



# Security Council

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## Letter dated 29 June 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; Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Afghanistan”, held on Thursday, 25 June 2020.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to 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, the briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Nicolas **de Rivière**  
President of the Security Council



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

I am delighted to address the Council today from Kabul. It is truly an honour to serve as the Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I assumed my duties at an important — some even say historic — moment in Afghanistan.

During my first months on the job, I engaged with a range of interlocutors from across the political spectrum and from civil society. They all delivered one clear message: Afghanistan now has the unique opportunity to turn the corner to a brighter, more stable future after four decades of war. Many stand ready to support them. And yet, as we all know, this moment of emerging hope comes at a time of an unprecedented global pandemic that threatens to unravel many of the hard-won socioeconomic gains.

Afghanistan has made immense progress in recent years. I am deeply impressed by the strength and courage of the country's youth. I met many inspiring young people during my three years as an ambassador for Canada, and I am delighted to reconnect with many of them in their new positions as Government and civil society leaders. We are privileged to be hearing from two of them today — Ambassador Raz, who has already made her mark in New York, and Ms. Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, with whom I had the honour recently to lead a panel on women's involvement in the peace efforts. Both Ambassador Raz and Chairperson Akbar are part of this new generation committed to creating a peaceful and self-reliant country, respectful of human rights for all. Inspired by what I see, I am further committed to using my voice and platform to champion them, to promote human rights and women's rights and to put those rights at the core of our work in Afghanistan.

Another important gain made in recent years that is particularly tangible is Afghanistan's free and vibrant media sector. Afghanistan is considered one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. Yet they persist in their essential work of holding those with authority accountable. They too are inspiring.

Afghanistan has also made significant strides in improving the living conditions of many of its citizens over the past two decades. Maternal mortality was reduced by 66 per cent over a 15-year period, and child mortality decreased by half. The expansion in coverage of public-health facilities nearly doubled during that same period. There has been progress. These facts are incontrovertible.

However, I am also fully cognizant that this progress was hard-won and remains fragile. Too many Afghans still face daily struggles for survival. And when it comes to civilian casualties, Afghanistan remains one of the deadliest conflicts in the world. The United States-Taliban agreement and subsequent reductions of violence have given only brief respites from the all-too-familiar carnage. Particularly egregious were the recent deliberate attacks against health-care facilities, at a time when all people and all resources need to be focused on combating the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The recent 12 May attack against a maternity ward in western Kabul was particularly outrageous and established a new low. That was truly a moment when new life was taken from the womb. The perpetrators must be found and held accountable.

I am also deeply concerned about the ongoing threat to civilians posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province. That was again demonstrated

by the recent suicide attack in Nangarhar province at a funeral ceremony, which resulted in at least 29 civilians killed and many more injured.

Afghanistan also remains the deadliest conflict in the world for children. Last year alone, 874 children lost their lives as a result of the conflict, and many more were injured. It grieves me to say that the number of children out of school has not dropped. Instead, it rose over the past eight years. If there ever was a call to prayer for peace, surely it would echo the voices of those children.

Like so many countries, Afghanistan continues to be plagued by corruption, which corrodes the confidence of the population and the donor community and fuels the ongoing conflict. In spite of progress made in previous years in anti-corruption reforms, that progress slowed in the past year, with key institutional reforms being neglected, including the establishment of an all-too-important independent anti-corruption commission. The apparent impunity of well-connected political figures remains a major issue. Additional progress in the fight against corruption is therefore crucial as the 2020 pledging conference on Afghanistan approaches.

More than ever, these compounding challenges facing the country, including the COVID-19 health and humanitarian crises, require determined and united leadership. In that context, I welcome the political agreement reached between President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah, which shows their determination and resolve to place the nation first. In that spirit of cooperation, I expect to hear in the next few days the announcement of a representative Cabinet and the formation of inclusive peace structures.

Despite those manifold challenges, this is the time for continued and concerted support for Afghanistan. As we pass the midpoint of Afghanistan's transformation decade, we enter what could be the most transformative phase as the two parties to the peace talks move towards a new and lasting political settlement that must build on the gains of the past and set the foundation for a more prosperous future.

I am cautiously optimistic that the talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban negotiation teams will indeed start in the next few weeks in Doha, during the month of July. As the two sides embark on what will likely be a long and complex series of talks, I have encouraged them to show the necessary flexibility and foresight, the commitment to peace and, most important, enough compassion for their people to bring those negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The formal announcement of a three-day ceasefire for Eid Al-Fitr by the Taliban and the Government led to a welcome and much-needed reduction of violence, which, as the Council knows, is essential to ensuring an environment conducive to peace talks and to paving the way for an eventual permanent ceasefire. But the recent spiralling levels of violence threaten that process. So, at this point, it is incumbent on all countries that support peace to use their influence and call for a reduction in violence.

On a more positive note, I want to highlight the commitment shown by both sides in the recent challenging issue of prisoner releases. This is an important confidence-building measure that has created momentum towards negotiations. As I speak, we are in the final stages, and it is noteworthy that both sides have agreed that talks could start within a week of the completion of the prisoner releases. However, that must go hand in hand with a reduction in violence.

I would like to recognize the Governments of the United States, Qatar and a number of other regional partners for their efforts in bringing the parties to this point. We all look forward to the formal commencement of negotiations. The United Nations stands ready to support these direct talks, as necessary, and I have been in

discussion with both sides to identify and address their needs going forward. We are now working very closely with a number of countries to build a support network for the talks and for the parties, as needed.

As we know, the best chance for a durable settlement rests on broad consensus reflecting the aspirations and concerns of all citizens. We understand that both sides have now reached out to various constituencies to seek their views on peace. It is indeed crucial to develop inclusive structures for peace talks that allow the meaningful participation of women, youth, minorities and victims of war. It is important that the rights of victims be addressed during negotiations and that reconciliation strategies be considered.

Allow me to highlight another encouraging indicator for peace. I am seeing and hearing strong resolve from countries of the region to support Afghanistan in its quest towards a peaceful settlement. The region's active engagement with, and support of, the peace process will be essential. Both the Afghan people and the region as a whole have much to gain from peace and stability. I have already held a series of engagements with partners from the region and beyond, and I am confident that together we will foster a constructive atmosphere for the advancement of the peace process. Support from the region is also available to advance strong economic and trade cooperation and connectivity as Afghanistan moves into a new period of stabilization and towards greater self-reliance.

