



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9314th meeting

Thursday, 27 April 2023, 5.20 p.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Nebenzia	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Spasse
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Sánchez Izquierdo
	France	Mrs. Dime Labille
	Gabon	Mrs. Kambangoye Ankassa
	Ghana	Mr. Osei-Mensah
	Japan	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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The meeting was called to order at 5.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, the Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uruguay and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/292, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, the Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Uruguay and Yemen.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Japan and the United Arab Emirates in our capacity as co-penholders on the Afghanistan file.

I would like to start by thanking the Russian Presidency for its flexibility in scheduling today's vote.

Today Security Council members are voting on a draft resolution (S/2023/292) condemning the decision by the Taliban to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations. Such restrictions are unprecedented in the history of the United Nations, and they put the very presence of the United Nations in Afghanistan in jeopardy. But as we all know, this is just the latest in a wave of restrictions that we have witnessed over the past year and a half.

By adopting this draft resolution, the Council would send an unequivocal message of condemnation and a clear call for the swift reversal not only of this latest ban, but of others restricting the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. We are pleased to be joined by over 90 States co-sponsoring the draft resolution not just from the Security Council, but from Afghanistan's immediate neighbourhood, from the Muslim world and from all corners of the Earth.

This cross-regional support makes our fundamental message today even more significant: the world will not sit by silently as women in Afghanistan are erased from society. The draft resolution also makes it clear that stability, economic recovery and political reconciliation are not possible in Afghanistan without the inclusion of Afghan women and girls. At the same time, the draft resolution recognizes that dialogue and engagement among all relevant Afghan stakeholders, the region and the wider international community is critical for turning a page on this chapter of Afghanistan's history.

Today's draft resolution also reflects our unyielding commitment to the welfare of the Afghan people, while echoing our profound concern about the exceptional set of challenges facing them: the unsustainable economic situation in the country, the dire humanitarian needs and the importance of the presence and operations of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Finally, this draft resolution also underscores that the protection of aid workers and United Nations officials who risk their safety while serving humanitarian and United Nations objectives is fundamental to the well-being of Afghan people. That process cannot be achieved without women, and that is why the draft resolution makes a clear demand on all to allow rapid and safe access to humanitarian actors, both men and women.

We want to thank and recognize all Council members for their constructive engagement with the text, their flexibility and their active support to us, the co-penholders, throughout the negotiation process. It is our shared intention that the people of Afghanistan have the opportunity to build the future that they deserve, especially the women and the girls.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2681 (2023).

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

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I deliver this statement on behalf of the United Arab Emirates and Japan, in our capacity as co-penholders on Afghanistan.

We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2681 (2023). We are grateful for the cooperation and constructiveness by Security Council members in the light of the pressing nature of the issue.

Three weeks ago, the international community witnessed another alarming announcement by the Taliban to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan. That decision, along with the previous restrictions, not only undermines the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan, but it also negatively and severely impacts United Nations operations on the ground. The impact is particularly serious given the dire humanitarian crisis and the desperate need of the Afghan people for

life-saving assistance and basic services. The full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls is indispensable if Afghanistan is to have a peaceful and prosperous future and enjoy long-term development.

Today the members of the Council, along with the wider States Members of the United Nations, came together to send a strong message expressing our condemnation of the decision and calling for a swift reversal of the policies and practices that restrict enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls. While maintaining our emphasis on the indispensable role of women and girls in Afghanistan, we also stress the importance of dialogue, consultation and engagement by all relevant stakeholders. It will be in no one's interest to isolate the Taliban. We must remain committed to determining how we can best address the difficulties faced by Afghanistan and its people. Our hearts and minds are always with them.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Today the Security Council has sent a clear, unanimous message to the Taliban and to the world: we will not stand for the Taliban's repression of women and girls.

The Taliban have chosen to ban women from universities, to keep secondary schools closed to girls and to prevent Afghan women from working with non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and in nearly every sector of the economy. Those decisions are indefensible. They are not seen anywhere else in the world.

Muslim-majority countries have spoken out against the Taliban's rationale for those decisions. In January, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation emphasized that Islamic law calls for women's education, work and participation in public life. And now the Security Council has condemned the Taliban. The United Nations and its Member States will not remain on the sidelines when women and girls are deprived from exercising their human rights.

The Taliban's edicts are causing irreparable damage to Afghanistan. They erase women and girls from society. They also move the Taliban further away from their desire to normalize relations with the international community. The United States continues to urge an inclusive political process among Afghans that leads to a representative Government that is accountable to its people and fully reflects Afghanistan's rich diversity, including the meaningful participation of women and members of minority communities.

In conclusion, the United States would like to acknowledge the extraordinary courage of women and girls in Afghanistan. Despite the Taliban's mounting

restrictions and intimidation, they continue to support their families and contribute to their communities. We applaud the many Afghan communities and individual who have strongly and bravely stood up in support of Afghan women and girls.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China and Afghanistan are linked by mountains and waters, and China always respects Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the independent choice of the Afghan people. China supports the Afghan interim Government in building a broad-based and inclusive political architecture and in implementing moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies. We expect the Afghan interim Government to take vigorous measures against all terrorist forces and develop friendly relations with international partners, including neighbouring countries.

China shares the regret and concerns of many countries about the recent ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations. We hope that the Afghan interim Government will protect the basic rights and interests of all Afghan people, including women and girls and ethnic minorities, and continue making efforts in a direction that meets the interests of the Afghan people and the expectations of the international community.

