionals from receiving training and critical medical education that saves lives. Statistics already indicate that Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates. That troubling trend is likely to worsen and will put at risk the well-being of the entire nation. Improving the livelihoods, welfare, safety and security of the entire Afghan population seems a distant concern or a non-concern for the Taliban. We therefore urge them once again to reverse and repeal the latest harmful discriminatory decision. We also would like to raise concern about operational impediments for international and local non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan, which are crucial actors for the delivery of such needed help to Afghan people. The international community cannot and must not ignore those regressive developments. All such actions are a serious obstacle to efforts of increased engagement with the de facto authorities. Engagement is a two-way street.

Slovenia remains committed to the objective of a secure, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan. However, the Taliban, as the de facto authorities, should respect international law and provide conditions for the international community to assist all Afghan people, including women and girls, in order to make a better future possible. Let us not turn a blind eye to Afghan women and girls. We appeal to all countries and regional and other organizations with influence on the de facto authorities to use it to ease the very difficult and inhuman situation of women and girls. The United Nations must lead by example and must ensure that every engagement with the de facto authorities includes Afghan women, as mandated by the resolutions of the Council and recommended by the independent assessment (S/2023/856, annex).

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the information provided by Special Representative Otunbayeva and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher, and I listened closely to the representative of civil society.

I briefed the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). I will not therefore revisit the recommendations that were made.

Ecuador takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/876) and acknowledges the dedicated work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to implement the mandate of resolution 2727 (2024).

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security are a priority and cannot be neglected. Lasting peace, stability and national reconciliation in Afghanistan will be possible to the extent that the multidimensional challenges facing it, such as the following, can be overcome.

First, gender-based discrimination, which restricts women and girls from exercising their rights to education, work and inclusion has further weakened Afghanistan's economic system, exacerbating unemployment, underemployment and poverty. That is demonstrated by the fact that, among other indicators, half of the Afghan population is in need of humanitarian assistance for their survival.

Secondly, civic space and civil and political rights have been reduced through unjustifiable practices — extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, public flogging, persecution and media censorship.

Thirdly, the continued number of violent incidents attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan and armed groups operating from Afghan territory continues to affect the security situation.

The Doha meetings provided the international community with opportunities to establish channels to discuss those challenges. We must continue working to establish a national dialogue process that involves all social and political segments of Afghan society, especially Afghan women, in order to follow up the conclusions of the working groups on finance and counter-narcotics and give impetus to holding another Doha meeting for evaluation and redirection. In addition, it is imperative to secure funding for the humanitarian needs and response plan for Afghanistan by 2025. It should be kept in mind that this year will close with barely 40 per cent of the funding needed for the plan's annual operation. The safety and freedom

of movement of humanitarian workers, especially female staff, must be guaranteed in order to ensure the predictability of operations.

I conclude by reiterating Ecuador's message of the past two years during its membership of the Council. Any initiative of the international community in support of Afghanistan should be conducive to the recovery of civic space and the rule of law and the promotion of and respect for human rights, with the restoration of the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women throughout the process. In Ecuador's opinion, that is in line with the principle of Afghan national ownership.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for her assessment of the current situation in the country. The Russian Federation has consistently supported the activities of UNAMA under her able leadership within the framework of the tasks entrusted to the Mission. We note Kabul's interest in developing contacts with her. We welcome the continued commitment of the United Nations to maintaining a presence and providing the necessary assistance to the people of Afghanistan. We are grateful for the briefing by Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We listened carefully to the briefings by the Chairman of the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) on the Taliban and Ms. Mahboob, the representative of civil society. We are glad that the regional stakeholders will also be given the floor in the discussion today. We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2024/876). We would like to note the following.

For some years, the Security Council has been discussing the situation in that country. During this time, Afghanistan has lived through Taliban rule in the 1990s, a 20-year war followed by the shameful flight of United States and NATO troops and the return to power of the Taliban in August 2021. Against the backdrop of such turbulence, two things have remained unchanged: empty Western promises to bring about the long-awaited peace and the extent of problems and challenges that the people of Afghanistan are still forced to cope with alone.

The country, which for years was dependent on the international community, finds itself in a situation of complete financial ruin, facing unprecedented unilateral sanctions and one step away from a humanitarian and economic catastrophe. However, contrary to the bleak forecasts and expectations of our Western colleagues, Afghanistan has not descended into another civil war or turned into a black hole. The de facto authorities continue to strengthen regional cooperation and focus on rebuilding socioeconomic capabilities. They are seeking their own path of self-reliant development for Afghanistan, without reliance on Western assistance.

However, it is clear that despite the efforts made, it will be difficult in the current circumstances for the country to take a fast development path on its own, solve all its long-standing problems and meet all new challenges at once. More than ever, Afghans need our assistance and full support. The Russian Federation has consistently advocated and continues to advocate a realistic and comprehensive approach to Afghanistan, based on an objective analysis and a balanced assessment of the situation. The imperative remains the same — the international community must seek a constructive engagement on the Afghan issue, first and foremost giving full consideration to the needs of the Afghans themselves while putting aside its own narrow interests, as well as a patient dialogue with the de facto authorities on a wide range of pressing problems. There was never any alternative to that, nor is there now. History has shown time and again that any pressure or blackmail leads to a dead end.

We are heartened by the fact that regional players are embracing the focus on pragmatic interaction. That is evidenced by the outcome of the quadripartite meeting on Afghanistan of the Foreign Ministers of Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan, held on the margins of high-level week of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, as well as that of the latest meeting of the Moscow format held in October. We can see that the Taliban themselves, who agreed to join the Doha process in June, remain interested in building such pragmatic cooperation.

