



Security Council

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Letter dated 8 September 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; and Mr. Saad Mohseni, Chief Executive of MOBY Group, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Afghanistan” convened on Thursday, 3 September 2020.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Australia, the European Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan and Turkey.

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, the enclosed briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdou **Abarry**
President of the Security Council



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

As I speak, Afghans representing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are preparing to sit with representatives of the Taliban to discuss a political settlement to the conflict. This is truly a historic moment. After four decades of war, the people of Afghanistan have more reason than ever to hope that this devastating conflict may come to an end.

This will be a long and challenging process. Already, the pre-talks phase has raised difficult issues related to prisoner releases, which have taken some time to resolve. Eventually, the negotiations will have to tackle a range of profound questions about the kind of country Afghans want. These can be addressed only by Afghans talking with other Afghans. Solutions cannot be found on the battlefield or imposed from the outside.

At the same time, Afghans need and deserve our support to ensure that peace, when it arrives, can be sustained. I would like to spend some time today updating the Council on the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to prepare the ground for peace and the role of the international community as the peace process unfolds.

Despite the air of cautious optimism, the level of violence on the battlefield remains deeply worrying. The last few weeks have seen near-record numbers of security incidents, including egregious attacks by spoilers targeting civilians involved in the peace process.

We must keep in mind the terrible consequences of that violence. The conflict continues to kill or injure hundreds of Afghans every week. It has displaced millions of people, most of whom have no immediate prospect of returning to their homes. It impedes humanitarian access, depriving many of life-saving assistance and hindering the response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. And, as we look towards peace talks, it creates an atmosphere of mistrust that risks derailing negotiations.

Let us recall what four decades of war have brought to Afghanistan. Despite significant progress in the last two decades, Afghanistan remains one of the worst places in the world to be a woman and one of the worst to be a child. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Afghans constitute the largest protracted refugee population in Asia and the second-largest refugee population in the world. After two decades of substantial financial assistance from donors, millions of Afghans continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty. As we congratulate Africa on the eradication of polio in Africa, we face a sobering statistic: Afghanistan is now one of only two countries in the world where polio still threatens the health of the population.

But it does not have to be this way. We continue to call on all parties to reduce the level of violence. Along with many Afghans, we hope that one of the first items on the agenda of intra-Afghan negotiations will be a humanitarian ceasefire. For Afghanistan's most vulnerable people, the stakes could not be higher. I urge all Member States to amplify this call as negotiations begin.

The coming days will, hopefully, bring the formal launch of intra-Afghan negotiations. We thank those Member States, including Qatar, the United States and Pakistan, that have engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to get us to this point. For our part, the United Nations will be working with international partners to support both parties and the host countries throughout the process. But a peace process, and

even a peace agreement, does not peace make. All of us must each do our part to create a conducive environment for peace talks. In parallel, we must ensure that the ground is prepared for peace to flourish once an agreement is reached.

One of the flagship issues for the United Nations will be the role of human rights in achieving a sustainable peace. We know from long experience that peace processes are more robust when they take into account the concerns of the victims of war. For that reason, we have initiated a dialogue with the conflict parties on the inclusion of victims' voices in peace negotiations and on mechanisms for incorporating victim-centred justice. This is a difficult topic but an essential one. Only when victims' grievances are acknowledged and addressed will true reconciliation be possible.

We have also spoken a great deal in this forum about the necessity of including women in the process. Most recently, I was impressed by the strong declarations of support for Afghan women by Member States during the Arria Formula meeting in July.

But talking will not be enough. Women's rights are already emerging as one of the most difficult issues confronting the conflict parties as they enter negotiations and one where any compromises could pose a difficult dilemma for Member States. This issue will be more central in the Afghan peace process than in any other peace negotiations in recent memory. In Kabul, I have initiated a series of meetings with a countrywide network of Afghan women on the peace process, which is giving us important insights into their concerns as well as possible avenues for greater engagement.

But it is women's representation at the peace table that offers the best opportunity to ensure that their own rights are upheld and that their vision for a peaceful Afghanistan is reflected. I commend the women members of the Islamic Republic negotiating team and other peace structures for their energetic outreach and substantive preparations for intra-Afghan talks. We are not aware of any women's representation on the Taliban side, but we remain hopeful that they, too, will find a way of meaningfully including women in the negotiations.

Afghanistan's vibrant media will also be crucial in fostering an inclusive and sustainable peace. I pay tribute to Mr. Mohseni for his leadership on this issue and to the many brave Afghan journalists who have taken considerable risks in the course of their work. Next week I will be having the first of what I hope will be many meetings with a consortium of national media to discuss how we can work, together with civil society, to stimulate an active dialogue on what peace looks like for them.

Peace will truly take hold only if it delivers material benefits to the Afghan people. This, too, will require substantial preparation by all parties: by the Government of Afghanistan; by the countries of the region; and by the international community. Alongside the Government, we have been working with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the private sector to identify the challenges to economic development and the great economic dividends of peace.

Regional cooperation will be a vital element of this undertaking, both as a contributor to and a beneficiary of peace. By deepening its regional relationships in the areas of trade and transit, infrastructure connectivity, counter-narcotics, people movements and knowledge transfer, Afghanistan can begin to realize its enormous untapped potential and take full advantage of its strategic location at the heart of Asia.

At the same time, a stable Afghanistan will bring about a more prosperous neighbourhood. In the spirit of the Tashkent conference, the Mission has initiated an ambassadors' working group in Kabul bringing together the six countries

bordering Afghanistan to discuss concrete work in key thematic areas. I have been gratified at the response from the six border countries — China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — and will continue to work with them, the Government and the many United Nations agencies to realize the dividends for all that peace in Afghanistan can bring. As this exercise develops, it will be linked into other regional formats such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, among others.

For peace to take hold, Afghanistan will need strong, trusted public institutions. I am pleased to note the Government's announcement of the formation of its cabinet as well as of appointments to the High Council for National Reconciliation. But there is still much work to be done. The most recent UNAMA anti-corruption report identified significant institutional gaps, which have stymied progress. We are working with the Government, civil society and donors to encourage concrete initiatives, including a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy and an independent anti-corruption commission.

In the lead-up to the pledging conference in November, tackling corruption is essential to building donors' confidence. In preparation, we are working closely with the conference co-Chairs, Afghanistan and Finland, as well as line ministries and donors, to promote alignment between the Government's priorities and the expectations of the international community. This year we are facing the added complication of the global fiscal crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which will likely constrain the financial commitments of key donors. But we are determined to help Afghanistan make the best case possible for ongoing donor support. Just as peace can pave the way for development, continued international support for development is needed to consolidate peace.

