



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 22 December 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011); and Ms. Shkula Zadran, Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Afghanistan”, convened on Thursday, 17 December 2020. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Jerry Matthews **Matjila**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex I****Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ms. Deborah Lyons**

I am addressing the Security Council as we close on one of the most momentous years that Afghans have endured.

Since my most recent briefing (see S/2020/891, annex I), the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban have made incremental but genuine progress in their peace talks. On 2 December, the two parties announced that they had agreed to the rules and procedures for negotiations. The two sides then formed a working committee to discuss the agenda and both parties presented to each other an initial list of topics for discussion. Those developments are an early but positive sign that both sides are willing and able to compromise when needed.

Earlier this week, following 93 days of uninterrupted talks, the parties agreed to take a 20-day recess. We hope that will allow both sides to regroup, consult internally and externally and resume negotiating with a renewed commitment. The parties have committed indeed to return to the negotiating table on 5 January, after that short three-week break.

Along with members of our humanitarian, development and human rights teams, I visited Doha twice recently to meet with both Afghan parties, and, of course, members of the diplomatic community. I should note that on each trip to Doha I have met with the women negotiators to seek their views on how we can help. And the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) also retains a team on the ground in Doha, working alongside the parties and members of the international community to support the process.

I want to thank the State of Qatar for hosting the talks, as well as the United States and members of the host country support group — Germany, Indonesia, Norway and Uzbekistan — for their diplomatic efforts. I look forward to further constructive engagement by the larger international community in the various existing and developing formats to further enlarge the support for the peace process.

Any sustainable peace will need to be owned by Afghanistan's very diverse society. That is possible only if the process is inclusive from the outset, with meaningful participation by all constituencies, including women, young people, minorities, victims of conflict and religious leaders.

The recent formation of the High Council for National Reconciliation will allow the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to establish a broad base for consolidating its negotiating positions. The Taliban, too, must expand and broaden its consultations with Afghan constituencies.

One of the key constituencies for both negotiating parties must be Afghanistan's young people. Two thirds of Afghan citizens are below the age of 25. That is also the most educated generation of young people in Afghanistan's history. Young Afghans have clear views on the future of their country, and we must do all we can to amplify their voices. And so I am delighted that Shkula Zadran, Afghanistan's Youth Representative, will join us here today. I look forward to hearing her thoughts once again.

I am proud to say that, through our youth-focused local peace initiatives, which are conducted throughout Afghanistan, UNAMA has provided a platform for the young people of Afghanistan to have their say on peace. Most recently, in the rural province of Faryab, young participants issued their own declaration, with strong recommendations specifying an immediate ceasefire; setting out the role of

Islam under Afghanistan's Constitution; identifying the all-important Sustainable Development Goals; and emphasizing the need for transitional justice. Those are the young people of Afghanistan. Their voices deserve to be heard.

As we all know, cooperation throughout the region, Central and South Asia, will be essential to an enduring peace. Increased trade and connectivity will build the foundation for peace and regional prosperity. It is therefore important to support regional efforts, and I particularly want to take note today of the regional efforts on counter-narcotics and transnational organized crime — two serious threats to the countries in the region — and I want to highlight that those topics were part of a major discussion that I participated in with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime regional Steering Committee meeting, which is made up of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Addressing those issues and the incredibly destructive impact on Afghanistan and the people of the region will be essential to promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region.

During my recent visits to Iran and Pakistan and my participation in events hosted by the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, I am happy to say that I noted an increasing commitment among regional players to making peace in Afghanistan a reality, as well as the critical recognition that regional stability does indeed require an enduring peace in Afghanistan.

Regrettably, the unrelenting violence remains a serious obstacle to peace and a threat to the region. I will admit that we are still compiling this year's data, but I would like to mention a few provisional statistics on the impact of the violence.

In October and November, improvised explosive devices caused over 60 per cent more civilian casualties than in the same period last year. In the third quarter of 2020, child casualties rose 25 per cent over the previous three months, while attacks against schools in the same period increased fourfold. In the first 11 months of 2020, targeted killings by anti-Government elements rose by nearly 40 per cent as compared with the same period in 2019. It is no surprise, then, that the *Global Peace Index 2020* ranked Afghanistan as the least peaceful country in the world for the second year in a row.

Such a ranking illustrates the psychological impact of the violence: as one Afghan official told me recently, "the sense and perception of violence and insecurity is higher now than ever". Let me say that again: the sense and perception of violence and insecurity is higher now than ever. Since the start of November alone, two separate rocket attacks in Kabul, the attack on Kabul University, the increased conflict in Helmand and Kandahar and a brutal bombing in Bamyan — to name but a few incidents — have strained the public's already fragile confidence and exacerbated the fears around the emergence of new terrorist threats. I ask all countries to continue to pressure all parties to the conflict to bring about a sustained reduction in violence, and I expect that will be a top priority when the negotiations resume.

The ongoing security transition, coupled with the emerging reality of international troop withdrawals, have obviously added to the anxieties felt by the Afghan population. I anticipate that in the coming months that larger security transition will become a central topic in the dialogue among Afghan officials, countries of the region and the larger international community.

And yet at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva the international community came together to reaffirm its financial support for Afghanistan. The conference exceeded expectations, and I congratulate our co-hosts, the Governments of Afghanistan and Finland, for making it a success. The generous

pledges — remarkable in today’s fiscal environment — will enable Afghanistan to pursue its core development priorities and deliver vital services to its people.

But it is not just about the money. It was also about a very important dialogue. UNAMA convened three high-level meetings: one on regional cooperation; another on the peace-security-development-humanitarian nexus — that complex Rubik’s cube that we will have to understand as we move forward to face the challenges of the coming year; and, of course, a high-level meeting in which Afghan private-sector actors participated to discuss how they can move towards self-reliance in the new peace environment. Those meetings brought a diverse range of voices to Geneva to address the challenges of governance and economic growth.

But above all, the conference sent a clear signal to the people of Afghanistan: the international community still stands with them. Adopted by no less than 66 countries, the conference communiqué reaffirmed support for “a unified, sovereign, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan”; it was signed by 66 countries. And then, three days later, that message was echoed at the session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in the Niger, where member States committed to “helping Afghanistan achieve a lasting peace, sustainable development, rehabilitation and reconstruction.” They also once again called for a ceasefire.

It is important to note, however, that donors have made clear that their generous financial assistance comes with conditions. A short year from now, we will all gather again — the Government and the donors — at a Senior Officials Meeting to assess the progress made against those pledges. Sustaining the current level of funding will require tangible improvements on peace, governance, the rule of law, certainly anti-corruption, and human rights, especially women’s rights.

There is no time to lose, and it is not business as usual. And so we have begun to work with the Afghan Government and development partners to galvanize the reform priorities. Together we can ensure — and will ensure — that donors’ assistance serves its intended purpose: building strong and accountable institutions and delivering services to the Afghan people.

And yet, unfortunately, Afghanistan remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists — and I want to take note of that today. Six have lost their lives this year alone — six journalists — with scant accountability for perpetrators. Eleven human rights defenders have also lost their lives, and many more have been injured or continue to be threatened.

Such attacks are completely unjustifiable. They risk chilling the public discourse just when dialogue is most needed. So I call upon the Government to take effective measures to protect the media and to investigate and prosecute violent crimes against journalists. The Taliban, too, must refrain from attacking civilian targets. The Taliban must recognize the critical role that the media and civil society fulfil in a modern-day Afghanistan, as a vital member of the global community.

Like much of the world, Afghanistan is now facing a new wave of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Already the effects of the pandemic have been devastating, and we are moving into a winter second phase that is likely to be much more damaging than the spring first wave. Hunger and malnutrition have spiked, and livelihoods have been eroded, with women and children particularly affected.

And so, in coordination with the Government and civil society, the larger United Nations family has scaled up to ensure that work is getting done to respond to the pandemic. Just this week, the President and I launched, and will be heading up, an emergency SWAT team to oversee the process on a daily basis. I encourage

Member States to fund humanitarian activities generously. We must ensure that Afghanistan's most vulnerable people are not left further behind in the pandemic.

As the year draws to a close, we must acknowledge that 2020 has brought a profound shift for this country — with the United States-Taliban agreement, the United States-Afghan Government joint declaration, three months of intra-Afghan negotiations, the renewal of pledges from international donors and a revitalized regional cooperation effort — all under a new Government in Kabul.

By all accounts, this was a big year. But a bigger year lies ahead — a full security transition, peace negotiations, which must and will advance, the health and socioeconomic challenges resulting from COVID-19, the ongoing commitment of the international donors and the expected results of even more regional cooperation — all of that with whatever political and societal changes accompany it.