We regret, however, the obstinate unwillingness of certain Western donors to acknowledge their own mistakes and settle their accounts. Instead of seeking real solutions to remedy the situation in Afghanistan, they continue to dictate conditions, insisting on erecting artificial obstacles to resuming the provision of the broad-ranging humanitarian assistance that is so

necessary for ordinary Afghans, including the women, girls and children about whom they supposedly care so much. But that hypocritical approach does nothing to truly facilitate a resolution for Afghan problems.

We share the Secretary-General's assessment regarding the complicated internal political situation in Afghanistan. We are particularly concerned about the ongoing security risks emanating from the persistent terrorist activity of the Afghan wing of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We take note of the efforts undertaken by the de facto authorities. Unfortunately, those efforts can hardly be described as sufficient to definitively eradicate terrorism. We see that the fighters are strengthening their influence in the country and are deliberately escalating tensions by recruiting new fighters, including foreign terrorist fighters, and carrying out new terrorist attacks targeting representatives of religious and ethnic minorities, including women and children. Their goals remain the same: to project themselves as an alternative force and to undermine stability in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. Furthermore, the terrorists are regularly receiving financial support from abroad and making extensive use of social media. Given the amount of weapons that were left in the country by Western troops, the threat of those weapons falling into the hands of militants and subsequently spreading throughout the region and beyond is becoming increasingly likely.

Terrorism is closely entwined with the narcotics issue. We are particularly concerned about ongoing manufacturing of synthetic narcotics, primarily methamphetamine, which has been confirmed in reports issued by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Ensuring comprehensive international and regional assistance, including through the UNODC, is more important than ever before if we are to eradicate the narcotics threat, which includes the cultivation, production and distribution of narcotics. That is our shared goal. Providing support for Afghan farmers remains of the utmost importance.

We continue to pay close attention to the socioeconomic situation in the country. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and regional organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. We commend the selfless work of humanitarian agencies and their personnel, who are willing to remain on the ground and help the Afghan people under any circumstances. We note the efforts of the United Nations to expand assistance beyond meeting

basic necessities. Nevertheless, we see that any attempts by the United Nations to make progress in that area are immediately blocked by a number of Western donors who categorically reject even the slightest possibility of providing assistance to rebuild schools, hospitals and much-needed roads and strengthening the capabilities of an independent and self-reliant State. As a result, under various pretexts, the United Nations humanitarian plan for Afghanistan remains underfunded, the activities of a number of humanitarian organizations and agencies have deliberately been curtailed and any proposals for UNAMA's participation in discussions on unfreezing Afghan assets have been rejected.

Why is it that helping women, girls, children and religious and ethnic minorities in other countries on the Council's agenda is more important than helping Afghans? For its part, Russia has systematically been providing targeted assistance to those in need in Afghanistan, including through multilateral humanitarian organizations. We will continue to work proactively to that end.

We also continue to closely monitor developments with respect to the rights and freedoms of all Afghans, including women and girls, such as the recently introduced bans. What also remains imperative is the formation of a truly inclusive Government with the participation of all ethno-political groups in the country. We hope to see progress in both of those areas.

The Russian Federation fully supports the right and desire of the Afghan people to live in a peaceful and prosperous country free of terrorism and narcotics. That is the key to order and stability in the region. However, building such a lasting and sustained peace is possible only by engaging in painstaking dialogue with the de facto authorities without imposing one's own views and priorities. That will help ensure a prompt end to the current deadlock and Afghanistan's subsequent international reintegration.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva, Under-Secretary-General Fletcher and Ambassador Montalvo Sosa for their briefings today. I also thank Ms. Mahboob for her powerful testimony.

As many have already highlighted, the Taliban's latest announcement to restrict medical education for women is yet another appalling violation of Afghan women's rights. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns that decision. Such a draconian and short-

sighted policy will severely undermine the provision of healthcare to Afghan women and children, putting thousands of lives at risk. It is yet another tragic setback, further compounding the suffering of Afghan women.

Meanwhile, a year since the publication of the Special Coordinator's independent assessment report (S/2023/856, annex), the implementation of its recommendations has stalled. We call for the swift appointment of a Special Envoy, as mandated in resolution 2721 (2023), to help bring Afghan stakeholders and the international community together in meaningful dialogue.

The United Kingdom, alongside its international partners, has engaged constructively with the United Nations-led process, including the establishment of working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector. But engagement on the Taliban's priorities requires reciprocity on their part. The Taliban must demonstrate meaningful progress in meeting Afghanistan's international obligations on human rights, political inclusion and counter-terrorism.

Finally, we remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, as highlighted today by Under-Secretary-General Fletcher. The United Kingdom will continue to support the people of Afghanistan through the distribution of over \$200 million in aid this financial year. With the 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan less than 40 per cent funded, we call on the international community to do everything possible to support vulnerable Afghans, particularly in these winter months.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Roza Otunbayeva, Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher, Ms. Mahboob and the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) for their briefings. We also take this opportunity to thank Japan for its penholdership of this file for the past two years.

It has now been over a year since the Security Council received the independent assessment report (S/2023/856, annex) from the Secretary-General. If implemented in a comprehensive manner, the report's recommendations could lead to gradual progress towards Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community. Thus far, however, the international engagement efforts have been largely followed by regressive measures by Taliban.

Following the third Doha meeting of Special Envoys, the so-called morality law was announced, and now, even women's voices are banned in public spaces. And right after the recent inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Counter-Narcotics, additional restrictions were imposed on women's medical education. Moreover, terrorism continues to pose a great threat to Afghanistan and beyond, as seen in recent attacks, including the one in Kabul this week.