While peace materializes on the horizon, COVID-19 is casting a huge shadow over Afghan daily life. Under the leadership of the Afghan Government, the United Nations is supporting a coordinated response to fight this epidemic. That includes the establishment of a network of laboratories across the country and the provision of personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Public Health for health-care providers.

Sadly, as in most crises, women and girls are disproportionately impacted. Lockdowns further limit their mobility and increase the risk of domestic violence. The United Nations and its partners continue to provide services to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and support reproductive health care.

In the light of the scale of the crisis and the crippling economic consequences, the humanitarian response plan has been updated to incorporate the COVID-19 requirements for 2020, reflecting the increased number of people in need. In total, humanitarian partners require \$1.1 billion to provide immediate humanitarian assistance. I appreciate the contributions already received and count on the continued generosity of the international community to enable us to pursue this essential response with the Afghan Government.

The socioeconomic impact of weeks of lockdown, reduced economic activity and loss of remittances will be deep and long-lasting. Afghanistan faces the daunting challenge of seeking continued international financial support at a time of unprecedented financial uncertainty, including in many of the traditional donor capitals. Therefore, we are working in close partnership with the Governments of Afghanistan and Finland to prepare for the upcoming pledging conference and to build support for ensuring sustainable resources for Afghanistan's future. That conference and the peace talks should be mutually reinforcing. I call for the robust engagement of all stakeholders in preparing for the conference so that we can help Afghanistan bring the gains of the past into the future on this new peace landscape.

However, the global pandemic also poses unique challenges for our own operational posture and has limited our ability to fully deliver on our mandate. We have therefore adopted a range of measures to safeguard the health and well-being of our staff while sustaining the delivery of critical programmes and activities

throughout the country. That of course includes redoubling peace negotiations efforts, intensifying efforts to support the Afghan Government in its COVID-19 response and continuing our leading human rights activities. Nevertheless, national lockdowns and disruptions to international travel have affected many of our colleagues. I am very grateful to the Governments that facilitated the rotational movement of critical staff and recently supported us with medical evacuations. Put simply, they helped us save lives.

In conclusion, I reiterate that COVID-19 is not just a health crisis, it is a multidimensional crisis impacting an already fragile country. By working together, we can overcome COVID-19 and support Afghanistan at the beginning of its nascent peace process so that its people can finally achieve the lasting peace they deserve.

The United Nations will continue to stand in partnership with the Afghan people in this time of unprecedented challenge and fragile hope. I am honoured to be part of the ongoing support efforts in the crucial months ahead. The Afghan people will look to the Council for guidance, support and unity as they chart their way forward on their long road to peace.

**Annex II****Statement by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ghada Fathi Waly**

[Original: English and French]

It is indeed an honour to join the Council today, and I thank the presidency of France for this opportunity to brief the Security Council. I welcome this important opportunity to share with the Council the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that promote stability in our partner country Afghanistan.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has laid bare the fragility of our systems and institutions everywhere in the world, exposing stark disparities in social protection. For Afghanistan, the pandemic — compounding the current conflict, hunger, droughts and floods — is a burden too terrible to bear. Illicit drugs threaten to further compound those challenges.

Earlier today here in Vienna, I issued the UNODC *World Drug Report 2020*. The findings are sobering. Afghanistan remains the world's biggest producer of opium, and production remains at record levels. Despite significant decreases in cultivation, which dropped by 38 per cent to 163,000 hectares last year, at 6,400 tons, production remained roughly at the same level as it was previously owing to high opium yields.

The evidence so far suggests that opium poppy cultivation and drug trafficking have continued unabated despite COVID-19 and related travel restrictions. Labour shortfalls observed at the start of the harvest in the western and southern provinces were quickly addressed by engaging women living in poppy-growing households to lance the opium-poppy crop.

The farmers compelled by poverty to grow opium poppy have seen their precarious incomes decline further, as the farm-gate value of opium production plunged by 33 per cent for the second consecutive year. The 33 per cent decrease follows a similar drop in opium prices, which are at the lowest level since systematic monitoring began, reflecting abundant supply. The illicit opiate economy is expected to continue fuelling instability and insurgency as well as funding terrorist groups.

The availability of trafficked weapons, which supports the drug trade and terrorism in the country and the subregion, is making matters much worse. One in three households in Afghanistan has been affected by drug use, and up to 850,000 women are estimated to use drugs. At the same time, the availability of evidence-based drug-use prevention remains limited. There are 107 drug treatment centres in the country, including nine for women and children, with limited capacity for outpatient and outreach programmes, or for longer-term recovery support. Due to funding shortages and the conclusion of an UNODC project, five of the nine treatment centres for women and children, in five provinces, were forced to close this year. This is extremely concerning as amphetamine-type stimulants have emerged as a serious problem.

While opium and opioids remain the most frequently used substances, use of methamphetamine is now being reported in nearly all provinces. Large-scale manufacturing of methamphetamine is emerging in Afghanistan. Seizures in and outside the country also confirm the scale of this new threat. Only four grams of methamphetamine were seized in Afghanistan in 2008, while in 2019 total seizures reached 1.25 tons.

The challenges I have briefly outlined are immense, and it will take the political will of Afghanistan, cooperation with its neighbours and the support of the international community to find lasting solutions. I would like to acknowledge the

efforts undertaken by Afghan law enforcement authorities to contain the trafficking threat, including through the mobile detection teams and precursor control units created with UNODC support. UNODC also helped to establish airport interdiction units, which assisted a controlled delivery operation that resulted in the seizure of seven kilograms of heroin. A follow-up investigation in India led to the seizure of 300 kilograms of heroin.

Similar successes have been achieved through the port control units established under the global Container Control Programme of the World Customs Organization and UNODC. This demonstrates how a small seizure can trigger bigger operational successes if the advanced investigative techniques that UNODC promotes can be deployed. The question for the future remains: how we can scale up such success stories and have a real impact?

The same holds true for UNODC alternative development initiatives, which we are pursuing in 66 of 407 districts. In the last two years, we have helped to create over 18,000 new jobs, including 7,600 for women, and nearly 2,000 hectares of agricultural land have been brought under licit cultivation. Nevertheless, these efforts to create sustainable licit incomes face serious constraints, as many opium-growing areas remain outside the influence of the Government.

The COVID-19 crisis has heightened many risks and vulnerabilities and could further drive illicit opium-poppy cultivation if we cannot take urgent action. First and foremost, we need to ensure that counter-narcotics policies are situated in broader development and security strategies, that such action is sustainably resourced by donors and reinforced by regional cooperation, and that it is tailored to meet emerging threats.