It is noteworthy that the pledging conference will be taking place in parallel with intra-Afghan negotiations. Each process must reinforce the other. Combined, the two will set the course for Afghanistan's future. For that reason, we are engaging regularly with the Taliban to ensure that it is well-informed about Afghanistan's obligations as a member of the global community, including through expanded discussions on development and governance issues, as well as our ongoing human rights dialogue.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Afghanistan hard. More than 38,000 confirmed cases of COVID have been reported and more than 1,400 people have lost their lives to this disease, although the actual figures are probably many times higher. Millions of Afghans have suffered lost income and livelihoods. Children have missed crucial months of schooling. Anecdotally — and, sadly, as is the case in many countries around the world — women have suffered an increase in gender-based violence. Rebuilding those lives will be a painstaking task.

I thank the members of the Council for their support for Afghanistan's national COVID-19 response and for the concern expressed by many of them for our staff here on the ground. Fortunately, the situation seems to have stabilized since my most recent briefing (S/2020/597, annex I), but the pandemic has affected our operations dramatically, and we do not know what the autumn has in store.

Despite those challenges, it remains a privilege for us to execute the mandate given to us by the Security Council in service of the people of Afghanistan. I am confident that the next time we meet, we will discuss the progress that will have been made in the intra-Afghan negotiations. The Council's support and that of Afghanistan's neighbours and international donors will be essential for success. The people of Afghanistan have heard Council members' voices of support and appreciate

the ongoing commitment of the United Nations to their future. We stand ready to assist them in any way we can.

Annex II

Statement by the Chief Executive of MOBY Group, Saad Mohseni

The Afghanistan to which I returned in 2002 was a radically different country from the one I was forced to leave in the late 1970s. The Taliban and its predecessors did everything they could to root out Afghanistan's charm, possibility and progress. It was no longer that proverbial Paris of Central Asia. In fact, it took only 20 years of isolation to annihilate a century of modern statehood and 1,500 years of history.

But a lot has improved since 2002. Twenty years of State-building and help from the international community has halved the rate of child mortality and boosted literacy to almost 50 per cent of the population. Students now make up one-third of the total population, and the country is better connected than ever; we have gone from no media to more than 100 television outlets and hundreds of radio stations, newspapers and online platforms.

Despite limited access to electricity, 95 per cent of the population regularly watches TV, a medium that provides exposure beyond Afghanistan. There are 33 million mobile subscribers; that is up from zero in 2002. Furthermore, we have 12 million mobile data and internet subscribers — that is one-third of the population with access to the Internet.

As I am in the media and news sector, I should like to highlight the vital work that the international community has done in terms of rebuilding Afghanistan's legal infrastructure and its ongoing support of this sector. Today, the country has the freest media from India to North Africa. It is not easy and it is certainly not safe, but this has ensured that our journalists have the freedom to report with integrity.

My news organization, Tolo, alone has lost 11 staff, while the media family has lost 132 journalists. Overall, there have been 1,600 violent incidents against journalists and 30 news outlet attacks. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for nearly every one of those attacks. The Government may not like what we have to say, but at least we do not fear those types of reprisals.

The transformation of Afghanistan despite the many hurdles and challenges has been extraordinary. With a clear majority of the country connected and plugged in, half the population residing in our major cities and an economy that has grown manifold, Afghanistan is on the upswing.

Of course, there are negatives. Opportunities have been squandered by both the Afghans and the international community. Corruption is an issue at every level, and the country remains in the middle of a deadly war.

And yet Afghanistan, with a median age of 18 — the youngest nation outside of sub-Saharan Africa — remains hopeful. With its population set to grow to 100 million by 2060, Afghanistan will be the world's sixteenth most populous nation.

So how can the Security Council help? The daunting task of fully reintegrating the Taliban into the Afghan Republic will require the Council's participation. Collectively, the Council will maintain leverage as long as there is a unified international position.

There needs to be a strong and consistent line on key issues. By way of example, a total ceasefire was agreed to with international troops, while a mere reduction in violence was good enough for the Afghans. This international position is not coherent, which encourages the Taliban to make further demands, thus resulting in an additional complication of the process and loss of life.

One condition of the Doha Agreement with the United States is for the Taliban to distance itself from other terrorist organizations. Have they done so? How will that be monitored and adhered to in future?

The world has to be careful not to embolden the Taliban through contradictory statements and arrangements. With peace talks imminent, both the Taliban and the Afghan Government will remain mindful of global opinion. The international community's positions must therefore be clear and unanimous.

That is particularly important when we consider the Constitution of the Afghan Republic, which the Taliban want rewritten. This document was written in the wake of Taliban human rights abuses and designed to safeguard against future violations, with explicit protection for women and minorities. Protection of those rights must be non-negotiable.

The international community still has enormous leverage in the aid it provides. Going forward, that aid should be given on a strictly conditional basis.

Any compromise on progress made post-2001 will succeed only in strengthening their position as a viable Islamic emirate as opposed to incorporating them into the current system. What is certain is that the Afghans do not want to go back. We cannot have another 20 years of isolation and misery.

Moreover, Afghanistan continues to remain vulnerable to regional politics. Ensuring that our neighbours play ball should be a priority for the United Nations and its members. The quiet, long-suffering majority of Afghanistan is emphatically supportive of continued international involvement.

I would like to end with the findings of a survey by the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies of 8,000 individuals across the country, which confirmed the following: 69 per cent of the population favours a republic, while only 7 per cent favours an emirate; only 10 per cent support a religious leader to head Afghanistan; 35 per cent fear that a drawdown of international troops will bring more conflict; 42 per cent favoured a continued presence of those troops; almost 70 per cent have faith in the Government; 65 per cent favour the disarming of the Taliban; and 95 per cent favour the indictment and prosecution of war criminals and human rights abusers.

It is my hope and recommendation that the international community will continue to remain involved, at least until this new generation of Afghans, which it has invested so much in already, can find its feet.

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

We thank Her Excellency Rula Ghani, First Lady of Afghanistan, Her Excellency Ms. Hasina Safi, Minister of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan, Dr. Habiba Sarābi, member of the negotiations team, Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, and Her Excellency Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar, for their statements. We have listened closely to their recommendations and experiences, and I want to emphasize that they can count on us to support their efforts.

In the past 20 years, Afghan society has made progress in realizing the rights of women, as guaranteed by Afghanistan's Constitution. I want to commend the Afghan Government for its dedication and efforts. Women leaders are demonstrating today, across all sectors of society, why a country should never exclude half of its talent.

All eyes are currently focused on the intra-Afghan peace talks to be launched in Doha. I reiterate the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women of diverse and representative backgrounds in peace talks. The current female participation should be scaled up and any future agreement must guarantee the human rights of women and girls. We join the call of the vast majority of Afghans, both men and women, who will not accept turning back the clock to darker times.