In the light of that deeply troubling situation, I would like to convey three messages today.

First, a principled approach on human rights and inclusive governance is no different from pragmatism in the context of Afghanistan. For instance, we see neither principle nor pragmatism in banning women's training in medical institutions. That sudden measure came just as Afghanistan is suffering from the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world and is in urgent need of 18,000 trained midwives. The same goes for imposing bans on girls' education and hurdles for businesswomen when the Afghan economy is limited by low human capital. By pursuing pragmatic engagement, we should be able to clearly convey that the Taliban's obsession with undermining women in every aspect of life is self-harming. As rightly pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/876), that obsession contradicts the Taliban's stated goal of self-reliance, as well as international norms. Another example pertains to the situation of minorities. In addition to the targeted attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan on Hazaras, we are concerned about reports of the suppression of Afghanistan's diverse communities. Such reports include the forced evacuation of marginalized communities, while the morality law prohibits even the befriending and helping of non-believers, and those communities continue to be excluded from governance. Mounting grievances among minorities can lead them to become easy targets of terrorist propaganda. In fact, ethnic or religious minorities constitute about half of the Afghan population. Women and minorities make up the majority of the Afghan people.

Secondly, as a long-standing donor, we strongly condemn obstructions to humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. We call on all relevant actors to cooperate with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in facilitating humanitarian assistance. The Taliban's increasing interference and control of the activities of humanitarian organizations, as well

as the ongoing restrictions that hinder the delivery of assistance to women and girls, are unacceptable. The sole purpose of continued assistance is to meet the basic human needs of the Afghan people. In that regard, the Republic of Korea expanded its humanitarian aid to Afghanistan by more than 50 per cent this year. Our contribution of \$20 million will include support to the United Nations Population Fund for countering gender-based violence and improving maternal healthcare, as well as helping Afghan returnees and displaced populations through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. We will closely monitor the delivery of those services. We can help only if aid is sure to reach those most in need.

Thirdly, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its support and trust in the United Nations Secretariat's role in facilitating the Doha process launched by the Secretary-General. Our firm belief is that the reintegration of Afghanistan into the international community is a United Nations-scale project that cannot be substituted by bilateral or regional engagements. It is therefore important for all Doha participants to seize the narrow opportunities to prove the credibility of that engagement project. In that spirit, Korea participated in the first meeting of the working group on counter-narcotics held last month. Taking note of the rebound in opium production despite the Taliban's poppy ban, Korea will support the development of alternative livelihoods for farmers. We also stress that the success of the working group will hinge on its impact on the lives of Afghan people, including women and children.

In conclusion, Korea will continue to actively join those collective endeavours and exercise its responsibility as a Council member for the promotion of inclusive peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. Our focus will remain on securing respect for the basic human rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Under-Secretary-General Fletcher for their insightful briefings. I thank Ambassador Montalvo Sosa for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Mahboob for sharing her own personal experience and her insights with us today.

Since the Taliban's return to power in Kabul in August 2021 and throughout Malta's term as an elected member of the Security Council, we have witnessed

the unprecedented deterioration of women's rights. The Taliban specifically target women and girls through their edicts, which represents the most extreme and critical women's rights emergency of our time. The Taliban's recent decision to suspend medical training and education for women and girls in Afghanistan is yet another example of the Taliban's institutionalized oppression of Afghan women and girls. Undermining the provision of healthcare to women and children, as well as related training, has a negative generational impact on the future of Afghanistan. That policy targets women who face high levels of maternal and infant mortality. The Taliban's own policies, taken together, seek to effectively erase women from public life. Malta believes that amounts to gender persecution. Those extreme policies have been widely condemned, which explains the difficulty in pursuing a coherent international approach that advances a political pathway for Afghanistan while ensuring human rights accountability. Engagement with the Taliban must not come at the expense of women's rights.

We have heard before, in the Council and elsewhere, that good-faith measures are needed to help ease tensions and build confidence. We must emphasize that we continue to refer to the catastrophic human rights situation in Afghanistan precisely because the Taliban themselves continue to expand the policies being adopted, while actively undertaking efforts across Afghanistan to urge stricter adherence to those draconian rules. There are 23.7 million Afghans who continue to require urgent humanitarian assistance. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) reporting shows many incidents of interference by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice has hindered the access of humanitarian organizations to women and girls. Gender-related incidents in the humanitarian space continue to be reported by OCHA, including threats to women staff members and incidents of violence targeting humanitarian personnel. Movement restrictions in the country continue to pose access constraints. Those actions constitute an assault on humanitarian principles.

The drug-related challenges faced by the Afghan people are many, and Malta encourages efforts to support alternative livelihoods to drug cultivation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme and the

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) play an important role in the agricultural sector. The transition from dependence on narcotics as the cash crop will take time and a drug-free agricultural sector must be one in which women participate. The future of Afghanistan's economic development cannot be realistically achieved with half of its population stripped of their economic independence.

UNAMA's role remains crucial. I thank the entire UNAMA team and all United Nations agencies for their work. The Mission must be fully equipped to implement its entire mandate, with human rights streamlined across its engagement with the Taliban, including in the Doha process and the working groups.

In conclusion, the people of Afghanistan deserve better. The international community and the Council must do better. Malta reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, in particular its women and girls and ethnic minorities. The Council must ensure that human rights remain at the forefront of our response. Only by upholding the rights and freedoms of all Afghans can we hope to see a peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States of America.