UNODC stands ready to expand alternative development initiatives as the security situation and resources allow, and I would like to highlight the contribution alternative development can make in putting women and girls at the centre of the COVID-19-response and recovery efforts, as called for in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/549). Our Office is ready to step up the integrated support we offer to Afghanistan to prevent and tackle drug trafficking and related organized crime and corruption, including in addressing illicit firearms, money laundering and financing of terrorism. I also appeal to the international community for increased support to help Afghanistan provide evidence-based prevention, treatment and other services for drug use and related diseases, in line with global commitments.

Political will and donor support in Afghanistan must be matched with renewed investment in regional cooperation. UNODC supports several regional initiatives and mechanisms and urges Afghanistan and its neighbours to make best use of them to strengthen regional action. I hope we can rely on the support of Security Council members to help us reinvigorate regional cooperation.

Finally, in scaling up and sustaining assistance to Afghanistan to address both supply and demand, our action must be tailored to address the emerging threat of synthetic drugs, which poses new dangers to the country, the region and the world at large. I would like to thank President Ashraf Ghani for his attention to the importance of counter-narcotics for the future of Afghanistan, and I welcome his decision to establish and personally chair the High Commission for Counter-Narcotics and Intoxicants.

I offer UNODC's full support through our integrated country, regional and interregional approach, and I urge the authorities to ensure that counter-narcotic operations will continue throughout the peace process. In this way, they will be contributing to the achievement of a durable peace. UNODC stands with the people of Afghanistan, and I am committed to working with all our partners to forge new paths of cooperation so as to help Afghanistan build back better.

**Annex III****Statement by the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Shaharзад Akbar**

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council. I would like to thank France, as President of the Council this month, for inviting me to share my perspectives on human rights in Afghanistan and on the Afghan peace process.

The response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected human rights around the world. In Afghanistan, the pandemic has made several segments of the population more vulnerable, including the poor and daily wagers, women and children, detainees, people with disabilities and the elderly, and has led to concerns about increasing poverty. Aware of the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on human rights, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has adapted measures to enable us to continue monitoring and following up on violations of the human rights of women, advocating for children's access to vaccination and education, monitoring detainees' right to health and safety, calling for transparency, access to information, the right to protest and freedom from restraint by police, and actively participating in the provincial COVID-19 response committees in different parts of Afghanistan with a view to informing local Government authorities about human rights aspects of response measures.

As Afghanistan faces the challenge of tackling the pandemic, the conflict rages on, despite repeated calls for a comprehensive ceasefire, taking a huge toll on the population with alarming number of civilian casualties and a worrisome trend of targeted assassinations. This conflict has raged in various guises for over 40 years.

Today Afghans continue to suffer death or serious harm through a variety of types of violence including, but not limited to, suicide attacks, air strikes and night raids. Civilians experience violence while praying in mosques and gurdwaras, while at work, in farms, factories or at the office, while travelling to visit relatives or on the way to work, or while studying in primary and secondary schools in preparation for a better future. Mothers have been targeted by gunmen while giving birth.

I want to draw attention to the extraordinary levels of violence civilians face, and the extraordinary degree to which civilians continue to be harmed. The peace process must begin with recognition of the degree of harm and suffering civilians face, and we must all work to bring about a comprehensive ceasefire as quickly as possible.

Aware of the devastating impact of the conflict on human rights, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has called for a comprehensive ceasefire, launched our "put down the guns" campaign and welcomed steps to enable intra-Afghan negotiations. As an impartial, independent entity mandated to protect the rights of all Afghans, the Commission wants to play a clear role in the peace process in order to enable us to provide expert input into the discussions about human rights for both negotiating sides, namely, the Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, and to monitor respect for human rights in various stages of the process.

The Commission's work and advocacy on the peace process focuses on contributing to an inclusive process, a durable outcome and mechanisms for the preservation and expansion of human rights. The Commission and the broader Afghan civil society and public are calling for transparency, victim-centred justice, accountability and the meaningful inclusion of women and minorities in the process. We are also calling for specific measures acknowledging the voice and rights of victims to be endorsed by both sides.



To this end, the Commission has raised the issue of victims' rights and accountability in relation to prisoner exchange, is continuously engaging with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's negotiation team, has reached out to the Taliban on human rights issues and has put forward four concrete mechanisms to enable broader public participation in the peace process. The mechanisms for the consideration of both negotiating teams include victims' testimonies, ongoing consultation with a select reference group of civil society and human rights activists, the negotiation teams' openness to receiving specific proposals and expertise, and nationwide consultation and outreach on human rights and victims' issues. The aim of these mechanisms is to bring the issue of victim-centred justice to the fore, which we believe is essential for achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Afghans have long suffered from the conflict, and the country's progress and prosperity has been paralysed by the ongoing war, which has impeded our potential to be a peaceful and contributing member of the global community. Like many Afghans, I experienced war and migration as a child, and I am now raising my son in a war-torn country. In the past 19 years, Afghans have made strides in our struggle to secure the basic human rights involved in leading dignified lives as equal citizens who can hold their Government accountable. Much remains to be accomplished, and the progress has been uneven. However, peace should provide an opportunity for expansion of access to human rights and should not lead to backsliding.

To end the conflict in Afghanistan, we have a much-needed sense of urgency, but we also need to acknowledge that only an inclusive process with human rights at its heart can lead to lasting peace and prevent a return to conflict. Any compromise on the basic human rights of Afghans will not lead to peace. To achieve lasting peace, we will need the United Nations and the global human rights community to stand with Afghans to stop the violence, preserve human rights — particularly the rights of women and minorities — and ensure that the voices of victims will be heard and that their demands will not be overlooked.

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

I too want to welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons to the Security Council. We congratulate her on taking up her post; she can count on our full support. We also thank Ms. Waly and Ms. Akbar for their informative briefings.

We welcome the political agreement in Kabul. This needs to pave the way, without delay, to the formation of a fully-fledged Government and to intra-Afghan negotiations. Confidence-building measures, such as prisoner releases, are useful tools for building trust between parties. However, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was, and is not, party to the United States-Taliban agreement.

Ideally, a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire accompanies the start of negotiations. At the very least, it should be the outcome of those talks. I reiterate the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women of diverse backgrounds in peace talks. Current female participation should be scaled up, and any future agreement must guarantee the rights of women and girls.