Clearly Afghanistan will continue to move forward in this new year, but equally it will continue to need the dedicated support of the Council.

I look forward to our discussion.

**Annex II****Statement by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), Dian Triansyah Djani**

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), which I am pleased to do in accordance with paragraph 56 of resolution 2255 (2015).

I am also thankful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support for the work of the 1988 Sanctions Committee and their continual assistance to the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

As this will be my last briefing to the Council as the Chair of the Committee, please also allow me to also thank my 1988 Committee colleagues, the Monitoring Team and the Secretariat for their excellent cooperation as well as their invaluable support over the past two years.

As the Council is aware, the 1988 Committee's main goal is to deter the Taliban from continuing to support Al-Qaida and its affiliates and to deter Taliban attacks against the Government of Afghanistan through the use of its sanction measures.

Concurrently, the 1988 sanctions regime is intended to support the peace and reconciliation process, including by enabling listed persons to engage in peace and reconciliation negotiations.

The ongoing Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha are encouraging, and it is our hope that the work of the 1988 Committee can support the creation of an environment conducive to a lasting and sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

That said, let me once again refer to resolution 2513 (2020), in which the Council expresses its readiness to consider the start of the review of the status of designations of individuals, groups, undertakings and entities on the 1988 list in order to support the peace process, and at the same time urges all States to conduct without any delay national reviews, mindful that Taliban action, or the lack thereof, to further reduce violence, make sustained efforts to advance intra-Afghan negotiations and otherwise cease to engage in or support activities that threaten the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan will affect the review.

In its latest report (see S/2020/415), of May 2020, the Monitoring Team noted that relations between the Taliban, especially the Haqqani Network, and Al-Qaida remain close. It was further stressed that the challenge would be to secure the counter-terrorism gains to which the Taliban have committed, which would require them to deny groups, including Al-Qaida, the use of Afghan territory as a source of international threats. The report also stated that the Taliban's ongoing profiting from narcotics would continue to present a challenge, as the scale of the problem remained huge and had been further complicated by a boom in methamphetamine production and trafficking.

The report also noted that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) had suffered severe setbacks in 2019 and early 2020, being nearly eradicated from its main Afghan base in Nangarhar province in November 2019, and then incurring further losses in its new refuge in neighbouring Kunar in early 2020. The report acknowledged that Taliban forces played a significant part in inflicting those defeats, as did the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and their international allies. While such reporting by the Monitoring Team is encouraging, attacks throughout the year in Afghanistan's provinces, as well as the most recent

heinous attacks reportedly perpetrated by ISIL-K against Kabul University and the Green Zone, are stark reminders that ISIL-K remains a threat to the peace and stability of Afghanistan and beyond.

On top of such vicious terrorist attacks, the people of Afghanistan must also still endure an active and deadly military campaign by the Taliban, as highlighted by the recent fighting in Helmand province.

The overall effectiveness of the 1988 sanctions measures relies heavily on close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and Member States of the region. In early 2020, the Monitoring Team travelled to Afghanistan and the region to meet with its interlocutors on the ground to discuss the implementation of 1988 sanction measures, as well as to conduct threat assessments. Similarly, and in view of the coronavirus disease travel restrictions, the Monitoring Team virtually met with the National Security Advisor of Afghanistan, Mr. Hamdullah Mohib, this past November to discuss matters pertinent to the 1988 Committee mandate. The Committee looks forward to a continuous fruitful and cooperative relationship with the Government of Afghanistan.

Please allow me once again to reiterate that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and its Monitoring Team seek to support the peace process in Afghanistan. Similarly, the Committee looks forward to continued close engagement with UNAMA and other relevant stakeholders in 2021 to ensure the full implementation of the 1988 sanctions regime along with supporting the ongoing Afghanistan peace negotiations.



**Annex III****Statement by the Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations, Shkula Zadran**

I was born during the civil war in Kabul. My family left Afghanistan, and I became a child refugee in Pakistan. I still remember the fear and agony I endured there and the awkward feeling of not belonging. I still remember the day when my family decided to come back to Afghanistan and the joy and hope in my parents' eyes.

In 2001, no one would think that a young girl would represent Afghan youth on an international platform. But today, after almost two decades, that child refugee is honoured to be the Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations. For that precious opportunity, I am grateful to the Afghans for Progressive Thinking organization and the German Embassy in Kabul.

While it is very difficult to represent a generation born and raised in violence and conflict, I am delighted to speak on behalf of Afghan youth. I represent a generation who have been the main victim of this proxy war. We are being killed, and our dreams are being buried every day.

I speak on behalf of Rahed, Suhaila, Hedayat and their friends who were brutally killed during the terror attack on Kabul University. I speak on behalf of students killed in the Kawser and Mowod education centres. I have met their families; their pain is beyond our imagination. I promised them that I will be their voice, and I am fulfilling my promise.

I speak on behalf of Elyas Da'ee, Yama Siawash and Malali Maiwand, the prominent young journalists who were killed by terrorists. I speak on behalf of human rights activist Natasha Khalil and the 25-year old mother who was shot dead along with her newborn baby girl in the maternity ward of the Médecins sans Frontières hospital. I speak on behalf of the young people in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces who have sacrificed their lives to fight terrorism and protect our motherland and the rest of the world.

I speak on behalf of those gems who were supposed to become our future leaders but were killed. Terrorists are afraid of Afghan young people, and that is why they are targeting our educational institutions. They know that the educated and informed generations will never allow terrorism and extremism to grow in their country. As the Afghan Youth Representative, my message is obvious and clear to the terrorists and their supporters: You tried to bury us, you did not know that we were seeds.

The daily slaughter of young Afghans — and all Afghans — must end now. That is why an absolute majority of Afghan young people support the end of the war through peace negotiations.

I should warn, though, that peace should not only mean the end of violence. Yes, we demand an immediate ceasefire, but for us peace means more than just a ceasefire. Peace should not threaten further development and the gains we have made over the past two decades, such as increasing access to education from several hundred thousand children to several million; improving health-care systems; building a vibrant civil society and creating leadership space for the brave women of Afghanistan.

It is important to implement the provisions of resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security. Young people should be part of the peace and security-building process. Unfortunately, we have been excluded since the beginning of the peace negotiations.



Afghan young people want transparent peace negotiations, which should pave the way for a dignified and permanent peace. We desire an Afghanistan in which every Afghan lives with dignity and in peace and in which women are respected and receive equal opportunities to be educated and to contribute to all sectors of society. We want Afghan children to spend their childhood with joy and not live with the sounds of bullets and bombs. We want Afghan minorities to be treated with respect so that they can practice their culture and religious beliefs freely. We want a corruption-free Afghanistan in which the rule of law is maintained.

We do not want a political settlement that will serve the interests of others. We have already paid a huge price for the proxy wars. If this peace process goes wrong, Afghans will be the victims again. Since the day the peace agreement was signed between the Taliban and the United States, instead of a reduction in violence, tension and conflict have increased. Civilians are being killed; young people are being targeted. We are disappointed, and we cannot trust the peace negotiations this way.

If the Taliban really want a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, why are they destroying schools, bridges, roads and public infrastructure? If they really want peace, why have they not stepped back even an inch on their demands and conditions, while the Afghan Government has released more than 5,000 dangerous prisoners to prove their goodwill for peace?

My message to the Taliban is that they must not destroy their motherland for the sake of other's interests. Their children will have a bright and dignified future only in their own country, and not as refugees.

It is not just the Taliban who are responsible for a variety of war crimes. The international forces, who have come to Afghanistan with a mandate and aim of maintaining law and order and protecting human rights and democracy, have also committed miserable war crimes. Instead of targeting the safe havens and training centres of terrorists in Pakistan, they have bombarded our villages and homes and have killed innocent civilians.

I hope that we all dare to accept our mistakes, apologize to the people of Afghanistan and direct all our efforts to avoiding such inhumane crimes in future.

To bring peace and maintain stability and order in Afghanistan, peace negotiations must be held in Afghanistan among the Afghans, and no foreigner should be allowed to interfere. The Taliban must agree to a countrywide immediate ceasefire to gain the trust of the Afghan people in the ongoing peace process.

Our achievements must not be compromised. Our demands and red lines should be respected. Afghan young people do not want to go back to the dark era of the 1990s.

All parties involved in Afghanistan's war must apologize to the people of Afghanistan for war crimes. To protect the rights of victims of war, individuals involved in war crimes must be prosecuted.

The peace process must strengthen unity among Afghans and should not pave the way for hatred and another civil war. The republic and democracy must not be compromised.