I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva for her informative briefing. She and the entire United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) team continue to demonstrate resilience in the face of enormous challenges. I also thank Emergency Response Coordinator Fletcher and Ambassador Montalvo Sosa for their briefings. And I thank Ms. Mahboob for her unwavering dedication and for her advocacy for the education of Afghan women and girls and for amplifying their voices here in the Security Council and elsewhere.

One thousand, one hundred and eighty-three days — that is emblazoned on all of our minds today.

Just two days ago, we marked the seventy-sixth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ironically, Afghanistan was one of the 48 original countries that adopted the Declaration, which applies all rights and freedoms equally to men and women. But today the Taliban is issuing archaic edict

after edict after edict designed to deprive women and girls of fundamental rights, of the chance to learn and live and thrive with freedom and dignity.

Most recently, the Taliban banned women's access to medical training, which means no access to medical care. How will women's healthcare needs be met in future if there are no qualified women doctors, nurses, dentists and midwives? And male doctors are not allowed to treat women. The new restriction defies logic and could represent a death sentence for Afghan women and girls in dire need of potentially life-saving medical treatment. It will have an impact on every mother, every unborn infant — boys and girls — and on the future of Afghanistan. That is not cultural, and it is not religious. It is unfathomable. It is sick. It is heartless. It means those men — Taliban — are sentencing their mothers who birthed them, their sisters, their wives, their own daughters, to die before their eyes if they become ill.

This month also marks two years since the Taliban banned women from attending universities and from working for non-governmental organizations. The Taliban are determined to erase women from public life, to try to erase their futures. Peaceful reconstruction is what we heard from our Chinese colleagues — that is not what we are seeing here.

But in the face of the Taliban's neglect and repression, the people of Afghanistan remain resilient and will not be blinded by the Taliban's failures and injustices.

My message to the Afghan people and to Afghan women in particular, is this: We stand with you in solidarity. In the face of this repression, we and our partners remain steadfast in our firm commitment to support the Afghan people.

We are also deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, with nearly 23 million Afghans — more than half of Afghanistan's population — in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of food insecurity, malnutrition, widespread displacement and contamination from explosive ordnance. The Taliban's indefensible restrictions hinder humanitarian access to vulnerable populations and exacerbate the stark humanitarian needs we are seeing now, particularly when it comes to women's health throughout the country.

The United States and its humanitarian partners will continue to deliver critical aid to Afghans in need and will continue to press the Taliban to change

course. We have engaged the Taliban bilaterally, as well as through United Nations-convened meetings, to try to find ways to support the Afghan people. But, as the divide between us on political and human rights matters grows larger, it is difficult to see how we justify continued engagement, even on technical matters. Any engagement must be linked with a broader dialogue on human rights and a political road map, as envisioned in resolution 2721 (2023). It has been a year since the Council adopted that resolution, in which we also requested the Secretary-General appoint a special envoy to develop this road map to reintegrate Afghanistan into the international community. The United States expects the United Nations-led Doha process to support the road map and promote the Taliban's adherence to the international community's expectations, but also more importantly, to the Afghan people's expectations.

And while we certainly recognize and appreciate the work UNAMA is doing, UNAMA should not be a substitute for an independent and senior figure to spearhead that process, as set out very clearly in last year's United Nations independent assessment (S/2023/856, annex).

We also appreciate the United Nations efforts that went into the first Working Group on Counter-Narcotics meeting as part of the Doha process.

But I want to reiterate our call that Afghan experts, particularly women, must be meaningfully included throughout the Doha process and its working groups. We cannot allow the Taliban to dictate the terms of the meetings or to exclude Afghan experts.

Before I conclude, I would like to again speak directly to the women of Afghanistan: The Taliban may try to silence your voices and make you invisible, but we see you and we hear you. We know you are the lynchpin to a stable, peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan. And we will endeavour to match your resolve by developing creative solutions and concrete initiatives that will provide opportunities for education and employment, while we use all the tools at the Council's disposal to push the Taliban to rescind its discriminatory decrees.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Faiq (Afghanistan): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this vital meeting and for your exemplary leadership of the Security Council

this month. Also, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Tom Fletcher; and the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), Ambassador Andrés Efen Montalvo Sosa, for his sobering presentations. Also, I would like to thank Ms. Mahboob for exemplifying the power and resilience of Afghan women by sharing her strong story. We are also grateful to the members of the Council who previously spoke for their unwavering commitment to the people of Afghanistan, especially its women and girls, including this morning's joint statement by the Council members signatories of the shared commitments on the women and peace and security agenda. We also commend the outgoing Council members, Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland for their exceptional service during these turbulent times. Their dedication has set a high standard of collaboration that Afghanistan deeply appreciates. We particularly recognize Japan's tireless efforts as the penholder for Afghanistan's file.

Afghanistan is entering its fourth year under Taliban rule, enduring a devastating humanitarian crisis compounded by social, political instability and systemic human rights violations, especially against women and girls. We mourn the hard-won progress of the past two decades achieved through immense sacrifice, now tragically lost. Millions of women and girls see their dreams shattered and fundamental rights eroded. And our youth face unemployment and a future clouded by despair.

A group has seized control of our nation's destiny, ruling over 40 million people with no coherent political vision for prosperity or progress. Their actions reflect a profound disregard for our nation's rich culture and enduring values and the true principles of Islam, leading only to widespread suffering and devastation.