While the Eid Al-Fitr ceasefire was a welcome development, the civilian toll of the conflict remains staggering. We call on all sides to immediately address this unacceptable suffering. I stress the importance of accountability and for bringing those responsible to justice. We take note of the opening of an investigation by the International Criminal Court. Moreover, resolution 2513 (2020) clearly stipulates the start of intra-Afghan negotiations and violence reduction by the Taliban as conditions for any review of listings under the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

We sincerely regret the continued deliberate attacks on health-care personnel and facilities, particularly during the coronavirus disease crisis, as reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. These attacks violate international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. On 12 May, it became tragically clear that in Afghanistan even newborns are not spared the horrors of war. We call upon the Government to conduct a thorough investigation into the attack on the Kabul maternity hospital and to hold the perpetrators to account. Sadly, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières suspended its operations there out of fear of further violence.

The conflict in Afghanistan is the world's deadliest for children, who are nevertheless granted special protection under international humanitarian law. We are deeply concerned at the scale and severity of grave violations of children's rights in the country and thank all delegations for unanimously adopting conclusions on children and armed conflict. We urge all parties to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Belgium reaffirms its steadfast commitment to the Afghan people. We are contributing through bilateral and multilateral channels to the implementation of the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and NATO's Resolute Support Mission. I want to emphasize that, in line with the conclusions of the Council of the European Union adopted last month, future support will be determined by the level of commitment of the Afghan authorities to good governance and human rights.

A just peace must be inclusive of all Afghans, including women, youth and minorities.

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**Annex V****Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger**

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons, Ms. Fathi Waly and Ms. Akbar for their briefings.

The Dominican Republic commends, and reiterates its support for, the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), especially during this challenging time.

The peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. We congratulate the efforts of the parties concerned in promoting the political dialogue and peace process and welcome the political agreement between the United States and the Taliban. As expressed on different occasions by the Council, Afghanistan has no alternative but a political solution.

The Dominican Republic calls for inclusive representation of all sides in the negotiations. It is essential that women participate directly and meaningfully in the peace talks at all decision-making levels.

We remain deeply concerned about the volatile security situation, especially the number of casualties attributed to the Taliban in the southern region. Furthermore, we condemn any sort of attack perpetrated against health-care facilities. Medical services must not be hampered by conflict. In this regard, it is of the utmost importance to reduce violence and establish a ceasefire to protect the civilian population, in particular women and children. The Dominican Republic reiterates that the parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and take immediate measures to prevent civilian casualties.

The economy and social development remain challenging. The country is facing harsh economic conditions during the pandemic. If Afghanistan does not have a solid foundation, it cannot have lasting and sustained prosperity. Resolution 2513 (2020) calls for the promotion of regional cooperation and connectivity.

Afghanistan carries the terrible burden of being the world's deadliest conflict for children. And now, with coronavirus disease (COVID-19), women are at greater risk from a surge in gender-based violence. The humanitarian situation must improve. Before COVID-19, 9.4 million Afghans required humanitarian assistance. We call on all parties to fully exercise their role to ensure the delivery of humanitarian support, more so now during the pandemic.

Before concluding, I call on the international community to remain engaged and continue to support Afghanistan, in accordance with the commitment to the ongoing transformation decade, 2015 to 2024.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the important role played by UNAMA in promoting peace in the country through outstanding contributions in areas such as human rights, particularly for women. That progress must be maintained.

**Annex VI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson.**

I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons for her significant work and comprehensive briefing to the Council and wish her much success in her upcoming years in a challenging role as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ghada Fathi Waly, for her proficient presentation and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar for giving a bold and realistic explanation of the situation in Afghanistan.

I would like to commend UNAMA on its activity and engagement under challenging conditions in support of the Government and the people of Afghanistan in several areas, in particular the women, peace and security agenda, transitional justice, the inclusion of civil society, as well as on its provision of coordination, advice and assistance to protect human rights during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis. Estonia strongly supports these efforts and is always open to exploring ways in which the United Nations, including the Security Council, may further assist UNAMA's endeavours.

We consider the political agreement between President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah as an important step in strengthening the republic and progressing towards reconciliation and sustainable peace. We expect the Government of Afghanistan to stay the course of accountable governance and to ensure the meaningful participation of a diverse and inclusive negotiating team for the intra-Afghan negotiation. We are therefore glad that the 21-member negotiating team comprises representatives from various political and social constituencies, including four women. This shows some progress and, to a degree, attests to women's participation in the peace process. And so we regret that the Taliban has questioned the inclusiveness of the team.

We urge the Government and all Afghan actors and armed groups, particularly the Taliban, to seize the current historic opportunity for peace and reconciliation and to commit actively to an inclusive Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process, while making sure that any effort pertaining to the peace process does not erode the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution. The achievements of the past 19 years, for which Afghans and the international community, including Estonia, have made enormous sacrifices, must be retained and further enhanced.

We are deeply concerned as the security situation on the ground remains violent and unpredictable. High-profile attacks by anti-Government elements have continued. According to the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2020/549), there were 3,422 armed clashes during the reporting period. The conflict remains one of the deadliest in the world, with 417 child casualties, including 152 killed and 265 maimed, in the first quarter of the year. We deplore in the strongest terms the attacks against children. We call on all parties to reduce violence immediately and establish a humanitarian ceasefire in order to protect all civilians, in particular women and children, and to focus efforts on tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, in which health-care personnel remain on the front line, risking their own lives to save others. There is absolutely no excuse for the deliberate attacks on health-care personnel and facilities by either the Taliban or the Afghan national security forces. We strongly condemn the attacks, including threats, abductions and the horrific attack on the Dasht-e-Barchi hospital in Kabul on 12 May. It is essential that crimes such as these are investigated and that perpetrators are held accountable.

The spread of COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on women and girls owing to the increased level of domestic violence caused by lockdown measures. In this regard, we appreciate the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative aiming to highlight the risks of increased domestic violence and to raise awareness of sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Afghanistan has come a long way with the help of the international community, including the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and many nations around the world. Yet, serious challenges remain. Therefore, once again, we call on all sides to act swiftly, build confidence, start the intra-Afghan negotiations without delay and fulfil their commitments to working towards a long-term reduction in violence and the establishment of peace. We need to see a comprehensive peace agreement that ends the violence for good.

**Annex VII****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Anne Gueguen**

[Original: English and French]

I thank the speakers for their presentations. As we tirelessly advocate for the full participation of Afghan women in the peace process and in public life, I am pleased that the Council is being briefed by women whose experience and contribution to peace and security, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, are great.