The level of violence in Afghanistan remains alarmingly high. We call on all sides to immediately end this unacceptable suffering and stress the importance of accountability. Sometimes women are specifically targeted, such as in the recent atrocious attack on a maternity ward in Kabul, which the Council condemned in the strongest terms. We also condemn violence against women-led non-governmental organizations and women educators, health workers, journalists and human rights defenders, including the killing of Fatima Khalil. Furthermore, we are concerned about reports of an increase in domestic and gender-based violence as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic, and urge for the response and policies to be inclusive and gender-sensitive.

The conflict in Afghanistan is the world's deadliest for children. We are deeply concerned about the scale and severity of grave violations of children's rights in Afghanistan. Protecting girls and boys should be at the centre of our work. We urge all parties to swiftly implement the recommendations agreed by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

From our side, we are supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan on resolution 1325 (2000), together with UN-Women. We are also a proud member of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan. The European Union (EU) is working to prevent and end violence against women in Afghanistan through the joint Spotlight Initiative with the United Nations.

As outlined in the latest EU Council Conclusions on Afghanistan, any expected future support from Belgium or its EU partners will be conditional upon their continued commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls.

The promotion of women's rights in Afghanistan falls squarely within the mandate of the Council, which will soon renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We expect the promotion of women's participation and women's rights to remain at the centre of its work.

Annex IV

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations

I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons for her comprehensive briefing today. I would also like to thank Mr. Saad Mohseni for his excellent presentation relating to media freedom in the country.

Let me start by presenting our condolences for the recent terrorist attack perpetrated in a prison complex in Jalalabad on 2 August. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims, as well as those affected by last week's devastating floods in north of the country.

The Dominican Republic welcomes the political agreement signed in May between President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, and we recognize the efforts made to appoint the Cabinet. We believe that the formation of an inclusive Government can stabilize the country, advance the peace process and strengthen the response against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which remains challenging.

Likewise, the appointment of the members of the High Council for National Reconciliation is a clear signal of positive steps that will lead the way to meaningful peace negotiations. In such an arduous process, it is critical that constructive steps continue to be taken.

This is a historic moment for Afghanistan. It is a first step in a long path towards peace. In that sense, we are concerned that women's hard-won gains could be compromised, especially if a peace settlement is limited to the core security issues of terrorism. The protection of women's rights, child protection and addressing the needs of young Afghans must be some of the main objectives of this process and any future agreement.

We therefore encourage an inclusive Afghan-led process, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in order to achieve a sustainable solution that includes guarantees for the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedom for all Afghans.

We are deeply concerned about the security situation in the country. Even though the Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha ceasefires offered some pause, the conflict remains one of the deadliest in the world.

We deplore in the strongest terms the attacks against civilians, particularly women, children, human rights defenders, media workers and civil society activists. We call on all parties to cease such violence and immediately establish a humanitarian ceasefire. We reiterate that all parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and take immediate measures to prevent civilian casualties.

We recognize the progress made by the Government of Afghanistan on child protection, including regarding the prevention of the recruitment and use of children, in line with the action plan, through the Law on Protection of Child Rights.

However, Afghanistan continues to be the deadliest country for children. There continue to be attacks on schools and hospitals, and increases in child marriage and sexual and gender-based violence, exacerbated by social norms and gender inequality. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been an increase of more than 100 per cent in the recruitment and abduction of children by armed forces and armed groups.

We urge the parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international law and call on the Government of Afghanistan to swiftly pass the child protection law through to the Parliament in order to prevent future violations against children. We also call for the release of children detained for their actual or alleged association with armed groups and for them to be treated as victims.

The country is facing harsh economic conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Afghanistan needs continued and reliable assistance to address their humanitarian needs and the long-term social challenges they face. We commend the close cooperation of the Government of Afghanistan with the United Nations and other international agencies, and we urge all sides to continue to fully cooperate with the United Nations agencies and other stakeholders.

In conclusion, the Dominican Republic acknowledges the important role that the United Nation Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is playing through its outstanding contributions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

[Original: English and French]

I would like to begin by thanking the briefers — Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mrs. Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and Mr. Saad Mohseni — whose presentations reminded us of the attention we must pay to the freedom of the press and the safety of journalists around the world, and especially in Afghanistan.

While inter-Afghan peace negotiations could begin soon, I would like to recall that the peace process can only succeed in the long term if the democratic and human rights gains of the last 20 years are preserved. We cannot accept a return to the past. Human rights, the freedom of the press, the effective participation of women in political life and consideration for the needs of the victims of the conflict are all sine qua non conditions for lasting peace. The Afghan Government has committed itself to the path of peace by taking confidence-building measures and appointing a negotiating team.

It is up to the Taliban to respect the commitments they made under the 29 February 2020 agreement, notably by severing their ties with international terrorist organizations, particularly Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Reducing violence must be a priority if we are to create conditions conducive to the launch of inter-Afghan negotiations. The conflict in Afghanistan continues to claim the lives of too many civilians, particularly women and children. The continuing spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic is greatly exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Attacks on civilians and health infrastructure are absolutely unacceptable. Every effort must be made to implement resolution 2532 (2020), with an immediate cessation of hostilities and a humanitarian pause. Respect for international humanitarian law is, of course, an obligation for all parties. The protection of civilians, women and children, including humanitarian and medical personnel, must be a top priority.

Furthermore, the economic and social development of Afghanistan must continue, with the help and support of the international community. In that regard, I welcome the progress made in preparation for the donors conference, to be held at the end of the year. However, I would like to recall that the European Union's support will be conditional on respect for key principles, in particular with regard to democratic governance and respect for human rights. Afghanistan's development will be sustainable only if we continue the fight against the scourge of drugs while we support the country's economic and social development. As we all know, the persistence of drug trafficking feeds terrorist groups and endangers the lives of thousands of Afghans. The commitments made in the fight against drugs and terrorism and in ensuring respect for fundamental rights must be kept. Afghanistan will continue to be bound by the freely ratified international conventions, particularly those relating to respect for human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we must, more than ever, remain united. The international community, in particular, must remain united to support Afghanistan on its path towards peace, stability, democracy and economic and social development. France will continue to stand by the Afghan people and fully support the peace process. Finally, I would like to commend the essential role of the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, whose mandate we are going to renew this month. I also thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons, who has our full support.

Annex VI

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Günter Sautter

My first remark is on the recent outbreaks of violence we have seen in Afghanistan. In March, the Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire. In July, the Security Council did the same. We will have a discussion next week in the Security Council on the follow-up. Violence in Afghanistan has once again claimed numerous victims. The persistently high-level of attacks by the Taliban against Afghan security forces, like the current escalation around Kunduz, is diametrically opposed to the creation of an environment conducive for peace negotiations. Recent targeted killings are especially heinous crimes that must stop immediately. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims.