The international community must keep supporting the brave Afghan security forces in fighting international terrorists, drug dealers and mafias. The peace process should result in an end to corruption, narcotics and unemployment in Afghanistan. It must lead to the disarmament of all political parties and warlords inside Afghanistan.

We have built our country by our blood, and throughout that struggle we have learned and achieved a lot. We are eager to serve our motherland. That is the duty of all Afghan young people.

I call upon all leaders across the world to trust the Afghan young people. We are resilient and eager to live in peace and harmony. We are the patriotic generation that they will never regret investing in and counting on.

**Annex IV****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Karen Van Vlierberge**

[Original: French]

First of all, I would like to thank the various speakers for their statements.

As participants in the Doha peace talks take a pause following the conclusion of a code of conduct, we call on all parties to take stock of their actions, present and future. Afghanistan is at a crossroads, and we sincerely hope that those talks will bring peace to the Afghan people. In that process, the gains of the past two decades must be preserved and even strengthened, especially with regard to human rights and the strengthening of the position of women. The protection of children must also be at the heart of the negotiations, including confidence-building measures such as the release of detained children and rehabilitation programmes for children associated with armed groups. We urge all parties to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the negotiations. We must listen to the voices of young people, such as Ms. Zadran.

Violence must be reduced. We therefore call on all parties, in particular the Taliban, to take immediate steps towards a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, which is all the more necessary in view of the current pandemic.

In that regard, I reiterate our position on sanctions against the Taliban: the delisting of members from the regime under resolution 1988 (2011) is not automatic but depends on the conditions set out in resolution 2513 (2020), including progress in intra-Afghan negotiations and a reduction in violence. The brutality of the Taliban's attacks is in stark contrast to their stated commitment to peace and their participation in peace talks.

We condemn the high level of violence against civilians, in particular children. In the third quarter of 2020, the United Nations counted among the victims 773 children — 773 in three months. We also specifically condemn the recent attacks against human rights defenders and journalists and call for the perpetrators to be swiftly brought to justice. In that regard, I stress the importance of combating impunity and the need for transitional justice in Afghanistan. We welcome the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on victim-centred justice.

As this is our last statement on Afghanistan within the framework of our current mandate in the Security Council, I would like to assure the people and the Government of Afghanistan of Belgium's firm commitment as they take the path towards peace and prosperity. At the United Nations, in the European Union (EU) and at the bilateral level, they can count on our support. Over the past five years, we have contributed more than \$60 million to the Afghan national army trust fund and, this year, \$8.4 million have been earmarked for the acquisition of vaccines and medical equipment for the Afghan army. As the EU made clear at the Geneva Conference last month, our future support will depend on progress in the areas of transparency, good governance, anti-corruption and gender equality.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Permanent Missions of Germany and Indonesia, in particular their experts Friedrich Schröder and Kartika Handaruningrum, for their exemplary work as co-penholders over the past two years. We wish the best to their successors, Norway and Estonia.

**Annex V****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: Chinese]

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and Ambassador Djani for their briefings. I commend the work carried out under their leadership by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). I also listened carefully to the statement of the Afghan Youth Representative. And I welcome the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan and Iran at today's meeting.

The peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan has entered a period that is critical to its future. China welcomes the first intra-Afghan talks, launched in Doha on 12 September, and congratulates the two parties on reaching an agreement a few days ago on the rules and procedures for the negotiations. The next stage of negotiations will include substantive discussions with a high level of difficulty. Both sides need to demonstrate more political wisdom and determination, and the international community needs to pay more attention and increase its input.

History has repeatedly shown that the Afghan issue can be resolved only through political means, and that the use of force will only plunge the country deeper into war. We hope that the two sides will consolidate the positive momentum, maintain a constructive attitude and persevere in the talks, while striving to achieve results in support of peace. We also hope that they will find an effective political solution to the Afghan issue at an early date.

China believes that Afghan's future arrangements should be broadly representative and inclusive so that all Afghan parties, ethnic groups and religious sects can participate equally and share State power. The international community should fully respect the will of the Afghan people and ensure that the negotiation process is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. No external force should impose its will on others or seek personal gain.

The Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) has played an important role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. China supports the Committee's continued performance of its duties, as authorized by the Security Council, to help the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. China supports the renewal of the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015), concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities.

Currently, the level of violence in Afghanistan remains relentless. According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1182), the number of violent incidents in October this year was the highest since 2007. The international community should continue to support the Afghan security forces in strengthening capacity-building, combating terrorism, protecting civilians and improving the security situation. China calls on all parties in Afghanistan to respond positively to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and immediately stop the hostilities and violence. Given the current security situation, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan should be orderly and responsible in order to avoid leaving a security vacuum to the detriment of the national interests of Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

Just now in her briefing, the Afghan Youth Representative condemned the various criminal acts committed by foreign troops in Afghanistan, which reflected the aspirations of the Afghan people and public opinion. All such crimes should

be thoroughly investigated. All perpetrators should be brought to justice. The international community should ensure justice for the Afghan people.

Development is the key to resolving all issues. Achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan will not be possible without economic and social development. At the recent Geneva Conference on Afghanistan, President Ghani emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and connectivity to the development of Afghanistan. The international community should help the country to implement the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework for 2021-2025 and resolve a number of difficult issues, such as poverty, refugees and drugs. We should support Afghanistan in participating in regional cooperation and connectivity in order to help the country exploit its geographical advantage, eradicate poverty and achieve stability and prosperity as soon as possible.

China has always actively supported Afghanistan's economic and social development and helped the country to strengthen its connectivity and economic and trade cooperation with countries of the region under the Belt and Road Initiative. On 9 December, China, Afghanistan and the five Central Asian countries held a video-teleconference at the level of deputy foreign ministers on trade and connectivity to build a new platform for regional cooperation, which will help to promote regional economic recovery and maintain regional stability and prosperity. China appreciates UNAMA's initiative to establish a working group with the participation of the Embassies of six neighbouring countries in Afghanistan so as to promote regional cooperation and connectivity. That is in line with China's thinking. We look forward to concrete results from the working group and are ready to work with all parties concerned to contribute to Afghanistan's socioeconomic development and the improvement of people's livelihoods.

Just now the Afghan Youth Representative talked about the situation and aspirations of young people in Afghanistan. China attaches great importance to the unique position of young people in Afghanistan, expresses its sympathy for their suffering and calls for them to play a greater role in the country's peace and reconciliation process and in its economic and social development. China has long supported the development of Afghan young people, helping them to tackle health, education, employment and other issues. In recent years, with the assistance of China, a number of projects were successively launched, such as the Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute and Kabul University's integrated teaching complex. Since 2017, nearly 200 Afghan children with congenital heart disease have received treatment in China and been provided with a full set of post-operative rehabilitation examinations, which received wide acclaim in Afghan society. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, China has provided Afghanistan with several shipments of anti-pandemic supplies and dispatched a medical expert team. We will continue to provide more help to enable the Afghan people, including young people, to finally overcome the virus.

China will continue to support, and act as a mediator and facilitator of, the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. We are willing to provide a platform for intra-Afghan dialogue and continue to work closely with all parties through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Contact Group and the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral dialogue. We will continue to support UNAMA's important role in the country and work with the international community to make greater contributions to Afghanistan's peace, reconciliation, development and prosperity.

**Annex VI****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons, Ambassador Djani, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and Ms. Shkula Zadran for their insights on the situation in Afghanistan. Now that the people of Afghanistan have suffered two decades of conflict, there is a consensus that the time for peace has come. Afghanistan has taken significant steps in that regard, and we would like to reiterate our support for the intra-Afghan peace talks. Dialogue remains the best way to end this conflict.

The way forward is clearly to enhance partnerships within Afghanistan, strengthen institutions and build trust among the population. An inclusive Afghan-led process, involving all sectors of society, will achieve a sustainable solution that includes guarantees for the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans. Afghan women, including young women and those living in rural areas, must therefore be fully, equally and meaningfully engaged in all stages and dimensions of the peace process, while we reiterate that their rights are non-negotiable.

We also agree with the concerns and calls expressed by Ms. Zadran. Young Afghans, including young women, feel excluded from the ongoing intra-Afghan peace talks despite the fact that 63 per cent of the population is under 25 years old. They not only represent the majority of the population but are a key element in a peaceful Afghanistan. Young peacebuilders and activists can no longer be ignored. However, at the same time, civilians, particularly women, young people and children, are paying the highest price in the conflict.

As we witness the deadliest attack in more than a decade in Bamiyan, one of the places that had remained relatively safe in Afghanistan, it strikes at the heart of Afghan hopes, which are already slipping away. The Dominican Republic strongly condemns that and other recent attacks on civilians. They are unacceptable. The perpetrators must be held accountable.