The hope raised by the 29 February agreements is rekindled. After a difficult period, there are encouraging signs that the start of inter-Afghan negotiations now seems possible again. The agreement of 17 May is one of those signs; it has made it possible to overcome the political deadlock. The first steps towards the release of prisoners and the implementation of the agreements are a second such sign. Restoring trust between the various partners is essential. But we must not stop there. Almost four months after the February agreements, much remains to be done, and discussions must begin as soon as possible.

The conflict in Afghanistan continues to claim the lives of many civilians, especially women and children. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire must be implemented. This violence, combined with attacks on health facilities, is hampering the response to the coronavirus disease pandemic. France reiterates its strong condemnation of the attacks on the Dasht-e-Barchi maternity hospital, as well as those against Afghan security forces on 17 June and on a funeral in Nangarhar province. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian and medical personnel, and first and foremost of children, must be a top priority, and all parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. Reducing violence is imperative. Peace will depend on the fulfilment of each party's commitments, including commitments to reduce violence and combat terrorism. The Afghan authorities have pledged to do so; the Taliban must now do their part. The fight against impunity and respect for justice by all actors are also the sine qua non condition for lasting peace.

Women have paid the heaviest price in this pandemic. Many have lost their jobs or are victims of gender-based, sexual or domestic violence. Our collective priority must be to support them. Tomorrow's Afghanistan must be built with the whole of society, building on the gains made in terms of democracy and human rights for all, without discrimination. We cannot accept any backtracking. The full and active participation of women in the peace process is an indispensable condition for its long-term success.

Among the threats to Afghanistan's security, drugs, along with terrorism, are among those whose seriousness prevents lasting peace. Yet, Ms. Waly's presentation showed that drug production, despite years of struggle, is on the rise and diversifying. It has devastating effects on Afghan society and global security. It is also a major source of financing for terrorism. For all these reasons, the international community and the Afghan authorities must continue to show unfailing determination to combat those two scourges.

The resolute commitment of Afghanistan's partners to standing at its side is indispensable to a lasting peace. France will be there, as always. I welcome the essential role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations in Afghanistan and call on all to support the stabilization of Afghanistan and to contribute positively to the establishment of lasting peace in the country.

## Annex VIII

### **Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Juergen Schulz**

I would like to thank our briefers, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Ms. Akbar, for their informative briefings and assessments. It is always great to see the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan in the Council.

I would also like to extend a particularly warm welcome to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons in her new job. She is indeed taking up her duties in a particularly crucial year for Afghanistan. As she said, there is coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the challenge it represents to the prospect of the nascent peace talks. There is also the 2020 pledging conference, which will be so crucial. So, we wish her every success and assure her that we will do anything we can to support her in her important job.

Let me start with some condolences, because the recent weeks in Afghanistan have been among the most gruesome of the last two decades. The attacks on a maternity ward and on a funeral in May were terribly shocking. We did right to condemn them as a Council. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims.

The overall level of violence, with continued Taliban attacks — more than 90 attacks a day — is extremely worrying. The attacks go against the spirit of the 29 February agreement between the Taliban and the United States. Violence must be reduced and eventually end for intra-Afghan negotiations to start. We reiterate that all parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and take immediate measures to prevent civilian casualties. Recent reports have indicated that Afghanistan is the deadliest conflict for children on the globe. The perpetrators must know that they will be held accountable for their brutal, cynical acts.

We also reiterate the importance of a sustainable peace, which can only be achieved through a negotiated and inclusive political settlement, owned and led by the people of Afghanistan, including its women. This will require flexibility on all sides. Any talks and negotiations need to build on what has already been achieved. Women must be equally and meaningfully represented in the negotiation team.

We highly appreciate all steps taken to move that process forward, namely the direct talks between the conflict parties to implement the exchange of prisoners and hostages. While some steps have yet to be taken, we welcome the plans to start intra-Afghan negotiations soon. Such an arduous process needs a united international support effort. We need to encourage both sides to take constructive and confidence-building steps. Germany will continue its work to support the process in close cooperation with its partners, including our co-penholder Indonesia, as well as Norway, Uzbekistan and, especially, Qatar. We highly recommend the United Nations take an active role in the process.

We commend the important role that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is playing to coordinate international assistance, particularly during the pandemic, but also to monitor the situation on the ground and engage with conflict parties to bring the peace process forward. The members of the Council should continue to lend their support to this vital Mission. Germany will soon be engaging with all Council members to renew its mandate.

Afghanistan is severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The official number of 30,000 cases can only be the tip of the iceberg. Ending the violence is of paramount importance. In March, the Security Council urged the conflict parties to

heed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. We reaffirm that call today. There are also worrying reports about attacks on health facilities and health workers. During the current pandemic, those facilities are even more relevant. They must not be targeted.

Afghanistan needs continued and reliable international assistance to address the immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term economic and social challenges. We highly appreciate the coordinating role of United Nations organizations, through which we channel most of our immediate aid to fight the pandemic in Afghanistan. For effective implementation, the close cooperation of the Government of Afghanistan with the United Nations and other international agencies is paramount. We urge all sides to cooperate with the relevant United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the COVID-19 response.

The 2020 Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, co-hosted by Finland and Afghanistan, is a milestone for the continuous support to the country. Continued funding is vital if we want to minimize the risk of jeopardizing the progress achieved over the past 19 years. Such a commitment will be based on the joint understanding that Afghanistan will continue on the path of reforms.



## Annex IX

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

We thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Ms. Waly and Ms. Akbar for their insightful briefings. We also welcome Ms. Deborah Lyons as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). She may rest assured that Indonesia will continue to support her and UNAMA. I also welcome my sister, Ambassador Adela Raz, to this video-teleconference.

The beauty of speaking after my co-penholder from Germany is that my work is much easier, since he has alluded to our joint efforts to help Afghanistan in achieving peace. I think many points have been stated by my co-penholder, Germany, so I will just add a few additional points.

Since the last briefing on UNAMA in March (see S/2020/274), we have witnessed greater energy put in by domestic, regional and international stakeholders to push forward the Afghan peace process. These common efforts speak to the necessity of continued cooperation in staying firmly on the path to peace, which the people of Afghanistan eagerly await. The opportunity is here. Let us intensify the momentum to capitalize on it.

Having listened to the briefers, Indonesia underlines the following.

First is safeguarding the peace process and nurturing reconciliation. Indonesia welcomes the political agreement between President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah. We hope that the Cabinet will form soon so as to also streamline a strengthened response against the coronavirus disease, which is exacerbating the challenges.