On the peace process, a negotiated and inclusive political settlement, owned and led by the people of Afghanistan, including the women of Afghanistan, is vital. All talks and negotiations need to build on what has already been achieved in the area of human rights, including those of women, girls and minorities. We might witness the start of intra-Afghan negotiations very soon. I listened very carefully to Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who informed us that we are speaking about days, not weeks. The Security Council should welcome that. The international community must encourage both sides to take constructive and confidence-building steps towards successful negotiations and peace. Germany will continue to support that process in close cooperation with its partners, including our co-penholder Indonesia, as well as Norway, Uzbekistan, Qatar and the United States. We highly recommend that the United Nations play an active role.

Let me say a word on UNAMA. We commend the important role that the Mission plays in engaging with conflicting parties and supporting the preparation of negotiations, but also in coordinating international assistance, particularly during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Council members should continue to lend their support to this vital Mission. Germany and Indonesia have started engaging with Council members to renew its mandate. I call upon all sides to approach the negotiations with a spirit of cooperation. Let us build on the progress reached in the most recent negotiations of September 2019. The United Nations needs to continue to play an important role in Afghanistan. Protecting human rights, safeguarding women's and children's rights and promoting sustainable development in Afghanistan will remain important tasks for the United Nations and the international community.

That brings me to COVID-19 and the future role of international assistance. We all know that the COVID19-crisis will continue to affect Afghanistan for years to come. Beyond safety and security, Afghanistan needs continued and reliable international assistance to address the immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term economic and social challenges ahead. The 2020 Afghanistan conference, to be co-hosted by Finland and Afghanistan in Geneva, will be a gauge of future support. Continued funding is vital if we want to minimize the risk of jeopardizing the progress achieved over the past 19 years, which Mr. Saad Mohseni, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of MOBY Group, just recalled in such an inspiring way. Such a commitment must be based on the joint understanding that Afghanistan will continue on the path of reform and adhere to international human rights, especially those of women, girls and minorities. I think it is politically important to bear that in mind.

Let me finish by asking Mr. Mohseni a question. We appreciate the Government's commitment to reform the law regarding non-governmental organizations. I would be interested to hear his assessment of the Government's attitude towards non-governmental organizations and the reform process. I would also like to commend the people of Afghanistan for its progress on press freedom in the country. Afghanistan performs quite well in press freedom indices. What perspectives does he see in that regard, given the context of the peace process ahead?

Annex VII

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 Mr. Saad Mohseni, for their insightful briefings. I would also like to thank Ambassador Adela Raz for her statement.

Germany, our co-penholder, has said a great deal, so I shall just add some points.

Although the present moment presents certain challenges, it also abounds with the hopes of the Afghan people for a peaceful, united and prosperous homeland. Despite years of conflict, terrorism, displacement, poverty, natural disasters and, now, the coronavirus disease exacting a heavy toll, the people of Afghanistan have been remarkably resilient. The potential commencement of the peace process is a ray of hope — not only for the Afghan people, but for the world. The Council and Afghanistan's partners must also play their role effectively to help ensure that the sacrifices of common Afghans are not in vain.

In response to the briefings, let me focus on three points.

First, we need to advance intra-Afghan negotiations. It is undeniable that the world is now waiting for intra-Afghan negotiations to start. In our view, that would be historic, as negotiations would finally open the door of opportunity for the parties to discuss what a future stable and prosperous Afghanistan will look like.

It is very encouraging that all main Afghan parties have expressed their willingness to engage in meaningful intra-Afghan negotiations.

Indonesia underlines that Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace negotiations should commence without delay. It is crucial that the plurality of Afghan society, including women and minorities, are reflected in those negotiations. Over the last 19 years, vibrant change has taken place in Afghanistan. Women and other groups increasingly participate in public life. The gains in human rights must not be reversed. As the peace process shapes up, the role of media, human rights defenders and civil society will be extremely important.

Secondly, priority must be given to reducing violence and protecting civilians. Despite the fact that the main parties have expressed support for intra-Afghan negotiations, violence and civilian casualties remain very high. All sides must make the protection of civilians their top priority. This is important for restoring the trust of the Afghan people and for providing space for peace talks. Indonesia strongly condemns all attacks against women and children, critical infrastructure such as hospital and schools, and humanitarian and human rights workers, media and other innocent parties. Perpetrators must be held accountable. We also call on parties to abide by resolution 2532 (2020), which has called for a global ceasefire. Furthermore, we are concerned by terrorist activities and narcotics cultivation. We support increased cooperation among all relevant entities in order to combat terrorism and narcotics, including through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Thirdly, we stress the important role played by countries of the region and the international community, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). As the road for reconstruction and post-conflict recovery commences, sustainable economic growth is required for a stable and secure post-conflict Afghanistan. Regional cooperation and international support will be crucial, including from UNAMA.

For its part, Indonesia continues to support capacity-building programmes in various fields, including women's empowerment in Afghanistan. We will continue

with determination to assist the country, including in facilitating the peace process. As a penholder in the Council — together with Germany — on Afghanistan, we will also continue to garner effective support for the country, including with the timely renewal of a high-quality UNAMA mandate.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: English and French]

First, I would like to thank Ms. Lyons for her briefing. The Niger recognizes the good work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in promoting peace, governance and development for the benefit of all Afghans. We are well aware of the importance of the coordination among all United Nations entities and other humanitarian actors in maximizing the effectiveness of Ms. Lyons' actions, especially in these times of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Mohseni for his presence and his briefing today. He can be proud of his leadership in the promotion of a free press and of women journalists.

As we have reiterated on many occasions, peace in Afghanistan can come about only through a negotiated political solution. In the spirit of seeking peace and stability as a priority, we welcome the latest measures taken by the Afghan Government, including the release of 4,600 prisoners. We hope that all remaining obstacles will be overcome and the way for intra-Afghan dialogue finally opened. Similarly, my delegation would like to stress the need for a reduction in violence, which would contribute positively to peacebuilding and reconciliation in the country. As in any good, negotiated solution, the protection of the constitutional rights of Afghan women throughout the peace process and the preservation of the gains of the past two decades, including human and minority rights as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution, must be protected and strengthened.

In closing, I would like to stress the importance of the international community's support for the Afghan people, including in development, the humanitarian sector and in the fight against terrorism and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage Afghanistan's friends and donor countries to continue their much-needed support at a crucial moment in the country's history.

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

At the outset, let me extend our deepest condolences to our Afghan friends — the people and the Government of Afghanistan — in the wake of the unprecedented flash floods that affected nearly 3,000 families and took dozens of lives.