We call on all parties to put an immediate end to such suffering and to establish a humanitarian ceasefire. The parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and in the context of human rights, such as facilitating safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to civilians in dire need.

The drafting of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework for 2021-2025 is a significant step forward by the Government of Afghanistan to address State-building and peacebuilding. The 2020 Afghanistan Conference, held a few weeks ago, demonstrated the international community's political support for the country when pledges reached \$3 billion for Afghanistan's development by 2021, including the implementation of the Framework, and a total of \$12 billion over four years.

Against that background, let me emphasize that child protection deserves greater attention. We call on the Government of Afghanistan to fully implement its 2011 action plan and 2014 road map to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, strengthen the legal and operational framework for child protection and adopt a standardized benchmark for the reintegration of children.

We also urge the Taliban to respect the commitments made under the 29 February agreement, in particular by severing ties with international terrorist

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organizations, including Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and to prevent the country from again becoming a haven for international terrorism.

The economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is currently at a critical juncture. Some 18.4 million people will need humanitarian assistance by 2021. That astonishing number is directly related to the high levels of ongoing conflict, severe drought and other natural disasters and the additional tension caused by the impact of the coronavirus disease. In that regard, Afghanistan continues to face alarming levels of food insecurity. According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1182), 16.9 million people are at crisis and emergency levels — one of the highest figures in the world.

Cooperation and coordination among the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and civil society are essential in order to improve that grave humanitarian situation. We remain optimistic that the funding gap in the 2020 humanitarian response plan can be addressed.

It is our duty, as part of the international community, to fulfil the hopes of the new chapter that awaits the Afghan people. This is a time for collective efforts and increased commitment.



## Annex VII

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Lyons and Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, as well as the Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations, Ms. Shkula Zadran, for their comprehensive and insightful briefings.

We commend the actions of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), particularly in promoting the role of women on the peace and security agenda, supporting transitional justice and the inclusion of civil society and protecting human rights under the challenging conditions in the country. Estonia strongly supports such efforts, and we are always open to explore ways in which the United Nations and the Security Council can further assist UNAMA in its endeavours.

Speaking of challenging conditions, the security situation in Afghanistan remains deeply concerning. Armed clashes have increased by 38 per cent this year, and the conflict continues to take a heavy toll on the civilian population. There is absolutely no excuse for the deliberate attacks on health-care personnel, journalists and educational facilities. It is essential that such crimes be investigated and that the perpetrators be held accountable.

We deplore the attacks on children in the strongest terms. UNAMA should have the necessary capacity to monitor and report on violations and abuses against children and should assist efforts to strengthen the protection of children. We share the Secretary-General's view that it is critically important for all parties to the conflict to recognize and address the harm caused, while incorporating victim-centred justice into the peace process.

Another challenge is the humanitarian situation, with the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance having doubled to a record 18.4 million. Such circumstances are unprecedented. It is vital to support UNAMA's efforts to improve the accessibility of humanitarian aid for people in dire need. At the donors' conference held on 23 and 24 November, the international community, including Estonia, renewed its commitment to accompanying Afghanistan on its path towards peace, security, stability, democracy, prosperity and self-reliance.

A global ceasefire has repeatedly been called for by the entire international community, the Secretary-General and the Council. Today we once again reiterate our call for an immediate, permanent and comprehensive ceasefire to save the Afghan people from more meaningless suffering and create a conducive environment for sustainable peace in the country, as well as stability in the region. All parties, particularly the Taliban, must fulfil their commitments and work towards ending violence to save civilian lives.

This year is momentous for Afghanistan. There is a historic opportunity for peace and stability for all Afghans after decades of immense human suffering. We welcome the agreement between the parties on the code of conduct, which unlocked the discussion of the agenda items of the peace negotiations. It is essential that the parties resume the peace talks without delay on 5 January, after their mutually agreed three-week break. Human rights, particularly those of women and children, are inalienable and should be the highest priority on the agenda of the negotiations. The gains achieved over the past 19 years and guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution should be preserved and further strengthened during the course of the talks.

I would like to recall the sanctions regime on the Taliban and the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team supporting the Security Council

Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). Estonia is convinced that the review of the measures and the sanctions lists should remain conditions-based and be strict in its consideration of whether substantial progress has been made by the Taliban to reduce violence.

We are glad that the President of Afghanistan recently issued a decree establishing a high council for women, intended to support women's empowerment and the implementation of the Government's commitments regarding women's rights. We strongly support the participation of various political and social constituencies in the peace negotiations, especially the meaningful participation of women, youth and minorities. Protecting and promoting their rights throughout the peace process is imperative.

I have a question for the Afghan Youth Representative, Ms. Zadran. Two thirds of the population of Afghanistan is aged 24 years or under, and they are taking on the considerable task of rebuilding their country. In what ways are the youth represented in the peace negotiations, and are their voices being heard?

A sustainable political settlement is the only viable solution. We call on all sides to act swiftly, advance the peace process and fulfil their commitments to end violence and establish peace. We remain hopeful that the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban can build on the current momentum.

Finally, we would like to thank Germany and Indonesia for their diligent and professional work as Council co-penholders on the Afghanistan file. Together with Norway, we hope to be their worthy successors.

**Annex VIII****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, I would like to thank today's speakers for their briefings and their work to promote peace in Afghanistan, starting, of course, with Deborah Lyons at the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I commend her and thank her for her efforts. I would also like to pay tribute to the remarkable work and unfailing commitment of Indonesia as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and as co-penholders alongside Germany. They have done a truly outstanding job. Finally, I thank Ms. Shkula Zadran, whose powerful testimony, courage and determination are a sign of hope on Afghanistan's long road to peace.

I would like to share three points today.

First of all, I wish to emphasize the need for intra-Afghan peace negotiations to finally get off to a substantive start. The agreement reached on 2 December on the code of conduct for those peace talks is an encouraging first step. I note, however, that it took three months to reach that agreement and that much work remains. In that regard, I note that, in line with the women and peace and security agenda, the full and complete participation of women is absolutely essential to achieving a lasting peace. The consolidation of democratic gains is, of course, a *sine qua non* for peace.

Secondly, I would like to recall that the fight against terrorism must remain a priority for the international community. France condemns in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attacks, including the assassinations of journalists and media representatives mentioned in the briefings. Such attacks threaten the freedom of expression and the very foundations of Afghan society, and they hamper peace efforts. The current level of violence remains unacceptably high. The conflict in Afghanistan continues to claim the lives of too many civilians, particularly among women and children. The Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire, in accordance with resolution 2532 (2020), is essential. In addition, as mentioned, the fight against drugs on all fronts — from prevention to the eradication of production — is also critical if we are to ensure lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, there can be no progress towards peace unless all parties to the conflict fully commit to talks. In that regard, the extent of the Taliban's commitment remains to be demonstrated. As we consider the renewal of the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team attached to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), I would like first of all to commend the work of the experts and recall the relevance of the 1988 Sanctions Committee. Pursuant to resolution 2513 (2020), the sanctions list can be revised only if the Taliban extends serious and credible pledges to reduce violence, commit to negotiations and renounce all activities that threaten the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan.

As we demonstrated yet again at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, held in Geneva, we are firmly committed to peace. Proof of that is the European Union's commitment, last month, to provide €1.2 billion over four years in both emergency aid and long-term assistance to support the country's modernization and sustainable democratic development, including the fight against corruption and in favour

of institution-building, as well as to help improve the daily lives of Afghans, particularly by reducing poverty. But that support is not blind; it is conditioned on the preservation of the democratic gains of the past 20 years.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that peace is not to be achieved at all costs. The fight against impunity for criminals is absolutely essential. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, must be an absolute priority, and all parties must respect their obligations in accordance with international humanitarian law.

**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

First of all, let me start by thanking Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her briefing.

I can only echo that 2020 showed a profound shift in developments in Afghanistan. In the past few weeks, we again saw a year of hope, but also of despair. We see the peace process gaining traction in Doha, but also witness violence reaching its highest levels. According to the Global Peace Index, Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world. It is very worrisome that attacks are targeting infrastructure, particularly schools. It is a nightmare that human rights defenders and journalists are killed. A couple of days ago, the Deputy Governor of Kabul was killed. This is just too much. The violence has to stop. We should be united in the Security Council and call for an end to the violence.

On the peace process, I can only echo what Ms. Lyons said. Doha really is a wonderful achievement. I would like to congratulate our Afghan, American and Qatari friends and the many partners who made this possible. The agreement reached on the rules of procedure is important. These are early positive signs, but they give us hope for future talks. We are not there yet. Both sides should now use the next 20 days wisely and consult with their leadership and constituencies on the proposals on the table and the way forward.