The political agreement augurs well for a united stand in intra-Afghan peace negotiations too. The intra-Afghan negotiations should follow without delay. All parties must avoid any provocations that could hamper the talks. The enhancement of mutual trust and understanding by putting only the well-being and long-term interests of ordinary Afghans as the top priority is crucial. Indonesia encourages continued confidence-building in that regard, and we welcome the prisoner releases by the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Indonesia stands ready to further support the peace process. We will also be relentless with our ongoing assistance programmes to enhance women's participation in nation-building and various public-sector capacities.

The second issue is ending violence and strengthening the protection of civilians. We are deeply concerned that the Afghan conflict remains extremely devastating for civilians and children. We are saddened to hear the report of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons just now that children have been victims of barbaric attacks. It must stop. Terrorism and attacks are exacting a heartbreaking toll on humanitarian, media and human-rights workers too. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/549) also mentions increased violence against women.

The violence must stop, and it must stop now. Indonesia urges the Government to intensify the protection of civilians by holding the violators fully accountable. Combating narcotics is also essential to cutting the terrorists' financing. Increased cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant agencies is important.

Violence to further one's political agenda is counter-productive. It also leaves deep psychological impacts, with a lingering resentment in generations whose support is essential to nation-building.

Third is the role of Afghan women and preserving human rights. Indonesia welcomes greater women's representation in various public institutions over recent years. The inclusion of four women in the team for the intra-Afghan peace negotiation is also encouraging.

Indonesia is a firm believer that the meaningful participation of women is indispensable for reconciliation and enduring peace. Our Foreign Minister also emphasized that when female leaders from Indonesia exchanged best practices with Afghan women in Kabul last February. Through the recent launch of the Afghanistan-Indonesia women solidarity network and other avenues, Indonesia will remain focused on enhancing Afghan women's participation in the Afghan peace process.

It is important that the Security Council also monitor Afghanistan's constitutional gains concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms. The country must be assisted in order to not revert backwards.

Let me close by underscoring Indonesia's long-standing position of supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. We pray to have a violence-free, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. *Insha'Allah*, with the singlemindedness and good faith of all sides, we will witness that soon.

**Annex X****Statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy**

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her observations and assessments of the situation in Afghanistan. UNAMA plays an important role in coordinating international assistance to this country. The Russian Federation supports its mandate and activities. We welcome the first briefing by Ms. Lyons in the Security Council and wish her every success.

We have also listened attentively to the assessments of the Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly. We thank the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, for her respective briefing.

We have studied carefully the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/549) about the activities and efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

The key issue that is on the radar today is the peace process. The Russian Federation consistently supports the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in Afghanistan. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has rightly mentioned, one of the crucial factors in starting intra-Afghan negotiations — and definitely not the easiest one — is the prisoner releases. We emphasize that this issue remains one of the key preconditions vital for future peace talks. We note several positive steps taken by the Government and the Taliban in that regard and call for the rapid release of the remaining prisoners in the coming days.

We affirm our principled position that the upcoming Afghan peace process should be inclusive. All efforts should be focused on promoting national reconciliation, which will lead to the end of the long-standing war in the country and the revival of a peaceful, united and independent State, free of terrorism and drug crime.

We have no illusions that direct intra-Afghan talks might be complicated and protracted, especially given the different understanding of the future political architecture of Afghanistan by both sides. Russia has always stood and still stands ready to facilitate negotiations. Enabling the Afghan parties to find an agreement that is acceptable to all and establishing a sustainable peace in the country are at the heart of our efforts within the troika plus Pakistan, which remains a very important driving force for the peace process in Afghanistan. For that reason, we also actively participated in the four-party virtual conference of the Special Representatives of the Russian Federation, China, Iran and Pakistan on Afghanistan on 18 May 2020 and in the trilateral virtual meeting of the Russian Federation, the United States and Afghanistan on 15 June 2020.

We truly believe that the regional actors can and should play their substantive role in promoting the peace process. The regional players and neighbours will undoubtedly be the first beneficiaries of the resolution of this protracted conflict in Afghanistan. Their cooperation and assistance are crucial to Afghanistan's peace, stability and development. In that regard, we emphasize that the Moscow format, which has under its umbrella all key participants, including Afghanistan itself, can play a crucial role.

Against that backdrop, the security situation in Afghanistan remains volatile. It is worsened by the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the country. We fully condemn the recent barbaric and cowardly terrorist attacks in Kabul and Nangarhar, which resulted in a high number of victims and for which ISIL-Khorasan claimed responsibility. The continued presence of ISIL

in Afghanistan is still of serious concern to us. This represents a real threat to the security of both Afghanistan and its neighbours, the countries of Central Asia and Russia's southern regions. We strongly believe that underestimating this problem is unacceptable. We urge all sides in Afghanistan to take decisive action against Al-Qaida, ISIL, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and other international terrorist organizations operating against regional countries.

We are also intensively monitoring developments regarding the fight against drug trafficking in Afghanistan. In that regard, we support your intention, Madam President, to focus today's meeting on the counter-narcotics issue. This threat remains a serious concern for the country, as well as for the region and the whole world. Drug production and drug trafficking are sources of significant financial support for terrorism. We call for all sides to completely eradicate this problem in the country. We are ready to fulfil our obligations by assisting the collective efforts against this threat, including through our active participation in UNODC, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Needless to say, Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture and needs the full support and attention of the international community, especially against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease pandemic situation. Appropriate regional cooperation and international assistance, as well as the joint efforts of the regional and international players, will remain imperative in order to achieve lasting peace and stability in the country.

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**Annex XI****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Inga Rhonda King**

I too thank our briefers — Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Deborah Lyons; Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Ghada Fathi Waly; and Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Shaharзад Akbar — for their passionate, comprehensive and insightful presentations.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains firmly committed to supporting Afghanistan on the path to stability and peace. We welcome the efforts of President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah, which culminated in the signing of a power-sharing agreement on 17 May, aimed at ending the months-long political impasse in Afghanistan. This agreement helps to deepen the public support for the future intra-Afghan negotiations and broaden the understanding and support of the outcome. In our view, unity and cooperation through inclusive national dialogue and leadership are necessary to address the needs and challenges faced by the country. We also believe that intra-Afghan talks should include women and young people, who are essential to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and fundamental to an inclusive negotiated political settlement.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. According to the report (S/2020/549), the spread of the coronavirus disease has had serious implications for the humanitarian situation in view of continued conflict-related displacement, population returns, poverty and food insecurity. My delegation calls on the international humanitarian community and national partners to renew their commitment to the humanitarian needs of people in Afghanistan.