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her observations on and assessments of the situation in Afghanistan. We believe that UNAMA has an important role to play in coordinating the international assistance pledged to the country. The Russian Federation supports the mandate and activities of the Mission. We also thank the Head of the MOBY Group, Mr. Saad Mohseni, for his briefing, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Adela Raz, for her statement.

We have carefully studied the recent report of the Secretary-General on the activities and efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan (S/2020/809). The country is now at a critical juncture, and the long-held desire of its people to seize the opportunity to achieve sustainable peace is evident. It is high time to focus all efforts on promoting national reconciliation that will lead to the end of a protracted war and the revival of a peaceful, united and independent Afghanistan that is free of terrorism and drug crime.

Let me reaffirm once again Russia's commitment to Afghanistan. We will continue to support the inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. An inclusive political settlement, which involves representatives of all parties, ethnic and religious minorities, sociopolitical groups and women, is at the heart of our efforts. As a friend and partner of Afghanistan, Russia has always stood and will stand ready to facilitate negotiations. We wish to enable Afghan parties to find an agreement that is acceptable to all and achieve a sustainable peace. This is the goal of our efforts within the troika plus Pakistan and our own interaction with all Afghan sides.

The swift start of intra-Afghan negotiations remains our highest priority. We note the recent progress made in terms of the release of prisoners. We do hope that all remaining hurdles will be removed in the coming days and that no further delays of the prompt launch of inclusive intra-Afghan negotiations will take place. Otherwise, this fragile peace process will simply be put in jeopardy. We strongly believe that Security Council members should once again speak with one voice on the importance of speeding up the start of the talks.

Against this backdrop, the security situation in Afghanistan remains volatile. We are seriously concerned about the continued presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Afghanistan. Major acts of terrorism occur regularly in various Afghan cities, including Kabul. This is clear evidence that ISIL is still very strong in the northern and eastern parts of the country. It is too premature to celebrate its defeat in the region: we are worried about ISIL's sleeper cells in north-eastern Afghanistan and the group's diversifying methods and channels for recruiting civilians to its ranks, especially Afghan youth. ISIL represents a real threat to the security of Afghanistan and its neighbours, the rest of Central Asia and Russia's southern regions. We strongly believe that this problem should not be underestimated.

Another challenge is the drug problem in Afghanistan, which is a threat that remains of serious concern for the country as well as for the region and the world as a

whole. Drug cultivation, production, trade and trafficking are sources of significant financial support for terrorism. We are concerned about the delays in the submission of the annual Afghanistan Opium Survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We do expect all the obstacles to be overcome. The problem must be completely eradicated. We are ready to fulfil our obligations by assisting the collective efforts against this threat, including through our active participation in the UNODC, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russia continues to provide training for narcotics squads from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the countries of Central Asia, as well as regular assistance under the auspices of UNODC's global Paris Pact initiative.

Afghanistan needs the full support and attention of the international community, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. We truly believe that actors from the region can and should play a substantive role in promoting the peace process. Their cooperation and assistance are critical to Afghanistan's peace, stability and sustainable development.

Annex X**Statement by the Counsellor of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jimesha Prince**

At the outset, we thank the President of the Security Council for convening today's meeting and convey our appreciation to Ms. Deborah Lyons and Mr. Saad Mohseni for their informative briefings.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to promote a durable political settlement and lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is currently at a critical juncture, as the volatile security and political situations have been further compounded by the spread of the coronavirus disease, natural disasters, food insecurity and other humanitarian concerns. More is expected of the United Nations: in particular in terms of leading international efforts towards a peaceful solution of the nearly two-decades-long conflict in the country and of coordinating the provision of humanitarian assistance. We appeal to members of the international donor community to renew their support for Afghanistan and cooperate closely with the United Nations to ensure that the urgent humanitarian needs are addressed.

We also emphasize the importance of regional consensus, which is imperative for the success of intra-Afghan peace and reconciliation. As we look towards the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiation, Afghanistan's partners in the region should engage constructively in support of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. We also call on partners in the region to strengthen relations and facilitate direct peace talks with the Taliban.

In the area of security, the situation in Afghanistan remains unpredictable and highly volatile. We strongly condemn all acts of violence and intimidation directed against civilians, the Afghan National Security Forces, United Nations and other humanitarian personnel, and other collateral targets. We reaffirm our serious concerns at the number of civilian casualties reported by UNAMA in its midyear update on the protection of civilians and reiterate our full support for a zero-tolerance approach to addressing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan, especially against women and children. The rights of all Afghans must be respected, in line with the Afghan Constitution and international law. Once more, we echo the Secretary-General's calls for a global ceasefire, which is an imperative for successful intra-Afghan negotiations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our strong commitment to UNAMA and the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. We remain convinced that a durable political solution to the conflict can only be achieved through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process that ensures the full, equal and effective participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels.

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

I wish to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Mr. Saad Mohseni, Chief Executive of the MOBY Group, for their insightful briefings. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Raz, to the Security Council and thank her for her statement.

Let me take this opportunity to extend South Africa's sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Afghanistan following the loss of life from the devastation brought about by intense flash flooding in recent weeks. Natural disasters, such as those that have ravaged Afghanistan over the past few weeks, continue to affect the humanitarian situation in the country, which is already of concern owing to the continuing violence, high levels of food insecurity and the additional strain caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In this regard, South Africa appreciates the measures taken by the Afghan Government and UNAMA to limit and respond to the spread of the virus and calls on the international community to continue its support for the Afghan people by ensuring that the necessary equipment and medical supplies are available to all those in need.

The only way to achieve long-term peace in Afghanistan is for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process and inclusive intra-Afghan negotiations. In this regard, South Africa welcomes President Ghani's recent announcement of the members of the High Council for National Reconciliation, led by Mr. Abdullah Abdullah. Additionally, we urge the Afghan leadership to fully adhere to the provisions of the political agreement signed in May 2020 and enhance their cooperation to fully implement this agreement, including the appointment of Cabinet Ministers and the filling of other Government positions. Accordingly, we express the hope that the parties can build on these positive developments by giving renewed impetus to an early start of intra-Afghan negotiations.

In this regard, it is essential to take on board the voices of all sectors of society, and South Africa supports the necessary inclusion of women in the Afghan peace negotiations. The unique views, perspectives and approaches of women are essential to establishing a safe, secure and peaceful Afghanistan. We know that all women involved at all levels of the peace process will continue to play an active role to this end. This includes ensuring that the gains made in the past two decades in restoring the fundamental human rights of women and girls are maintained and that greater opportunities and achievements for all Afghan women and girls will be part of their future.

In order for these peace talks to be effective, there must be a cessation of hostilities so that an environment conducive to intra-Afghan peace talks is created. We therefore call on all parties to cease their violent actions, particularly as this violence affects the most vulnerable members of society, namely, women and children.