Despite repeated United Nations and international calls for patience and pragmatic engagement, the Taliban have become increasingly emboldened. Instead of halting their policies, they have intensified their oppressive restrictions, imposed a gender-apartheid environment and focused solely on consolidating power. Their four-year rule has produced nothing but poverty, isolation and misery, manipulating geopolitical complexities to the detriment of the Afghan people. The consequences are dire: Afghanistan's economy is collapsing, forcing millions to flee; and refugees and

returnees face uncertainty while journalists, women protesters, former officials, security personnel and Shia and Hazara communities endure retribution, forced disappearances, targeted killings, arbitrary detention and torture. The Taliban invest in extremist madrasas while opposing modern education, silencing women and denying half of the population their basic rights. The recent Taliban ban on women attending nursing and midwifery classes at private institutes epitomizes the Taliban's ignorance and hostility towards the people of Afghanistan. Imagine being a woman in Afghanistan—denied education, confined to one's home and stripped of professional opportunities. Members should consider how it would feel to see their daughters barred from attending high school or university.

The security situation remains deeply concerning, as foreign terrorist fighters pose a potential threat by establishing training camps, regrouping and reorganizing in Afghanistan, as highlighted by the Chair of the Sanctions Committee. Humanitarian metrics are alarming. More than 23.7 million Afghans need urgent aid, with 12.4 million experiencing severe food insecurity. Almost 45 per cent of children under 5 are stunted, and 14 per cent face acute malnutrition. Women and children suffer disproportionately, yet humanitarian funding covers only 37.5 per cent of the required \$3.6 billion humanitarian aid budget. Afghanistan's gross domestic product has contracted by 30 per cent, with 97 per cent of people living below the poverty line.

In this critical situation, what should be done? While we are deeply grateful to the United Nations and international partners for their life-saving support, that approach is not sustainable. Achieving sustainable economic growth and self-sufficiency requires an accountable and inclusive Government that effectively utilizes Afghanistan's natural resources, human capital and development aid. To achieve that objective, a strong and united international position is necessary to support and facilitate political dialogue. However, the Taliban oppose political dialogue and continue ruling by force to solidify their power and maintain the status quo.

We welcome the international community's principled stance on supporting inclusivity and pressing the Taliban to adhere to international human rights obligations and end their oppressive policies and restrictions on women and girls. We commend the statements of condemnation and practical actions aimed at holding the Taliban accountable under the

International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice for their systemic discrimination and gender-based persecution. We ask the ICC Prosecutor to expedite the investigation. Justice and accountability are vital for rebuilding trust and restoring the rule of law. Mechanisms to document and address human rights violations must be strengthened. In that regard, we admire and support the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and we welcome his recent report (see A/79/330). We also support the extension of the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in order to ensure the effective implementation of the sanctions regime and reporting on Taliban activities.

Given the decline in humanitarian funding, we call on the Member States to advocate increased funding to address Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis. Aid delivery must prioritize vulnerable groups and women's involvement and ensure effectiveness through consistent oversight and reporting mechanisms. We also underline the importance of regional cooperation and commend our neighbouring countries for their continued support in facilitating trade, transit and humanitarian cooperation for the benefit of the Afghan people. We are deeply grateful to neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran, for hosting millions of Afghan refugees with remarkable patience and hospitality. However, as the winter intensifies, we call on those nations to halt any decisions on the expulsion of Afghans, whose lives are at risk, as well as all migrants, and appeal to international partners to fast-track resettlement programmes while extending greater support to host communities.

The Taliban are not representative of the Afghan people and culture or of true Islamic values. The Taliban must understand that legitimacy cannot be achieved through repressive policies and distorted interpretations of sharia law. Governance based on oppression and tyranny is unsustainable. History shows that tyrannical regimes eventually fall, and people's resilience prevails.

We say to the Taliban: enough is enough. The Afghan people have endured decades of unimaginable suffering and conflict. It is time to cease inflicting further pain, abandon oppressive policies and respond to the legitimate demands of both the Afghan people and the international community. The Taliban must prioritize education for all, uphold their commitments and engage in meaningful political dialogue in order

to establish an inclusive governance system that reflects the will of the people, upholds justice and is rooted in the rule of law. To all Afghans, we say: unite and craft a shared vision for a democratic, stable Afghanistan. Engage in dialogue through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process, facilitated by the United Nations, to find a political solution. Our plea to the international community is clear: prevent Afghanistan from becoming a breeding ground for terrorism, support efforts for a legitimate Government system rooted in the people's will and adopt a unified approach against the Taliban's actions using sanctions and other measures to ensure respect for Afghan rights and demands.

We welcome all international efforts and Afghan-led initiatives aimed at ensuring peace, stability and prosperity through meaningful engagement and dialogue. However, any engagement must be principled, with clear benchmarks for an inclusive system of governance and the full and equal participation of women in public life. While the United Nations-led Doha peace process and past initiatives have yielded no tangible results, we believe that the platform retains potential if reoriented towards a unified international strategy. The Taliban are not the only stakeholders. The process must include all credible Afghan representatives, democratic forces, civil society actors and women leaders. The Secretary-General's independent assessment report (S/2023/856, annex) provides a road map for achieving peace and reintegration. However, it is deeply regrettable that the Security Council has not expedited the implementation of the recommendations, including the appointment of a Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

In conclusion, despite the immense challenges that my country faces, the resilient people of Afghanistan remain hopeful. Their aspiration is simple: a stable, prosperous and representative Afghanistan; living in peace and security with itself and its neighbours; and fully committed to its international obligations. To achieve that, the Council has both the mandate and the moral responsibility to act decisively. Let us not abandon Afghanistan to oppression and despair. Instead, let us stand united to ensure justice, equity and opportunity for its people, especially its women and girls. Our choices today will shape Afghanistan's future.