The negotiation team of the Afghan Government decided that it would talk to the youth. To hear that young people have thus far been excluded from the peace process is very worrisome. We have always said that, from our perspective, it is absolutely necessary that women be represented on both sides. We hope for renewed commitment to the path towards a political settlement and a peaceful future for Afghanistan.

We need a full and lasting ceasefire. The strategy of the Taliban to negotiate, on the one hand, and to continue violence, on the other, is extremely cynical. If the Taliban really want peace for the country, why do they continue to destroy infrastructure and schools? Why do they destroy their motherland if they want to be part of the Government? This has to stop.

Germany will continue to support the peace process in close cooperation with our partners, including our co-penholder, Indonesia, as well as Norway, Uzbekistan, Qatar and the United States.

On the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), I welcome that Ms. Lyons has chosen to play an active role by maintaining a small team in Doha to support the negotiations. It is very important that the negotiating parties hear from her what the international community expects and what the Afghan people expect. I hope we can launch a forum of key regional and international partners to further strengthen efforts to support the negotiations.

The United Nations and UNAMA need to continue to play an important role in Afghanistan in protecting human rights, safeguarding women and children, promoting sustainable development and protecting the rights of minority groups using a victim-centred approach. What is really concerning is drug trafficking, which we need to continue to combat. These continue to be important tasks for the United Nations and for the international community at large.

On international assistance, Geneva was a success. It sent a strong signal of continued international support. In total, countries pledged more than \$3.3 billion.

I am very happy to confirm that Germany alone pledged more than \$500 million in international assistance and stabilization funds. Germany continues to be the second-largest donor to Afghanistan.

Assistance is attached to conditions that the Afghan Government itself greatly values. The current and future Afghan Governments must apply the same standards with regard to ensuring human rights, protecting women and minority groups, maintaining the constitutional achievements of the past 19 years and fighting against corruption.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has been a huge challenge, and we know that we also need to support Afghanistan in that respect. Afghanistan needs more continued reliable international assistance to address all its humanitarian needs. Only 50 per cent of the pledges towards the humanitarian response plan have been fulfilled. I know that there are competing needs, but we can do better than that.

On the sanctions regime, we do not yet see sufficient reasons for lifting sanctions on the Taliban or downplaying their direct link to terrorism.

I thank the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the non-governmental organization Afghans for Progressive Thinking and my colleagues in the Kabul Embassy for identifying Ms. Shkula Zadran as our youth representative. Her wonderful briefing made the deficiencies very clear. We, the Security Council, have listened to her, but everybody should listen to her, including the Afghan Government and the Afghan public. If peace is to be achieved, the Taliban have to understand the issues that she raised — the need to protect the youth and to preserve what has been achieved over the past few years in Afghanistan with regard to the role of women's participation in economic and political life that for peace in the country. Those gains must be not only preserved but enhanced.

We need firm commitment to the human rights constitutionally guaranteed to all in Afghanistan. We will continue to support civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. They are the backbone of a democratic Afghanistan. Accountability is also key. Whoever commits a war crime must be prosecuted. There can be no reconciliation or peaceful future for the country if impunity prevails.

I would like to thank Indonesia for its efforts over the past two years in its capacity as co-penholder. It was very hard work, but it was wonderful to work with Indonesia. I wish our successors good luck. I am sure Estonia and Norway will do an excellent job.

Germany will continue to support the Afghanistan dossier at the United Nations. We are very proud to be the facilitator of the General Assembly resolution 75/90, adopted last week, which expressed the solidarity of the wider United Nations membership with Afghanistan. The United Nations stands behind the peace process. We are very happy that we received 130 votes in favour of the resolution — many from the countries of the region, such as Iran. We even garnered the support of some co-sponsors from the region, like Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Mongolia. Despite the 130 votes in favour, we regret that four countries did not vote in line with us. We would have loved to have them on board. It is unfortunate that two of those countries are actually permanent members of the Council.

**Annex X****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

I thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Ms. Shkula Zadran for their important and inspiring briefings, which speak volumes. We extend our condolences to all the victims of terrorist attacks. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Adela Raz and Ambassador Majid Takht Ravanchi to this important meeting.

Echoing our German colleague, I convey Indonesia's appreciation to all Security Council members for their cooperation and support for us as co-penholders of the Afghanistan dossier at the Security Council.

The international community is behind Afghanistan. Our support for a peaceful, prosperous and self-reliant Afghanistan will be there as it moves forward. That consensus of international support is reflected, inter alia, through the Afghanistan Partnership Framework, adopted at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, held in Geneva. This is the time for Afghanistan. Indonesia is honoured to be part of this historic moment as Afghans make efforts to realize the promise of peace held by peace negotiations. In that context, allow me to underline three points.

First, violence must stop, and civilians must be protected. The current level of violence and the high civilian casualties are unacceptable. Threats, including by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), persist. We are concerned that those threats could escalate if they are not tackled effectively.

The recent attacks, claimed by ISIL, on education facilities and journalists, are a direct attack on the future generation and on the freedom of expression. We condemn those terrorist attacks. All parties must protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. Abiding by international humanitarian law is not an option, but an obligation. Ensuring the safety civilians will also build the trust of the Afghan people. The progress of peace negotiations needs to translate into progress on the ground. The Taliban must also cease its attacks against innocent people.

Secondly, an inclusive peace process and the quest for peace must continue. All parties should pursue a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire as part of efforts to ensure an inclusive political process. We underline the need for diversity and the participation of all segments of Afghan society in the peace process and nation-building. That is what is meant by the mantra of an Afghan-led and -owned process. The role played by youth as the future generation of Afghanistan and by women is indispensable. The participation of these groups is the recipe for sustainable peace.

Indonesia welcomes the progress made by the negotiating parties in reaching an agreement on the rules of procedure. It is an important milestone, as these rules will guide the negotiation. This agreement is also a testament to the fact that, where there is a will, compromise is possible. We commend both parties for their efforts.

All parties should continue to engage in constructive dialogue with a view to safeguarding the interests of the Afghan citizenry as a whole, namely, reconciliation, peace and development. We commend the contribution of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) in helping to foster peace and support the peace process through travel exemptions. To that end, we support the extension of the mandate of its Monitoring Team.

Thirdly, regional and international support should be maintained. Sustainable development, stability and peace in Afghanistan are in the best interests of every country in the region and beyond. Sustainable peace and an Afghanistan that is well



connected to its region will yield greater regional trade and security, which will be beneficial for everyone.

Increased cooperation in combating terrorism, drugs and other organized crime is a key to bringing stability to the country. We commend regional and international partners for spurring efforts in favour of Afghanistan. Such efforts should continue, as the country will need support for reconstruction.

The role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is also very important. We commend UNAMA's many useful programmes in the areas of the peace process, reconciliation, the protection of civilians, human rights, anti-corruption, electoral reform and the boosting of trade and economic activities.

As a co-penholder with Germany on the resolution on renewing UNAMA's mandate (resolution 2543 (2020)), there is nothing more joyous than to see UNAMA's tangible contributions on the ground making a difference for common Afghans. This is where we feel that the Security Council is most successful and where people's confidence in multilateralism is reinforced.

Indonesia's support for Afghanistan will be unremitting. Whether in Afghan peace negotiations as a host-country support group, in bilateral assistance, in training or in supporting women's participation, our support will continue to be steadfast. I can attest to the fact that our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Retno Marsudi, has a special place in her heart for the well-being and progress of Afghan women and girls. This is also Indonesia's priority.

As this is Indonesia's last meeting on UNAMA in the Council, let me put on record that our co-penholdership on the Afghanistan file has been an enriching experience for us in our term as a member of the Council. We also thank Mr. Christoph Heusgen and our German colleagues, particularly Mr. Friedrich Schröder, for their close collaboration. I would personally like to thank my Deputy Political Coordinator, Kartika Handaruningrum, for taking care of this important file and for the impressive job she has done.

Finally, we have done our utmost to help the people of Afghanistan. They may rest assured that, even though we will not be in the Council next year, Indonesia will continue to be a friend of the Afghan people. Indonesia will remain fully committed to the country. The hearts of the Indonesian people are with them. To quote an old Afghan proverb: "after every cloudburst, there is sunshine; from one heart to another, there is always a way for peace, if one wishes for it". May God be with us all as we seek to find peace in Afghanistan.