Additionally, the armed conflict remains the deadliest for children. There have been reports of sexual violence against children and incidents of attacks against schools and protected personnel. We agree wholeheartedly with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons that if ever there was a prayer for peace, it would most certainly echo the voices of these children. In that connection, we reiterate our call for the greater protection of civilians, particularly women, children and displaced persons, and for respect for international human rights law.

Turning to the 2020 pledging conference on Afghanistan scheduled for later this year, we encourage the international community and the Afghan Government to renew their commitments to the mutual objectives to coordinate development cooperation in Afghanistan. We urge greater support for the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework to promote inclusivity, resilience and sustainability in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I feel compelled to highlight a significant fact that is not mentioned in the report of the Secretary General. The situation in Afghanistan, which has been affected by years of war, is further compounded by the fact that this is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world and the environmental impacts of war and the resultant damage to critical infrastructure have made it one of the least equipped to handle these challenges. The consequences of flooding, drought and lack of irrigation for crops contribute to continued instability in Afghanistan. We call on major emitters and all Member States to significantly reduce their emissions in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. We further call on Member States to fulfil their responsibilities regarding climate finance for adaptation and loss and damage caused by climate change.

We can only call on Afghans to address what is within their power and control. The impact of human-induced climate change on this country is palpable and caused by external forces far beyond its borders. Climate change is one in a deadly mix of factors at play, but it is too often overlooked. This truth, as inconvenient as it may be, must be acknowledged so that we may comprehensively address the climate-induced security risks that undermine stability in Afghanistan. Without action on this front, lasting peace may remain elusive.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for UNAMA and our commitment to a successful and sustainable Afghan peace process.

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**Annex XII****Statement by the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations**

We wish to welcome Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), to the Security Council, and we thank her for her briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and the work of UNAMA.

We also thank Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for their briefings. We further extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Adela Raz to this video-teleconference meeting of the Council.

Allow me to begin by congratulating and commending the political leaders of Afghanistan for placing the national interest of their country above their personal interests, which has resulted in the formation of a Government.

Equally, we wish to commend the crucial mediation role played by both domestic and international stakeholders in placing Afghanistan on a path to peace. Accordingly, we welcome the agreement reached in that regard, and we hope that the parties can build on these positive developments by injecting renewed impetus and support for the start of the intra-Afghan peace talks.

South Africa calls on all parties to urgently work towards commencing the intra-Afghan peace talks as soon as the conditions and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions allow. In the interim, it is important to state that a ceasefire remains a critical enabler of such talks and a catalyst for lasting peace and security for all Afghan people. South Africa wishes to reiterate, again, the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process, taking on board the voices of all sectors of society. This includes hearing the strong voices of women, who have remained steadfast in their commitment to participating in the peace process and playing an active role in contributing to a peaceful Afghan society.

South Africa is proud to be among the 170 signatories to the statement of support for Secretary-General Guterres' appeal for a global ceasefire to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and we reiterate that call in support of the people of Afghanistan. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2020/549), the impact of COVID-19, together with sustained conflict, food insecurity and fragile infrastructure, has increased the suffering of the Afghan people.

My delegation appreciates the measures enacted by both the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA to limit the spread of the virus, and calls on the international community to support Afghanistan in ensuring that the necessary equipment and medical supplies are available to those in need.

South Africa is most concerned about the circumstances of Afghan children, many of whom have seen the worst humanity has to offer. As detailed by the Secretary-General, "the armed conflict in Afghanistan remains the deadliest conflict in the world for children". The scale, severity and recurrence of violations and abuses endured by children in Afghanistan — particularly the high levels of killing and maiming, the recruitment and use of children in conflict, acts of sexual violence against children, the targeting of schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access — must be stopped.

We therefore call on the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international human rights law as well as international humanitarian law. All

those responsible for committing or conducting acts of grave violations, particularly against children, in Afghanistan should be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.

Let me now also state South Africa's strong condemnation of the heinous acts of terrorism, including the attacks on a Sikh temple and a maternity hospital in Kabul, that occurred during the reporting period. The perpetrators of these and other terrorist acts must be brought to justice for peace to prevail.

In conclusion, allow me to extend my appreciation to the leadership, troops and personnel of UNAMA, all of whom operate in a challenging environment. UNAMA's continued engagement with national, regional and international stakeholders in seeking an end to the violence, its work in support of a ceasefire as well as in promoting the intra-Afghan negotiations, and its encouragement of confidence-building measures are all necessary and significant components in bringing long-term peace, security and prosperity to Afghanistan.



## Annex XIII

### Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ms. Deborah Lyons on her appointment as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and to thank her for her first briefing to the Council.

I also would like to thank Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for their briefings.

Tunisia welcomes the power-sharing agreement reached in May between President Ashraf Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, and looks forward to the completion of the formation of the new Government and the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation, which has been tasked, under the chairmanship of Abdullah Abdullah, to lead the Government's efforts to reach a peace deal with the Taliban.

While we regret the increasing number of attacks staged by the Taliban against Government forces over recent weeks, we are encouraged by the recent announcement that the two sides have agreed to start the long-awaited peace talks. Tunisia reiterates, in this regard, its support to all international initiatives in favour of peace efforts in Afghanistan.

We also stress the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned political process, with the meaningful participation of women, to achieve a sustainable solution that includes guarantees for the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms for all in Afghanistan, especially women.

Tunisia remains deeply concerned by the high level of violence in Afghanistan at a time when the priority should be given to protecting the population from the dangers of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We are, in this regard, particularly appalled by the recent attacks against health-care facilities and personnel, including the gruesome attack on a maternity ward in Kabul on 12 May, which left 24 dead, among them newborns, mothers and nurses.

We call on all parties to heed to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and stress the importance that they uphold international humanitarian law and take the necessary measures to prevent civilian casualties. We also underline the necessity to hold all those responsible for these casualties accountable.

Efforts should also be reinforced to defeat the terrorist groups that are still active in Afghanistan by limiting and hopefully eliminating their operational and financial capabilities. In this 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.

The Taliban should also to do its utmost to stop the attacks perpetrated by its members and honour its counter-terrorism commitments.

Lastly, we believe that the peace process should be accompanied by an ambitious plan to assist the Afghan Government on the economic and social levels. The international community should step up its efforts to that end. Initiatives to further promote regional cooperation and economic integration should also be encouraged.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons; it is great to see her today. I also thank Director Waly and Chairperson Akbar for their informative briefings and their efforts to be here today.