Indeed, South Africa remains deeply concerned at the scale, severity and recurrence of violations and abuses endured by children in Afghanistan. All those responsible for conducting acts of grave violations against children must be brought to justice and held accountable, including through timely, systematic, impartial and independent investigations, and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction.

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, its efforts find an end to the violence, its work in support of a ceasefire, its promotion of 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 and the wider region.

Annex XII**Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, James Roscoe**

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for the remarks. I commend you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to invite Mr. Mohseni to brief us today and to offer a perspective of Afghanistan's dynamic and, as you heard, a vibrant civil society and media.

I was really struck by his vision of a peaceful Afghanistan where the Afghan people can be free from war and are able to reach their full potential. I was also struck by the polling that he set out for us that tells us what the people of Afghanistan really want for their future. I think it is important that we in the Security Council listen to and reflect on that.

I thought his vision clarified for us the objectives of the Afghan peace process, which we are all eager to support. We — the Afghan people and the international community — are not working towards an end to conflict alone, vital though that is. We are working to ensure that Afghans of all ethnicities, tribes, sexes and backgrounds can live in a country at peace where they can trust well-governed, accountable institutions, where they can enjoy the full extent of their fundamental human rights and where they can build their own future for themselves, for their families and for their communities.

For that reason, it is essential that the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations be fully inclusive and lead to a long-lasting and sustainable peace. That means ensuring effective and timely transitional justice for the victims of conflict and the protection and advancement of rights, such as the freedom of expression, as Mr. Mohseni highlighted today.

It also means that groups that suffered so much under Taliban rule must be able to have confidence that their rights will be protected. That is why the United Kingdom, as co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Women of Afghanistan, has made the participation of women and girls in the peace process and the protection of their rights such a priority here in New York, as well as in Afghanistan in the work of our Embassy in Kabul. I take this opportunity to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for her participation in the Arria Formula meeting on this issue that we co-hosted with Afghanistan, Germany and Indonesia in July.

That is the vision, and today we are closer than ever before to achieving it. We were glad to hear from Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons that the intra-Afghan negotiations will start within days. Afghanistan and its people potentially stand on the threshold of a new beginning. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons said, we have more reason than ever to hope for an end to conflict. But we also stand at the beginning of a process that will be long and challenging. It will require the support of all of us.

We commend the Afghan Government for taking the bold steps to remove obstacles that have allowed this moment to happen. We also commend the negotiating team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for its preparations, including outreach to women's groups and other civil society actors across the country. We note the continuing efforts to form the Cabinet and the High Council for National Reconciliation and hope both can be fully established and begin their work swiftly.

However, there are two sides to this negotiation. Let me emphasize that the Taliban, too, must demonstrate that they are a credible partner for peace. That means the following.

First, they must end the violence now. They cannot expect to be accepted back into Afghan society when they continue to attack and harm Afghan men, women and children.

Secondly, they must fulfil the commitment to countering terrorism by completely breaking with all terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, and condemning all acts of terrorism in Afghanistan, which continue to claim too many innocent lives.

Thirdly, they must engage in good faith in the upcoming negotiations.

With regard to the roles of the United Kingdom and the international community, for its part, the United Kingdom stands ready to provide its support at any stage of the upcoming peace process. We also lend our full backing to the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and the United Nations in supporting the talks. As one of the largest donors in Afghanistan, the United Kingdom is providing assistance via the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and, with our partners, we are planning how we can support Afghanistan in mitigating both the immediate health impact and, critically, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons said, the severe socioeconomic effects.

We are also working closely with Finland, the United Nations and other partners to prepare for the meetings later this year to secure Afghanistan's immediate financial stability and set out the future parameters of the international donor communities' medium-term support for Afghanistan.

Yesterday in London, the United Kingdom created the new Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. We will continue to bring the best of our diplomacy and development expertise to support the people of Afghanistan as they stand at this crucial juncture. We join Mr. Mohseni and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons in their pragmatic and cautious optimism.

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

I thank Special Representative Lyons for her briefing and for her leadership in guiding the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in support of peace, human rights, women's empowerment and economic development in Afghanistan. I also thank Mr. Mohseni for the work that he has done to promote freedom of expression in Afghanistan.

I would like to begin my remarks by commenting on the string of recent targeted attacks in and around Kabul. Those attacks are reprehensible and must end immediately. They erode the safety and security of Kabul's residents and workers, and they threaten the efforts of those working towards peace. For example, among the individuals targeted and killed in recent weeks was Mr. Abdul Baqi Amin, a scholar and an activist firmly committed to peace. The United States condemns that and all acts of terrorism, and we offer our sincere condolences to his family, his friends and everyone affected by those explosions and killings.

We urge all sides to move swiftly to deny spoilers the opportunity to shake the faith of those demanding peace now, when Afghanistan is closer than ever to advancing its peace process. President Ghani's decree paving the way for the Government's release of members of the Taliban, following the brave decision of the Loya Jirga, allows for the next steps of the peace process to occur and for intra-Afghan negotiations to begin soon.

The United States is encouraged by the Afghan Government's recent decision to finalize the make-up of the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation and to fill the majority of its Cabinet positions. Delays in implementing the May political agreement between President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah threaten progress on the peace process and governance reforms, as well as the Government's response to the coronavirus disease. An inclusive and unified Government is needed to serve the interests of all Afghans at this critical moment.

Another necessary component of a prosperous and secure Afghanistan is the meaningful participation of women in the peace process. Their essential role goes beyond addressing the issues that uniquely affect them. Their participation is vital to achieving economic progress and stability in Afghanistan, and that is why it is critical that their rights be protected and advanced. The United States has spoken clearly on what will happen if these rights are not maintained: No current, or future, Afghan Government should count on international donor support if that Government restricts or represses the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls.

I would like to pause for a moment to say something that I truly believe needs to be said: It is utterly cruel and incomprehensible that we have to be excited about something that should be a given. Why in the world have Afghanistan's women been so marginalized? It could be argued that, if women had participated fully in their country's development, Afghanistan would have not been held back for so long and would not be facing such a difficult path today. Since when do women have to justify their role in humankind? Do men negotiate their place? Women's leadership in the region is nothing new. Look at Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto.

We have to be thankful for the progress that has been made, however much more needs to be done. Women make up four out of 21 members of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's negotiating team, and we firmly believe that these women must have the opportunity to be heard. That is why we are appalled at the recent

attempted assassination on the life of the negotiator Ms. Fawzia Koofi. We strongly condemn this attack and hope that it will not deter Afghan women from continuing to speak out courageously and with conviction about their country's future.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration continues to follow through on its long-standing commitment to Afghanistan through the provision of critical humanitarian aid, recognizing that Afghanistan's humanitarian crises serve only to compound one another. Since the beginning of fiscal year 2020 alone, the United States has provided nearly \$99 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. In addition to the \$99 million, the United States has provided more than \$24 million in humanitarian assistance and roughly \$35 million in development assistance to support the response to the coronavirus disease pandemic in Afghanistan.