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

Mrs. Kasymalieva (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I congratulate the United States on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and wish the United

States delegation a successful stewardship of the Council in the interest of international peace and security. The Kyrgyz delegation is delighted to welcome to the Council the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Roza Otunbayeva, and thank her for her comprehensive briefing today. We also thank all other briefers for their briefings.

Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan are century-long neighbours that have lived in peace with respect for each other. In line with our foreign policy, Kyrgyzstan adheres to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of Afghanistan and respects the rights of Afghans to build their own future on the basis of their own history, culture, traditions and national uniqueness. At the same time, as a good neighbour, Kyrgyzstan wants Afghanistan to be free, stable and prosperous. At the present time, when the people of Afghanistan face various formidable challenges, Kyrgyzstan stands ready to help in many ways.

First, Kyrgyzstan supports international efforts to address the issues of concern in Afghanistan. Our country is an active participant in the Doha process and other existing formats of dialogue and engagement with the de facto authorities. We also support the establishment of the United Nations Regional Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Secondly, in Central Asia, it is well understood that our regional security is linked to the security context in neighbouring Afghanistan. It is an absolute imperative that Afghanistan be sustained as a secure and stable country. Let me recall that Central Asia remains a destination point for international terrorists, violent extremists and drug traffickers. In that connection, Kyrgyzstan notes the efforts of the de facto authorities to fight against non-State terrorist actors, in particular the Islamic State of Khorasan, and against the illegal production and illicit trafficking of narcotics. In countering those threats, cooperation and interaction are the key to success. Therefore, it is encouraging that working group on counter-narcotics of the Doha process was recently launched.

I also wish to recall that Kyrgyzstan is a candidate country for a Security Council non-permanent seat for the term 2027–2028. If elected, Kyrgyzstan plans to focus on Afghanistan as a key policy of its membership.

It is with deep regret that we observe the evolving humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The ongoing under-resourcing of Afghanistan's humanitarian needs and

response plan for 2024 continues to affect the daily lives of children, women and girls, owing to food insecurity, the lack of healthcare services and the destruction of housing resulting from natural calamities. The international community must do more and unconditionally help the vulnerable groups of Afghans. Over the past three years, Kyrgyzstan has regularly provided humanitarian and food aid to Afghanistan.

In our opinion, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is likely to be alleviated when the national economy improves and jobs are created. However, as long as the international isolation of Afghanistan continues, the prospects for economic growth are limited. In that connection, the release of frozen assets to Afghanistan could be very critical to economic development and social stability. We know that Afghans are very hard-working people and gifted entrepreneurs, who can contribute tangible inputs to economic growth and prosperity. In our view, the private sector would be the primary beneficiary of those frozen assets, which could expand the availability of affordable loans and microcredit opportunities. In addition, the implementation of infrastructure development projects in the areas of energy, transport connectivity and water management would strengthen Afghanistan's economy. They would also better integrate it into the regional trade and investment system.

First, Kyrgyzstan is interested in the implementation of the Central Asia–South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, which will allow energy export from Central Asia to Afghanistan and beyond to South Asia.

Secondly, the operation of the multimodal China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan–Afghanistan transport corridor has become a trade route since 2023.

In conclusion, as educated young people are crucial to the future of each country, the Government of Kyrgyzstan engages with the Afghan authorities to cooperate in the areas of youth education and capacity-building for professionals. We are interested and ready to train them in Kyrgyz universities and invite our international partners to support the project with financial assistance.

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

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I join others in congratulating the United States delegation on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and thanking Ms. Roza Otunbayeva for her insightful

briefing on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as the other briefers for their substantive and moving briefings.

Afghanistan's security, peace and progress remain key priorities for Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The independent assessment (S/2023/856, annex) is a vital guide that serves not just for our discussions today but as a pointer for future action. Kazakhstan adheres to the Security Council's stance on the international recognition issue of the Taliban and we would like to see their unwavering commitment to international humanitarian law and the human rights of all Afghans. We firmly stand in support of the meaningful participation of women in all spheres of life and upholding the rights of minorities. While we must work on accountability of the de facto Government, as our Afghan colleague stated today, we also join him in emphasizing the need for robust support to the ordinary Afghan people on the part of their neighbours, as well as partners and international organizations, in order to accelerate progress.

Integrating Afghanistan into the regional economic framework benefits not just the country but also Central Asia and the global community. Infrastructure and connectivity projects are pivotal for linking Afghanistan to international trade, transport, logistics and energy systems to promote the country's revitalization and job creation for its ordinary people. As close neighbours of Afghanistan, we see the solution in the united and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders in assisting in building the resilience of the population of the struggling nation. At the sixth Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State held in Astana, our nations adopted the Central Asia-2040 concept and the road map for regional cooperation until 2027, emphasizing economic collaboration and assistance to Afghanistan. As a landlocked region, the diversification of its trade ties is crucial. Therefore, as a key trading partner of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan continues to foster economic cooperation. Notably, in October, we hosted a business forum, at which Kazakhstan and Afghanistan agreed on a strategy to achieve a mutual trade turnover of \$3 billion.

Kazakhstan also actively provides humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, particularly through partnerships with United Nations agencies, such as the World Food Programme. We remain a reliable supplier of wheat and grain and engage in various large-scale procurement projects. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has

proposed establishing a United Nations Regional Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty. That initiative, supported by all Central Asian nations, seeks to strengthen Afghanistan's economy, create jobs for its young people, stem migration flows and integrate the country into regional trade networks. Over time, economic stability will pave the way for Afghanistan's gradual political transformation, including advancements in women's rights. Structured, coordinated efforts by United Nations agencies and all stakeholders are essential to realizing the Secretary-General's vision of "Delivering as One". Furthermore, the Doha meetings of special envoys reaffirmed the need for sustained dialogue with the Taliban, particularly in trade, economic and humanitarian domains.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan urges the international community to support Central Asia in aiding Afghanistan. We stand united with others in pursuing a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and other international norms.