**Annex XI****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Aougui Niandou**

[Original: French]

Let me begin by thanking our briefers, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons, Ambassador Djani and Ms. Zadran, for their very edifying briefings. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our condemnation of the continued attacks on civilian targets in Afghanistan, extend our condolences to the victims, their families and the Afghan people and wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

The numerous calls and commitments by the warring parties to reduce violence have not been followed up on the ground. We would like to encourage all stakeholders to recommit themselves to the voice of non-violence, which is a necessary condition for the success of the ongoing intra-Afghan talks. With regard to these talks, we hope that tangible progress will be made as soon as possible, and we look forward to the second round, which represents a crucial step for the future of Afghanistan.

However, ending the war in Afghanistan will require much more than just talks. Indeed, to ensure a full transition to peace, it is necessary to establish a solid basis for a comprehensive peace process. To that end, it is essential that all stakeholders, including the various sectors of civil society — women, youth, minorities and journalists — be included. The Niger is in favour of such inclusion, as the engagement of all parties — and their being given a meaningful place at the negotiating table — is key to the success of the discussions, and therefore to sustainable peace and development.

We must help the Afghan Government not only to promote and strengthen women's rights and those of all components of the population but also to consolidate the progress made over the last two decades, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1182). Supporting Afghanistan also means helping its Government to reform and professionalize its defence and security forces, implement mechanisms for good governance and establish a national consensus on future relations among the different groups, as suggested by the experts.

Finally, as we all know, building lasting peace always involves tackling the root causes of conflict. In that regard, we would like to stress the role that a healthy and inclusive economy plays, but also the importance of the international community's commitment to the Afghan people, particularly in mitigating the dramatic effects of the coronavirus disease and in continuing its indispensable support for the country.

**Annex XII****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We thank the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) for his briefing on the work of that subsidiary body of the Council. We also listened carefully to the briefing by the representative of Afghan civil society.

Russia has unswervingly supported UNAMA's activities. We believe the Mission plays an important role in coordinating international humanitarian assistance to the country, and we note the selfless work of United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, particularly against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic. We have closely studied the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the country (S/2020/1182) and would like to share the following observations.

The centre of attention is the peace process in Afghanistan. At the previous meeting of the Security Council on this matter in September (see S/PV.8759), we noted that there had been certain positive developments towards national reconciliation, among which was the intra-Afghan negotiations launched on 12 September in Doha, which received broad support from the international community, including Afghanistan's partners from across the region and the world.

Russia welcomed that event after the long months of discussion that had happened since the signing of the agreement between the Americans and the Taliban on 29 February. Let us not forget what preceded this development, which was a crucial moment in the history of this country: both parties ultimately agreed to make concessions and free prisoners. Over the previous three months they reached agreements on the rules of procedure for the negotiation process.

However, there is still a long way to go for there to be real progress. At this stage, we see that intra-Afghan dialogue has been delayed for three weeks — until 5 January 2021. We hope that the pause taken by the parties does not mean the process is going to grind to a halt. It is our firm conviction that all efforts now must be aimed at launching substantive negotiations, which the parties have not yet started.

Against this backdrop, we remain concerned over the security situation in Afghanistan. We are struck by the unprecedented level of violence in the country. The report of the Secretary-General shares views on the increasing number of victims among the civilian population, in particular women and children, is increasing. These assessments are indeed horrifying.

On a regular basis, the country is shaken by terrorist attacks that unfortunately have become an everyday occurrence for the Afghan people. This is evidence once again of the presence in the country of terrorist elements of various kinds. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant stands behind many of the large-scale attacks. We see that its Afghan wing has not only not ceased to work but rather, on the contrary, it continues to maintain and even increase its potential to roll out terrorist activity across neighbouring Central Asia. This is not to mention that in the country, as previously, there are still cells of foreign terrorist fighters, many of whom have received military experience in Syria and Iraq. Among the most recent

sad confirmations of that were the attack on Kabul University and missile strikes on the capital.

We also cannot be optimistic about the situation with the drug threat. There have been certain measures taken by Kabul, but we have not seen any particular progress in the fight against drugs. For the second year in a row, we are dealing with a situation where the publication of the latest report by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) has been delayed. We had hoped to hear objective assessments today of the problem from the representative of UNODC. However, as Council members know, his participation was blocked by a number of delegations. This gives rise to a question: is it possible that certain countries simply do not want to see the real and sad situation in relation to drugs in Afghanistan? We believe that attempts to silence or downplay the presence of drug and terrorist threats in Afghanistan are unacceptable.

We are convinced that there is a need for collective efforts on the part of international and regional players to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan and help facilitate the country's recovery as rapidly as possible. The Afghan people need our solidarity at this turning point. As a friend and neighbour of Afghanistan, Russia continues to work with all Afghan parties for an inclusive process of national reconciliation and to move successfully towards the signing of an intra-Afghan peace agreement. This will also be helped by our steps taken through the troika — Russia, China and the United States — plus Pakistan.

Maintaining regional consensus on the peace settlement in Afghanistan remains a priority. It is of course not a secret for anybody that partners from the region are the ones best able to play a role in helping the Afghans achieve their primary goal of putting an end to the years-long conflict and opening a new peaceful chapter in the country's history. Our common steps should be directed towards bringing Afghanistan into a stable, flourishing period as a State free from terrorism and drugs. This is also the reason for the comprehensive efforts of partners from the region within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, as well as the Moscow format for consultations.

Further progress towards intra-Afghan dialogue is directly connected to the future of the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). Extending the mandate of the Monitoring Team on the sanctions on the Taliban would allow it to continue its work and provide the Sanctions Committee with the necessary assistance. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Djani and the entire Indonesian team for the capable stewardship of the 1988 Committee and for creating a favourable working atmosphere in that subsidiary body over the past two years.

Nevertheless, we believe that resolving the issue of the sanctions review is something that must be discussed separately. It is clear that it requires a step-by-step approach and an objective view of the current situation in strict and full compliance with resolution 2513 (2020). We should recall that the result of our efforts should be peace in Afghanistan.

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**Annex XIII****Statement by the Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Isis Gonsalves**

I thank the briefers for their insightful remarks. Permit me also to extend our gratitude to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), Ambassador Djani, for his leadership of the Committee. I am also pleased to see the Afghan youth representative to the United Nations at this virtual table.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its strong support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process aimed at finding a lasting political resolution to nearly 20 years of conflict. The start of the negotiations on 12 September represents an opportunity to find sustainable peace in Afghanistan. In that regard, we appeal to the Government and the Taliban negotiating teams to remain committed to a just and inclusive political settlement that caters to the needs and interests of all Afghans, including women, youth and victims and survivors of the war. All stakeholders must be involved in the trust and reconciliation process to create an environment conducive to ending decades of conflict. We look forward to the resumption of the intra-Afghan talks in January following the 20-day recess.

My delegation remains deeply concerned about the continuing high level of violence, particularly in the south. Our primary goal should continue to be the prevention of violence and the condemnation of terrorist attacks. The recent attack that claimed the lives of 13 police officers offers a stark reminder of the human costs of war. For the civilian population, which continues to bear the brunt of the conflict, an end to the hostilities will provide much-needed hope. Consequently, we reiterate the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and the immediate reduction of violence. It is critical that the Afghan Government and the Taliban enhance their cooperation and negotiation efforts, with a view to promoting sustainable and durable peace in Afghanistan.

The economic, environmental and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan necessitates urgent action and sustained attention from the international community. It is vital that climate-fragility risks be considered in the creation and implementation of policies, including those aimed at creating peace and stability in Afghanistan. The ongoing violence, natural disasters, heightened levels of food insecurity, and the coronavirus disease pandemic threaten the lives of millions of people.

We welcome the outcomes of the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, and we encourage all international donors to honour their commitments to supporting Afghanistan's peace, prosperity and self-reliance. Improved development cooperation, enhanced trade and investment and expanded economic opportunities for all Afghans are critical for lasting peace.

In conclusion, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms our commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for its continued support to the Government and people of Afghanistan.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

I thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons, Ms. Shkula Zadran and my colleague Ambassador Djani of Indonesia for their briefings. I would also like in particular to welcome and thank Ms. Shkula Zadran, Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations, for her presentation.

I will focus my remarks on the following three areas: the peace situation, the security situation and the humanitarian situation.

With regard to the peace process, let me begin by welcoming the launch of the Afghan peace negotiations in September and the ongoing discussions. The agreement reached by the parties on rules of procedures for the negotiations is a welcome and important step in the right direction. South Africa urges all the parties to continue to build on that momentum and engage constructively towards a just, durable and inclusive peace. More important, South Africa urges that the peace process be Afghan-led and -owned and include all Afghans.