I would like to take this moment to thank the men and women of our military and humanitarian workers who have been killed or wounded trying to help Afghanistan build a better future.

Finally, as members in the Council are aware, we are in the midst of negotiating a new UNAMA mandate. As the intra-Afghanistan negotiation process begins, we must ensure UNAMA's mandate is especially clear and robust during this pivotal moment in history. All of us must display discipline and the political will to focus the mandate on the core issues that will support the Government and the people of Afghanistan in achieving peace.

The United States seeks a sovereign, unified and democratic Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours. Let me again express my appreciation to the United Nations and other international partners for their support in strengthening Afghanistan's democratic institutions and in support of the peace process.

Surrounding nations and neighbours also deserve credit for their constructive role in supporting refugees and humanitarian assistance that has been instrumental in so many Afghan lives. Together, we must all continue to support Afghanistan for a better future for the Afghan people.

Annex XIV

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

Australia welcomes progress towards intra-Afghan negotiations, and it stands ready to support where it can.

We appreciate progress made to appoint Cabinet members and delegates to the High Peace Council and encourage all stakeholders to work together to finalize these appointments through Parliament.

Afghanistan needs a strong, stable and unified Government to tackle the challenges of peace, development and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Australia urges all parties to build on the momentum of the recent Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr ceasefires to reduce violence and begin to negotiate a comprehensive, durable and resilient intra-Afghan peace agreement.

A significant barrier to peace is the ongoing high level of violence. We strongly condemn all attacks on civilians, and we call for an end to targeting human rights workers and peace negotiators. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the attempted assassination of Fawzia Koofi, a member of the Afghan Government's negotiating team.

Australia encourages all parties to the intra-Afghan negotiations to be inclusive and consultative towards a peaceful future. The rights of women and girls, and the inclusion of youth, are fundamentally important to the success and sustainability of Afghanistan's peace process. We call on all parties to ensure that the voices of women and girls are included in each part of the peace process, recognizing that women's participation is essential for Afghanistan's future as a modern economy integrated with the region and the wider world.

Afghanistan needs its women and youth to play an equal part in development, building on gains, but also reaching new heights. A healthy, safe and educated society needs women health workers, teachers and participants in economic life.

Australia expects continued progress on the hard-fought gains that have been made over the past 19 years, including further progress on the rights of women and girls.

Australia continues to be concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the people of Afghanistan. The scale of the crisis requires a robust response from all parties to avoid a new wave of poverty and despair. Australia echoes calls by the Afghan President, the Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for a humanitarian ceasefire as the best chance for Afghanistan to combat this deadly epidemic.

There are 14 million Afghans in urgent need of humanitarian assistance — almost 4 million close the famine level. We therefore encourage the international community to respond to their needs. We have responded by pivoting our development programme to assist, including support to humanitarian and health-care interventions.

We would like to stress the importance of seizing the moment. Now is the time for peace, and there is real hope for a lasting resolution that will consolidate, protect and build upon the gains of the past 19 years in Afghanistan, especially for women and girls.

We will continue to work closely with the Afghan Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, NATO and our fellow supporting nations to help end the long-lasting despair and conflict within Afghanistan.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

The candidate countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

A peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan free of terrorism is not only essential for its own stability and development, but also for that of the entire region and beyond. A negotiated political settlement leading to peace must result from an inclusive Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. The peace process should be built on the democratic and human rights achievements made by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan since 2001.

The European Union (EU) and its member States urge the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to seize the current historic opportunity for lasting peace and genuine reconciliation and engage in intra-Afghan negotiations. This will mark an important step towards the peace the people of Afghanistan deserve and have long demanded. We call for the parties to accompany the start of the peace talks with a ceasefire that would stop the unnecessary suffering and create the right conditions for the negotiations to prosper. We also call on Afghanistan's neighbours and regional stakeholders to actively and honestly engage in promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We underline the need to safeguard women's active participation in the talks.

The political process should strengthen the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and national unity of Afghanistan. To this end, the EU is working with all parties to ensure that peace negotiations are inclusive and respectful of the wishes of Afghans to live in a peaceful, secure and prosperous country, providing new opportunities for all of its citizens, where rights are upheld and vulnerable groups protected.

The EU and its member States are ready to support the parties as they embark on this peace process and wish to see the immediate start of intra-Afghan negotiations that are truly representative, where the voices of all Afghans, including persons belonging to minorities, are represented in a meaningful way. The EU notes in particular Afghanistan's commitment to enhancing women's meaningful participation in the peace process in its national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. The intra-Afghan negotiations must lead to a fair democratic process, and therefore reinforce the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Afghans.

The EU and its member States remain concerned at, and condemn the unacceptable levels of, violence — including sexual and gender-based violence — in Afghanistan, which have continued even after the Doha agreement. The EU's position remains clear and unchanged: Afghanistan needs a comprehensive ceasefire to accompany the peace negotiations and create a conducive environment for sustainable peace in the country as well as stability in the region. The EU and its member States fully support recent Security Council resolutions and the Secretary-General's call, of 23 March, for a global ceasefire, which have so far gone unheeded.

The Afghan Government has so far proven its readiness to start the talks. The Loya Jirga Assembly, composed of political leaders and elders in Afghanistan,

sent in its last recommendations a loud signal of peace, compromise and goodwill, including by recommending the release of thousands of prisoners convicted of the worst crimes. The Taliban must now demonstrate their willingness for peace, by entering into negotiations through dialogue and accepting the genuine ceasefire the people of Afghanistan deserve. Lasting peace cannot come at any cost and must not be built on impunity.

The EU and its member States, together with the United Nations and the international community, have demonstrated their commitment to remaining engaged in supporting the process and ensuring the best conditions for achieving a sustainable political settlement. We support NATO-led Resolute Support Mission efforts to provide further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions.

The unanimous adoption by the Security Council, on 10 March, of resolution 2513 (2020), which the EU fully supports, goes in that direction. The message sent by the Security Council was clear: the international community is ready to constructively support the start of intra-Afghan negotiations towards a lasting peace in Afghanistan, but commitments have to be met and sanctions will not automatically be softened or lifted only in correlation to their genuine commitment to peace.

The EU's sustained support for peace and development in Afghanistan will not be unconditional but assessed against political progress and the commitment of the parties to the conflict to a meaningful peace process. The European contribution will be rooted in our transparent, democratic values-based and principled approach, including safeguarding the human rights and fundamental liberties of all Afghans, including women, youth, minority groups, as well as victims of war, which must be preserved and further promoted.