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

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): We thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings. We also thank Ecuador's Ambassador for his briefing. We listened carefully to Ms. Mahboob. We take note of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/876), which highlights the numerous challenges confronting Afghanistan.

I would like to highlight the following points in that regard.

First, more than three years after the de facto authorities took control, Afghanistan continues to face profound challenges, with the humanitarian crisis at the forefront. In 2024, an estimated 23.57 million people remain in need of assistance. Declining aid, significant funding gaps and restrictions on female aid workers have exacerbated the crisis, placing women and children at the highest risk. The international community must take effective action to prevent further suffering. Humanitarian assistance must be impartial, unconditional and free of politicization. Frozen Afghan assets should be released, and sanctions must

not obstruct economic recovery efforts. Failure to act will only deepen the plight of millions and jeopardize Afghanistan's future.

Secondly, the security situation in Afghanistan remains critical, with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan and its affiliates posing a grave threat to both the country and regional stability. Yesterday's terrorist explosion in Kabul, which claimed the lives of Mr. Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani, Minister for Refugees, and several others, is a stark reminder that no one — not even the de facto authority — is immune to the scourge of terrorism. Escalating attacks on Shia and Hazara communities highlight rising extremist violence. Iran condemns those acts and urges the de facto authority to comply with its obligations to fight terrorist networks effectively and protect all people. Equally important, the rise in the production of synthetic drugs and the narcotics trade demand urgent action. Iran supports the programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which provides income, advanced agricultural practices and essential services to address drug dependency and build resilience among the people affected.

Thirdly, as a neighbour, Iran has shouldered a disproportionate share of the burden resulting from Afghanistan's crisis, especially after the reckless United States withdrawal in 2021. More than 6 million Afghans have sought refuge in Iran, placing immense strain on our already-limited resources. Iran spends more than \$10 billion annually to provide for their needs. Yet the burden has been met with insufficient recognition and support from the international community. Host countries like Iran and Pakistan need sustained aid, while efforts must focus on enabling refugees' return by strengthening Afghanistan's capacity to provide housing, jobs and essential services. Enhancing those capacities is crucial to regional stability and the dignity of returning refugees. The international community must act to support those efforts.

Fourthly, representative and inclusive Government is essential for long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan. An inclusive Government can address key challenges, prevent conflict from resurging and curb refugee flows to neighbouring countries. It also lays the foundation for stability, security and the protection of human rights, including those of women and girls.

Fifthly, we emphasize the necessity of sustained and coordinated international engagement with Afghanistan's de facto authorities to tackle pressing

challenges. In that context, the Doha process serves as an important platform. Iran welcomes the recent Doha meeting outcome, which led to the establishment of working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector. Iran participated actively in the first counter-narcotic working group meeting on 28 November and is prepared to contribute to the upcoming private sector working group in order to address challenges and support Afghanistan's development. Iran supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in fulfilling her mandate and regards UNAMA as a significant mechanism for international affairs in promoting peace and stability.

Sixthly, Iran remains committed to regional initiatives that foster dialogue and active engagement with Afghanistan, including neighbouring ministerial meetings, regional contact groups and the Moscow format. On 27 September, Iran hosted the third quadrilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers with China, Pakistan and Russia here in New York to deepen engagement with Afghan authorities and promote regional stability. The joint statement of the meeting reaffirmed support for Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence, underscored the importance of inclusive governance and highlighted concerns about terrorism. It also stressed the need to guarantee women's and girls' access to education, economic opportunities and active participation in public life.

Lastly, the challenges in Afghanistan are significant, but they can be overcome through a coordinated step-by-step approach to building trust and fostering stability. Iran is committed to actively supporting Afghanistan's political, economic and social reconstruction, working towards a brighter future for its people while promoting regional peace and security. Western countries, whose prolonged occupation and abrupt withdrawal plunged Afghanistan into crisis, have a moral, legal and political obligation to contribute meaningfully to the country's rebuilding efforts.

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

Mr. Parvathaneni (India): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this very important meeting. We appreciate the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva and thank her for updating the Security Council on the recent developments. The views and insights of Ambassador Montalvo Sosa, Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher and the civil society briefer were also extremely helpful.

India has a historical and civilizational relationship with the people of Afghanistan. As its contiguous neighbour, historical people-to-people exchanges have forged unbreakable bonds of a special relationship. That is the basis of our contemporary engagement with Afghanistan.

India is closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan and has been actively engaged in regional and international efforts to maintain stability and peace in Afghanistan. Our broad approach remains to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the people of Afghanistan and create an international consensus within the United Nations framework to resolve various issues between the de facto authorities in Afghanistan and the international community. Our participation in the United Nations meetings in Doha in the Moscow format and other forums are a reflection of our efforts to secure peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. India has also joined the two working groups of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on counter-narcotics and enabling the private sector in Afghanistan. Through resolution 2593 (2021), the Council demanded that Afghan territory not be used to threaten or attack any country and reiterated the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan. That continues to guide the international community's approach to combat that menace. The resolution's call on all donors and international humanitarian actors to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan should remain a shared global priority.