The progress and gains made in the rights of women and girls needs to be preserved. As Ms. Zadran demonstrated to us today, the women and youth of Afghanistan have a meaningful role to play and a real and existential stake in the future of Afghanistan — both in terms of its peace process and in mapping its reconstruction and development trajectory.

On the security situation, regrettably, the soaring rates of violence and related high civilian casualties jeopardize Afghanistan's prospects for peace and are of great concern to South Africa. The Secretary-General has stated that "the armed conflict in Afghanistan remains the deadliest conflict in the world for children". It is important, therefore, that all parties cease their hostilities. The men, women and children of Afghanistan deserve peace and a life of fulfilment.

Sustainable peace requires active dialogue and negotiation, which, in turn, require a peaceful environment in order to thrive. For Afghan peace talks to be effective, all parties must cease their violence and hostilities in order to create an environment conducive to meaningful progress. In that regard, South Africa calls on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In addition, all those responsible for grave violations in Afghanistan — particularly against children, women and the most vulnerable — should be brought to justice and held accountable, including through timely, systematic, impartial and independent investigations and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction.

On the humanitarian situation, a day or two ago we were informed of the worsening humanitarian situation in Afghanistan by the Acting Assistant-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. It goes without saying that the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate change and the protracted conflict, which has lasted over a decade, have all contributed to this dire situation. Mindful of the magnitude and complexity of the necessary measures, South Africa commends the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for their dedicated efforts to attend to all who require assistance.

In conclusion, and noting that this will be South Africa's last meeting on the situation in Afghanistan as an elected Council member, let me take this opportunity to extend my appreciation and gratitude to Special Representative Lyons and the personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their dedication and commitment to the execution of its mandate. The Mission's work to

facilitate dialogue with various stakeholders, including civil society groups, and its efforts to support conflict resolution and peacebuilding remain critical in uniting all Afghans towards a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the Afghan conflict.

I thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia and his team for their tireless efforts to contribute to creating a conducive environment for peace in Afghanistan, and I convey our best wishes to the incoming Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

I also thank Ms. Zadran for her role in Afghanistan and reassure her that South Africa has faith in the youth and believes in their ability to contribute to peaceful negotiations and building a fair, equitable and inclusive society. We are convinced that a better future for Afghans is on the horizon.



**Annex XV****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Dian Triansyah Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and Ms. Shkula Zadran, Afghanistan's Youth Representative to the United Nations, for their briefings.

Tunisia reiterates its full support for the peace process in Afghanistan and its solidarity with the Government and the people of Afghanistan. We welcome the start of the negotiations between the Government and the Taliban in Doha, on 12 September, as well as the agreement reached by the two parties, on 2 December, on rules of procedure for the negotiations. We hope that the discussions on substantive matters can begin soon.

We would also like to renew our appreciation for the continuing support of all Afghanistan's neighbours and the international community, as a whole, in favour of the Afghan peace process. That support is crucial for achieving long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

We remain deeply concerned about the continuing high level of violence and the security situation in Afghanistan. While we sincerely hope that the current peace process will rapidly bring security, stability and prosperity to the Afghan people, we fear that the recent attacks attributed to the Taliban, which resulted in numerous casualties among Afghan forces — including 13 police officers just yesterday — and the civilian population could seriously complicate the negotiations. We reaffirm that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, and again stress the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, in line with the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2543 (2020).

At a time when priority should continue to be given to responding to the coronavirus disease pandemic, the very high number of civilian victims in Afghanistan, especially among women and children, continues to be a source of great concern. We stress the need for all parties to take the necessary measures to prevent civilian casualties. We underline the importance of investigating all allegations of violations in Afghanistan of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and of holding perpetrators accountable.

We are particularly troubled by the targeting of civil society and media organizations, which has killed many, including, most recently, the journalist and women and children's rights defender Malalai Maiwand, who was murdered earlier this month.

Such despicable attacks further raise the concerns expressed by many in and outside Afghanistan — that peace might come at the cost of freedoms and rights. More efforts should therefore be made to combat all terrorist groups still active in Afghanistan by targeting their operational and financial capabilities. In that regard, we share the view that the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces should continue to be fully supported and that more efforts should be made to fight drug trafficking, which continues to fuel the illicit economy and finance terrorist groups.

We also stress the need for the Government of Afghanistan, the countries of the region and the international community to continue their cooperation to counter all unlawful acts of violence and terrorist attacks. For its part, the Taliban should

put an end to its attacks, honour its counter-terrorism commitments and negotiate in good faith with the Government of Afghanistan.

Today we would like to underline again the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led and -owned peace process, with the meaningful participation of women and youth, in order to achieve sustainable peace. Accordingly, we believe that any future political agreement should include clear guarantees to protect and promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of all in Afghanistan, with a particular focus on women's rights.

We also believe that the peace process should be accompanied by an ambitious international effort to assist Afghanistan at the economic and social levels. In that connection, we welcome the adoption of the Afghanistan Partnership Framework at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, held in Geneva on 23 and 24 November. The conference confirmed the commitment of international partners to continue supporting Afghanistan.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge the important accomplishments of UNAMA. We believe it will have an even bigger role to play in the coming period. In that regard, we welcome the unanimous adoption, on 15 September, of resolution 2543 (2020), which extended the Mission's mandate until 17 September 2021.

**Annex XVI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Lyons and Ambassador Djani, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), for their briefings. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Zadran and to thank her for her powerful statement and clear call for a peaceful future for the youth of Afghanistan.

On 12 September, the Afghan people took a significant step on the road to peace, with the start of the Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha. We welcome the commitment the two negotiating teams have shown so far, culminating in their agreement, on 2 December, on the rules and procedures for the talks. It is vital that the negotiations resume swiftly on 5 January.

I would like to emphasize three points today.

First, we must be prepared for a long and challenging process ahead. When the talks resume on 5 January, the parties will start negotiating on substance for the first time. In many cases, the distance between the two sides' positions may seem unbridgeable. There will be setbacks before there are breakthroughs. That is normal and probably necessary. A successful outcome will require a long, challenging process of building trust, finding common ground and compromising. International partners will also need to show commitment and patience in the process. The United Kingdom, for its part, stands ready to offer support.

Secondly, even if a final settlement takes time, Afghans should start to see the tangible benefits now. Yet, as we have heard many times today, appalling levels of violence continue to blight the lives of Afghans. And let us be clear — the Taliban is responsible for the majority of that violence, which not only results in loss of life but also undermines confidence in the negotiations. The Taliban claim to want a part in Afghanistan's future and the international community, and demand relief from United Nations sanctions. That requires substantive progress in peace negotiations, an end to violence and a complete and permanent break from terrorism, including from Al-Qaida.

Thirdly, the outcome of the Afghanistan peace negotiations is for Afghans themselves to decide. But the parties, and especially the Taliban, must recognize that Afghanistan is not the place it was 20 years ago.

To be sustainable, a peaceful settlement will need to be inclusive and preserve the rights and freedoms of all Afghans, including women and minorities. To maintain international support, the new Afghanistan will need to adhere to its treaty obligations, including those concerning human rights. And to reach a settlement that achieves those ends, the process will need to be inclusive and broad.

For my part, I look forward to supporting women's participation in the process in my new role co-chairing the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan alongside Ambassador Raz.

In Geneva last month, the international community reaffirmed its support to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom pledged up to \$207 million in development assistance for 2021. The Afghan Government, for its part, renewed its commitments, as set out in the new Afghanistan Partnership Framework. Together, the commitments made last month can help strengthen Afghan institutions and the Government's ability to support its citizens — tasks that are vital even as peace talks unfold.

Today Afghanistan stands a step closer to being at peace with itself and its neighbours, being free from conflict and terrorism, and being able to protect the rights and freedoms of all Afghans. We should redouble our collective efforts to make that a reality.

**Annex XVII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Kelly Craft**

It is always such a treat to be able to see Special Representative Lyons. I thank her for her briefing and her leadership role in guiding the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in support of peace, human rights and development in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Djani for chairing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) over the past two years. I also thank all the Council members for all their hard work. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Zadran for bringing the Council into the digital age as she uses social media to engage with young Afghans so that they can participate in building a future for themselves in Afghanistan.

Sadly, in continuation of what we heard during our previous meeting on this item (see S/PV.8759), the people of Afghanistan continue to face terrible violence. The rocket attack on 21 November, which killed eight people and wounded over 30 near Kabul's Green Zone, is one of the latest crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams. The last few months have also seen barbaric attacks on educational institutions. It is time for the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban and all Afghans to band together against this group.