Following the irresponsible withdrawal of foreign forces in August 2021, Afghanistan, already in tatters, was plunged into new difficulties. International aid has been drastically reduced, unilateral sanctions have been intensified, economic development has been severely restricted, and the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate. The international community should take a comprehensive, objective and historical view of the multiple and complex challenges facing Afghanistan and seek comprehensive and systematic solutions. No matter how complex the problem is, maintaining dialogue and engagement remains the right approach to promote problem-solving, whereas mere condemnation and pressure can only be counterproductive.

Against that backdrop of that principled position, China constructively engaged in the consultations on resolution 2681 (2023). China notes with appreciation that the resolution incorporates the reasonable suggestions of China and other members and includes important improvements in a number of areas. The resolution that was just adopted states that Afghanistan faces multifaceted challenges, including but not limited to, humanitarian, economic and social challenges, as well as development, security, terrorism and narcotics challenges, and that measures must be taken to address them.

In the face of the dire humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan and the increasing scarcity of humanitarian resources, it is necessary to step up assistance in order to promote a political solution to the Afghan issue and maintain peace and stability in the Afghan region at large. It is necessary to maintain dialogue and engagement with all relevant Afghan stakeholders.

Those consensus points should serve as the guiding principles for the Council's handling of the Afghan issue going forward.

China has repeatedly expressed concern over Afghanistan's overseas assets. I would like to refer to that matter again today. The United States froze over \$7 billion worth of Afghanistan's overseas assets after the hasty withdrawal of its troops. Under international pressure, half of those funds were seized to set up a trust fund under the claim that it would be used to assist Afghanistan. Yet, as of today, what we have seen is that the assets were only transferred from one account to another without a single cent being returned to the Afghan people. The resolution that the Council just adopted explicitly calls for helping to address the major challenges facing the Afghan economy by using assets belonging to the Central Bank of Afghanistan for the benefit of the Afghan people. We once again urge the United States to act as soon as possible to implement the requirements set out in the Council's resolution and make up for the harm it has already done to the Afghan people, rather than continuing to aggravate their suffering.

It is both a common responsibility and in the common interests for the international community to help Afghanistan achieve peace, stability and development. As a close neighbour of Afghanistan, China will continue to work with the international community to that end. We also hope that the Council will dutifully play its positive role and not let the Afghan people down.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Let me start by commending the co-penholders — the United Arab Emirates and Japan — for their approach to securing the Security Council's support for this important resolution (resolution 2681 (2023)).

Since the Taliban took power, they have imposed restriction after restriction, resulting in the systematic erasure of women and girls from society. Banning Afghan women working for the United Nations in-country is the latest example of the Taliban's complete disregard for women's fundamental human rights.

This latest ban is a direct violation of the core tenets underpinning the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of non-discrimination. It will

severely impede the delivery of life-saving aid to women and girls at a time when 28 million people, over two thirds of all Afghans, are in need of assistance.

We therefore welcome the Council's unanimous condemnation of the Taliban's latest decision and the call for an immediate reversal of all policies that restrict women's rights and fundamental freedoms.

We joined other Council members and Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries in co-sponsoring this resolution to send an unequivocal message to the Taliban: there is no justification for what you are doing to women and girls of your country.

Since April 2021, the United Kingdom has given \$662 million to address the deepening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We remain committed to supporting the United Nations and our partners working in-country. We will not abandon the women and girls of Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation voted in favour of resolution 2681 (2023), on Afghanistan. We note the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and Japan as co-penholders on the Afghan file in the Council. They worked to find compromise solutions while taking into account a wide range of positions and sought to draft a document that would account for the whole set of challenges that Afghanistan is faced with today. In that regard, it is a matter of sincere regret and disappointment that steps towards a more prominent reflection of all those problems were actually blocked by a number of Western colleagues, led by the United States.

Of course, we do not welcome the decision by the Taliban to restrict the rights of women and girls. Of course, those bans must be lifted. However, the real reasons for the unresolved issue of unfreezing Afghan assets that belong to the Afghan people; calls for increasing humanitarian assistance and restoring the country's economy; and the negative consequences of unilateral sanctions — those matters did not make it to the resolution. However, that approach by our Western colleagues no longer surprises us. This is just another example of the double standards of the United States and its allies when discussing various conflicts in the Council.

At the same time, those who are responsible for the terrible crisis in Afghanistan and its consequences, which Afghans are forced to deal with by themselves, are

precisely those who today talk loudly about the suffering of women and girls who were left behind. If they care so much for the people of Afghanistan, why do they not return the money they stole from them and direct it to remedy the dire humanitarian and socioeconomic situation without preconditions? Why do they not lift the illegal unilateral restrictions and start contributing responsibly to a real settlement of the Afghan problem, which they themselves created? Vulnerable segments of the population, including women and girls, would benefit most from such steps.

Afghanistan needs our shared support, now as never before. We note the dedicated work of United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva, first of all by the humanitarian wing of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who deliver on their mandated tasks in a very complex environment. We assume that UNAMA will continue implementing its duties in full, including with regard to the coordination of international humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, and supporting the most vulnerable groups — women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Any attempts to politicize the humanitarian issue for various pretexts are immoral and unacceptable.

We are convinced that pragmatic interaction with the de facto authorities on all key issues — that is, via UNAMA in accordance with its mandate — remains imperative. It is important to prevent the isolation of Afghanistan. A patient and constructive dialogue will be beneficial for all: the people of Afghanistan, the region and the whole world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of April, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of the Russian Federation to the members of the Council and the Council's secretariat for all the support they have given us. It has indeed been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to arrive at consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone or without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, including the technical support team and the conference service officers, interpreters, verbatim reporters and security staff. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Switzerland good luck in the month of May.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.