India has been working with various United Nations agencies to provide assistance to the Afghan people in the areas of health, food security, education, counter-narcotics, sports and capacity-building. Since 2001, India has been committed to the rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Our development partnership includes more than 500 projects spread across all provinces in Afghanistan. Since August 2021, India has delivered 27 tons of relief material, 50,000 metric tons of wheat, 40,000 litres of pesticide and more than 300 tons of medicines and medical equipment. India has continued scholarship initiatives for Afghan students. Since 2023, it has granted admission to 2,000 Afghan students, including approximately 600 girls online. India has also provided winter clothing, stationery items and toys for primary school students in Kabul. India has partnered with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan to provide assistance for the welfare of

the Afghan drug-user population, especially women. Under that partnership, India has supplied 11,000 units of hygiene kits, baby food, blankets, clothing, medical aid and other items to UNODC in Kabul since 2022. We are also developing Chabahar port in order to provide connectivity to Afghanistan and ensure its reconstruction and development.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm India's steadfast commitment to the friendly people of Afghanistan. India looks forward to continuing to work closely with all stakeholders and will leave no stone unturned in joining the global community's efforts to support Afghan society in its quest for peace, stability, development and prosperity.

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

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and the United States delegation on your successful presidency of the Security Council this month. We take note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/876) and the briefing provided by Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We thank the Special Representative and commend her leadership and efforts to promote normalization in Afghanistan under very challenging circumstances. We also thank the other briefers for their very useful insights.

Let me begin by expressing Pakistan's strong condemnation of the cowardly terrorist attack in Kabul yesterday that resulted in the death of Mr. Khalil Rahman Haqqani, Acting Minister for Refugee and Repatriation in the Afghan interim Government, and several others. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the Afghan interim Government and the people of Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan remains dire and deeply worrisome. Some 23.7 million Afghans are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. While we are encouraged to see improvements in funding for the Afghanistan humanitarian needs and response plan, the plan remains severely underfunded, at just 37.5 per cent of the required \$3.06 billion. The plan must be fully funded, without preconditions, for the welfare and well-being of the vulnerable Afghan people. Pakistan supports efforts to revive the Afghan economy and its banking system, including by addressing liquidity challenges and exploring pathways to unfreezing Afghanistan's national reserves. We are committed to expanding trade relations

and commercial linkages with Afghanistan, including through the implementation of planned infrastructure and regional connectivity projects, such as the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India pipeline, the Central Asia–South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project and the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan railway projects.

Pakistan was the first to advocate sustained engagement with the Afghan interim Government, and we welcome all such initiatives, including through the ongoing rounds of the Doha process, to help address Afghanistan's problems. However, the efforts being undertaken in the framework of the Doha process must go beyond counter-narcotics and the private sector to encompass the fundamental issues that have been identified by the international community, especially in the independent assessment submitted last year by the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu (S/2023/856, annex). As noted in the Secretary-General's report, Afghanistan continues to face multiple challenges, including with respect to terrorism, human rights, political inclusivity, a fragile economy and widespread poverty. Those problems are also affecting the region, in particular neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, which have sustained millions of Afghan refugees for decades and borne the brunt of more recent population flows from Afghanistan.

Terrorism within and from Afghanistan poses the single most serious threat to the country, the region and the world. While the Afghan interim Government is fighting Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, the threat from various other terrorist groups such as Al Qaida, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and others has yet to be addressed.

The TTP, with 6,000 fighters, is the largest listed terrorist organization operating in Afghanistan. With safe havens close to our border, it poses a direct and daily threat to Pakistan's security. The TTP is responsible for a number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, causing the loss of the lives of hundreds of innocent Pakistani civilians and law enforcement officials. In countering the TTP's cross-border operations, our security and border officials have confiscated some of the modern weapons acquired by the Afghan interim Government from stocks left behind by foreign forces. The TTP also receives external support and financing from our adversary. The TTP is fast emerging as an umbrella organization for other terrorist groups in the area, with the clear objective of destabilizing Afghanistan's neighbours. We have evidence of its collaboration with

other terrorist groups, such as the Majeed Brigade, which is utilizing terrorism to disrupt Pakistan's economic cooperation with China, especially on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. Given its long association with Al-Qaida, the TTP could emerge as Al-Qaida's arm with a regional and global terrorist agenda.

Pakistan will take all necessary national measures to eliminate those threats. We will continue to cooperate with regional and international efforts to effectively root out the menace of terrorism.

The international community also expects the Afghan interim Government to fulfil its declared commitments on human rights and political inclusion. Instead of easing the earlier restrictions, the Afghan interim Government has intensified the restrictions on women and girls. Those restrictions are contrary to Islamic precepts, jurisprudence and sharia. Pakistan shares the desire of most of our neighbours and the international community to enhance the prospects of stability and normalization in Afghanistan and engage constructively with the Afghan interim Government. Yet engagement does not imply international acceptance of policies that contravene international law and Afghanistan's legal and political obligations, and engagement must have clear objectives and purposes. We need a road map of the specific and reciprocal actions to be taken by the Afghan interim Government and the international community to achieve the goal of normalization in Afghanistan. The spokesperson of the Afghan interim Government has himself asked for the implementation of the Special Coordinator's plan. That is the only viable recipe for economic revival, long-term development and sustainable peace, security and development in Afghanistan.

The destinies of Pakistan and Afghanistan are intertwined, underpinned by bonds of history, geography, ethnicity, language, faith and culture. The suffering of our Afghan brothers and sisters affects the Pakistani people deeply. There is no country that is more eager than Pakistan to see Afghanistan return to the fore of the international community. Pakistan will continue to play a proactive role to achieve the much-needed and long-awaited peace, stability and development that the people of Afghanistan rightfully deserve after more than four decades of conflict, and we will continue to engage at the bilateral, regional and international levels to realize those aims, including as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2025–2026 term.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.