We also strongly condemn targeted and unlawful attacks on media representatives, religious leaders, human rights defenders, students and civilians. It is an outrage that women leaders, such as reporter and activist Malalai Maiwand, who was gunned down last week, and Mayor Zarifa Ghafari, who survived multiple assassination attempts and then lost her father to assassins, are being targeted.

Afghan Government officials also continue to be prime targets, with the senseless assassination on Tuesday of the Deputy Governor of Kabul and the deputy head of the Ghor provincial council.

That violence must stop. This concerning pattern of violence gives the utmost urgency to the need for a comprehensive ceasefire as a critical step towards peace for the Afghan people. An immediate reduction in violence will also help the peace process advance and is what the people of Afghanistan yearn for.

The recent finalization of rules and procedures was a significant step forward and demonstrates that the two sides are capable of tackling difficult topics. The first meeting of the leadership committee of the High Council for National Reconciliation was a second significant and positive development in recent weeks.

We cannot afford to lose momentum, however, while the parties consult on a proposed agenda. We urge the parties to resume talks on 5 January as agreed, to deny spoilers any opportunity to slow the process and to accelerate their peace efforts and end the country's long war.

Earlier this year, the Council adopted resolution 2513 (2020), endorsing the United States-Taliban agreement, which outlines the prospective timeline for United States forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan. United States reductions in posture remain conditions-based per the agreement and will continue to be implemented after consultation with the United States Congress and in coordination with our NATO allies and partners.

Meanwhile, United States efforts to stabilize Afghanistan continue through our support to Afghan security forces and our delivery of critical aid to the Afghan people. As a sign of our commitment, the United States pledged \$300 million in civilian assistance for 2021 during the 2020 donors' conference, with another

\$300 million available depending on progress in the peace process. That pledge comes with continuing calls for progress on economic reforms, anti-corruption efforts and human rights.

We welcome the discussion at the conference of the voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of refugees. We call on Afghanistan to follow through on its plans to support returning refugees, including by allocating land and providing identity documents. Over the last year, the Trump Administration has provided nearly \$277 million in humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons and returnees in Afghanistan, and for Afghan refugees in the region.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's humanitarian needs are still growing at an alarming pace, with a record 18.4 million people in the country likely to require humanitarian assistance in 2021 — nearly double the number a year earlier. Nearly half of Afghanistan's children under 5 face acute malnutrition.

This discussion is an important opportunity to keep the international community focused on what lies ahead and on the need to increase funding for life-saving humanitarian aid in Afghanistan as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continues to provide crucial assistance to displaced and returning Afghans.

The United States has also provided more than \$33 million for the coronavirus disease response in Afghanistan. The pandemic has only exacerbated the challenges facing vulnerable groups.

We also remain deeply concerned by the continued exploitation of children in Afghanistan, including through the practice of sexual abuse known as bacha bazi and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Impunity is a major challenge to ending those harmful practices. The United States is committed to supporting the Afghan Government and civil society in their efforts to hold perpetrators accountable and protect and support victims.

All Afghans, including those negotiating peace, must recognize and respect the universal human rights of people belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups in their country, whether they be women, children or members of ethnic and religious minority groups.

A sincere commitment to inclusion is the foundation for future peace and stability. In that regard, there is a need for continuing efforts by the United Nations and other international partners to strengthen Afghan civil society in order to create a foundation for successful peace talks and democratic institutions so Afghanistan can move forward.

I thank Ambassador Djani once again for having brought this forward.

**Annex XVIII****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General; Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011); and Ms. Shkula Zadran for their statements.

Viet Nam commends their efforts and reiterates its support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in this challenging time of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I also warmly welcome Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and Ambassador Majid Ravanchi, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to this meeting.

The year 2020 marks the beginning of the historic intra-Afghan peace negotiations, which open a pathway for the pursuit of long-term peace and stability in the country. I would like to reaffirm Viet Nam's support for the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process and the full implementation of resolution 2513 (2020).

We are pleased that the Afghan parties agreed on 2 December to a code of conduct that will act as guidance for negotiations on specific issues. We commend the consistent efforts of the Government of Afghanistan in promoting the peace process, including its commitment to ensuring the participation of women and youth in that process.

While significant progress has been made, sustainable peace and development are still far from being guaranteed. We are concerned about the recent increase in the level of violence and of civilian casualties, including among women and children. We strongly condemn the ongoing attacks on civilians and civilian objects. It is tragic to hear about the loss of the lives of young students, health-care workers and journalists in the past few weeks.

Furthermore, the Government and the people of Afghanistan continue to face tremendous challenges in the socioeconomic sphere. In the light of recent developments, I wish to make the following three points.

First, we call on the Afghan parties to find a common understanding in order to achieve a permanent ceasefire, thereby putting an end to the ongoing violence. The intra-Afghan peace negotiations require a stable and conducive environment in order to succeed and achieve a lasting political solution. The continued support of the United Nations, UNAMA, the countries of the region and other international partners will be crucial to maintaining the momentum of the peace talks. We also welcome and encourage further efforts to facilitate the meaningful participation of women and youth in the peace process and the reconstruction of the country. The bright younger generation of Afghanistan, such as Ms. Zadran, represents the hope and future of the nation.

Secondly, we once again urge all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, immediately stop targeting civilians and civilian objects and allow unhindered access to humanitarian services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Strengthened efforts are also needed to combat the increasing presence of terrorist groups in the country. We also commend the efforts of UNAMA and the United Nations Mine Action Service in addressing the humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan in past months.



Thirdly, long-term peace and stability also require robust development and sustainable livelihoods for the people. In that regard, the Government and international partners should continue to work together in promoting economic development and the reconstruction of Afghanistan, as well as in addressing pressing issues such as food insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, crime and drug trafficking.

We are concerned that 11.15 million people, more than one third of the country's population, are facing high levels of food insecurity. That number could rise to 13.15 million during the winter period of December 2020 to March 2021. We welcome the successful outcome of the 2020 Afghanistan Conference held in Geneva last month, at which international partners pledged more than \$12 billion in aid for the country in the next four years. We call on the international community to continue to strengthen its humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in that regard to ensure its projected needs.

Before concluding, I would like to express our appreciation to Indonesia and Germany, the co-penholders on Afghanistan, for their tireless efforts during the past two years. I also congratulate Ambassador Djani on his successful chairmanship of the 1988 Committee.

**Annex XIX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

Iran and Afghanistan enjoy common religious, cultural, linguistic and historical backgrounds, and our stability, sociocultural development and economic growth are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. As our President stated very recently, we consider Afghanistan's stability as our own stability.

Afghanistan's decades-long insecurity and instability can end only through a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process involving all Afghan factions, including the Taliban, supported by neighbouring, regional and international partners.

The peace process must preserve and promote past achievements, particularly the present Constitution, the right of the people to self-determination through elections and the right of ethnic and religious minorities and women, as well as the commitment to combating terrorism.

However, as peace and violence cannot go hand in hand, to reciprocate the goodwill of Afghanistan's Government in the peace talks, the Taliban must halt its attacks against Afghan defence and security forces.

We support the peace talks and believe that their successful conclusion requires flexibility and patience by all sides, placing the interests of the people of Afghanistan above all other interests.

As we stated to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons during her recent visit to Tehran, Iran continues to call for a further engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and stands ready, in coordination with the United Nations, to further contribute to that process.

Afghanistan's security situation remains a source of concern owing particularly to the terrorist acts perpetrated, including by Da'esh, whose presence poses a serious threat to the security of Afghanistan and of the region.

As a manifestation of external interference, the presence of foreign forces is another source of Afghanistan's instability. However, as many countries have stressed, their withdrawal must be orderly and responsible and must not lead to a security vacuum in Afghanistan. Accordingly, prior and simultaneous to the withdrawal of foreign forces, Afghanistan's military and security forces must be supported and strengthened.

Likewise, effective assistance must be extended to Afghanistan in combating the illicit production of, and trafficking in, narcotic drugs as a source of financing terrorism and other crimes.

A durable peace in Afghanistan cannot be established without promoting its economic conditions, which requires strong regional and international support.

For our part, in addition to hosting more than 3 million Afghans despite facing the savage United States economic war, we have promoted economic cooperation with Afghanistan. Linking that landlocked country to the high seas and other countries through Iran's Chabahar port is a prominent example of close partnership between the two countries.

Just last week, we inaugurated the Khaf-Herat railway, which connects Afghanistan's railway to Europe through Iran. The Presidents of both countries called the inauguration of that project a historical event, further strengthening bilateral and

regional economic cooperation, thus enhancing the foundations of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to contributing to a more secure and prosperous Afghanistan through further enhancing relations between two fraternal nations.

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