The United States remains fully committed to assisting Afghanistan achieve a political settlement to the conflict. Recent developments reflect the promise of peace and the critical challenges that must be overcome to end a conflict that claims Afghan lives every single day. The Afghan Government and the Taliban have taken important steps toward intra-Afghan negotiations that include the Afghan government, other Afghan leaders, including civil society and women's groups, and the Taliban.

These talks promise the best chance of a political road map to sustainable peace. Once they begin, we will have reached the international community's long-stated goal of an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process. Since we last discussed Afghanistan in the Council in March (see S/PV.8742), there have been three significant and positive developments in Afghanistan that offer hope for reaching this milestone.

First, the United States welcomes the agreement reached between Afghan President Ghani and the leader of the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation, Mr. Abdullah. As the two set aside their differences, the formation of an inclusive Government that can stabilize Afghanistan, advance the peace process and tackle the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic remains essential.

Secondly, because the reduction of violence is paramount in creating the conditions necessary for intra-Afghan negotiations, we recognize the Taliban's decision to observe a ceasefire during Eid, just as we recognize the Afghan Government's decision to reciprocate and announce its own ceasefire.

Thirdly, the Afghan Government has now released over 3,000 Taliban prisoners, and the Taliban has released more than 500 prisoners. These are important milestones in this confidence-building measure. Furthermore, it is significant that the Taliban publicly committed to join intra-Afghan negotiations within one week of the Afghan Government releasing 5,000 prisoners.

Against this backdrop of positive developments, we must be candid about the serious challenges that remain. Since the Eid ceasefire, violence has continued to climb, and innocent Afghans continue to bear the costs of this war, as witnessed by recent, devastating attacks. Left unchecked, this violence could disrupt the start of negotiations. The United States condemns all such attacks, most especially those specifically directed against civilians and civilian objects, which violate international humanitarian law.

Recently, there have been shocking attacks against health-care workers and facilities. The United States condemns them and, furthermore, condemns threats to health-care workers and the brazen use of explosives in civilian-populated areas. The appalling 12 May attack on a Kabul hospital, which targeted its maternity ward, killed at least 24 civilians, most of whom were female patients. Among the dead were newborn babies. On the same day, a suicide attack at a funeral in Nangarhar, claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Khorasan Province, killed at least 19 civilians and injured many more. We also condemn the attack this week on lawyers from the Office of the Attorney General and other team members working to facilitate prisoner releases, which killed five civilians. We cannot overlook these

awful incidents, but I also want to be clear: no party should allow spoilers to deter them from the path of peace.

The United States also recognizes that COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on the lives of the Afghan people as the virus continues to spread across the country. The United States continues to build on its commitment to supporting Afghan health care and livelihoods. We have contributed \$20.6 million in COVID-19-related assistance to Afghanistan for critical surveillance, treatment and prevention programming.

While mindful of the fact that practical details will need to be worked out, we are closer to our goal of a post-conflict Afghanistan than ever before. We reiterate to the Afghan Government and the Taliban the importance and benefits of incorporating women's rights and participation in all aspects of the peace process, as well as the participation of other underrepresented groups.

This momentous opportunity should not be missed, and the Trump Administration will continue to do its part. We call on both sides to build on the momentum they created, with the Eid ceasefire and accelerated prisoner releases, to reduce violence, to continue to release prisoners, and to work pragmatically towards agreement on the modalities of negotiations.

In closing, we recognize the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in supporting the Afghan people in creating an environment conducive to the intra-Afghan negotiations. The United States remains committed to ensuring that terrorist organizations are never again able to use Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States or its allies, and we look forward to continuing our work with Special Representative Lyons to advance peace and stability in Afghanistan.

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

I would like to thank Ms. Lyons, Ms. Waly and Ms. Akbar for their statements. It is interesting that all the briefers today are women. I also welcome the presence of Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, in this meeting.

While we continue to closely follow the situation in Afghanistan with great interest, we would like to reiterate our support for the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process and for the resolution 2513 (2020), which has laid the foundations for the pursuit of long-term peace for the country.

We welcome the recent positive developments on the political front. It is encouraging to see the spirit of compromise displayed by President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah in reaching the 17 May agreement. We note consistent efforts to promote women's participation in various aspects of the peace process, including having nearly 20 per cent of the peace negotiations team be women.

At the same time, Viet Nam remains concerned about the security situation. Although the numbers of security incidents and civilian casualties have decreased compared to the previous period, the situation on the ground remains very fragile. We strongly condemn the continued attacks of the Taliban and other terrorist groups. We are also concerned about the increasing spread and impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on security, peacebuilding and the socioeconomic development of the country. Transnational crimes and drug trafficking are also issues of high concern, which threaten the security situation.

Allow me emphasize the following three main points.

First, the most important issue now is to advance the implementation of resolution 2513 (2020), particularly in starting the intra-Afghan negotiations. It is critical that the talks start as soon as possible, with a permanent ceasefire as the first goal. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other relevant stakeholders in facilitating the negotiations. In this regard, we are encouraged to hear the reports on the possible peace talks in the coming weeks in Doha. We also look forward to seeing further strengthened and active participation of women in this process.

Secondly, in parallel to the peace talks, it is vital to improve the security situation. Despite the agreement of a nationwide reduction of violence, the Taliban has been carrying out attacks on the Afghan people, many of whom are women and children. We are deeply concerned that during the past week, the Taliban carried out 422 attacks in 32 provinces and killed 291 Afghan security personnel. The escalation of violence took place only a few days after the Taliban had announced a three-day ceasefire on 23 May. At the same time, health-care personnel have been bearing the brunt of the poor security situation. As the threat of COVID-19 remains, Viet Nam once again urges all parties to heed the call of the Secretary-General to put an end to the fighting, stop targeting civilians and civilian objects, and allow unhindered access to humanitarian and health-care services.

Thirdly, the economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to face many challenges due to ongoing conflict, the impact of COVID-19 and natural disasters. Long-term peace and stability require strong economic development and sustainable livelihoods for the people. Viet Nam recognizes the efforts of the Government in advancing socioeconomic development and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. We call on the international community to further assist Afghanistan in eradicating poverty, fostering post-conflict reconstruction and overcoming

the challenges resulting from COVID-19 and climate change. We also call on the international partners, as well as UNAMA and relevant United Nations agencies, to further provide technical support to the Afghan authorities in countering cross-border crime and drug trafficking. We would also like to emphasize the importance of increasing protection for vulnerable groups, especially women, children and persons with disabilities.

In conclusion, Viet Nam once again emphasizes our full support for UNAMA and for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, as well as for the pursuit of peace, stability and development in the country.

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