The EU also expects strong structural reforms to be carried out, especially to reinforce the rule of law, promote good governance and better fight corruption, illegal immigration and drug-trafficking, as well as further enhancing cooperation regarding readmission. Financial support remains above all a political commitment. We recall that the EU, together with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and international partners, has been mobilizing significant resources to support the Government in its fight against corruption. Assuring donors that funds are being used efficiently and appropriately is an essential step. To see reforms fade or fail now would also mean a loss of these investments and a loss of Afghanistan's credibility. International partners will therefore carefully follow the progress made. At this point, a strong and positive signal is needed.

Looking ahead, the upcoming November 2020 Afghanistan conference in Geneva will be an important opportunity for the international community to confirm its continued commitment, including financially, to a peaceful, prosperous and self-reliant Afghanistan. Afghanistan is at a major crossroads and needs support from us all now more than ever. The EU reiterates its full support to the Government of Afghanistan, Finland and the United Nations in organizing that conference.

The spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the country and the lack of a health care system is also a matter of serious concern.

Finally, the EU recalls the strong and crucial role played by UNAMA and all United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people, encouraging peace and reconciliation, monitoring and promoting human rights, as well as implementing the commitments from the 2018 November ministerial conference on Afghanistan. The EU will continue to fully support UNAMA and cooperate closely with it on the ground and in all related international formats for the ultimate benefit of Afghanistan.

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

The people of Afghanistan are currently passing through a crucial stage in their decades-long struggle to overcome insecurity and instability and achieve their long-awaited aspiration: genuine and durable peace in their country. To that end, the swift commencement of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process involving all Afghan factions, including the Taliban and other political, ethnic and religious groups and minorities, enjoys strong national, regional and international support.

The process, in addition to preserving Afghanistan's past achievements, particularly its Constitution and political system, as well as ensuring the rights of women and all ethnic and religious minorities, must also aim at establishing solid foundations for comprehensive and lasting peace and sustainable socioeconomic development in the country.

Genuine and durable peace cannot be dictated or imposed. The right to decide about Afghanistan's future belongs exclusively to Afghans themselves. This must be recognized and respected by all. Accordingly, the international community, including the key regional and international players, while avoiding interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, must encourage, facilitate and support its people's efforts to determine their own future. At the same time, addressing the legitimate interests of Afghanistan's neighbours will ensure regional support for the establishment of an enduring peace in that country.

The Government's efforts, such as the formation of the High Council for National Reconciliation and the peace negotiating delegation, as well as the recent decisions of the Consultative Peace Jirga, indicate its seriousness about peace.

To ensure the success of the peace process, certain additional measures need to be taken, the most important of which is agreeing on a ceasefire, which can promote trust and confidence among conflicting parties. This, however, must not include combating the activities of terrorist groups, particularly Da'esh, whose terrorist acts are on the increase, endangering peace and security in Afghanistan and the entire region, including through the expansion of its operations into Central Asia. Taking effective measures to contain the coronavirus disease pandemic is another important step towards the establishment of peace in Afghanistan.

As a prerequisite for sustained socioeconomic development and stability in Afghanistan, we reiterate our strong call for a time-bound and responsible withdrawal of all foreign forces from that country, regardless of their mandate and structure. We also underline the high importance of supporting and strengthening Afghanistan's National Defence and Security Forces.

Following our intensive efforts aimed at bringing the two sides within the Government together, which facilitated the conclusion of a political agreement on the formation of the Cabinet of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also conducted extensive consultations with Afghan leaders and regional and international players to facilitate the peace talks, and stands ready to host the talks if the parties so desire.

In addition, as peace cannot be achieved and sustained in the absence of socioeconomic development, Iran, in parallel with its diplomatic efforts in support of peace, has continued its cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan in areas such as trade, transportation and health, which include projects concerning the development of Chabahar port, to be utilized by the Government of Afghanistan

for import and export, and the construction of roads and railroads to facilitate Afghanistan's access Afghanistan to the high seas and Central Asian countries.

While we spare no effort to promote our economic relations with Afghanistan, the inhumane sanctions of the United States against Iran have negatively affected the benefits that such efforts can bring for both Iran and Afghanistan.

Finally, Iran stands ready to support the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Iran reaffirms once again its resolve to support the fraternal people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu**

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and Mr. Saad Mohseni for their briefings, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Raz, for her statement. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2020/809).

The volatile security situation in Afghanistan remains alarming. The continuing violence has devastating repercussions for all Afghans, in particular for vulnerable groups, which have already suffered immensely for decades.

The Secretary-General reports that the security situation in the country puts the lives of children at risk more than those of any other group. The United Nations verified more than 600 child casualties during the second quarter of 2020 alone. The conflict also continues to take a heavy toll on women and girls.

The deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers is a stark reminder that those who wish to derail the peace process have no scruples about violating even the most fundamental human values. We strongly condemn these attacks and reaffirm our full support for Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has increased the vulnerability of the civilian population by deepening poverty and reducing access to essential services. The provision of sustained health services to those in need remains all the more critical, which requires collective effort and cooperation by the Afghan Government and the international community.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Afghanistan serves to further underscore the urgency of reducing violence in the country. An effective fight against the pandemic and the stability of Afghanistan will depend on improved security. In the face of such enormous challenges, Afghanistan needs the international community's support more than ever.

With this understanding, Turkey has delivered health-care assistance to Afghanistan as a solid display of its solidarity with the Afghan people and as another reflection of the deep-rooted relations between Turkey and Afghanistan, on the eve of their 100th anniversary next year.

There is now a historic chance for peace in Afghanistan. The Afghan people urgently need a sustainable peace, and the opportunity presented by the current momentum must be seized. At this critical juncture, unity has become even more essential within Afghan political groups in order to master the challenging tasks ahead for the future of Afghanistan. We stress the importance of an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

We welcomed and supported the United States-Taliban agreement of 29 February, with a view to paving the way for the intra-Afghan negotiations aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the country. Peace should be built on the gains of the past 19 years. We should preserve and strengthen respect for fundamental rights. All our efforts towards the empowerment of women and girls should not be wasted.

We fully embrace the international community's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, which is essential to creating a conducive environment for the peace talks.

Regional consensus is a must for an enduring peace. At the same time, we see a proliferation of initiatives and formats seeking to ensure regional and international support for an eventual peace. Existing platforms that enjoy a vast membership and great expertise, such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, can be utilized as an umbrella platform at this critical time, as well as to assist post-peace stabilization efforts. Let me emphasize Turkey's readiness to contribute to peace efforts in its national capacity or through regional processes.

In the run-up to the Geneva conference, we expect that donors will also consider the increasing needs on the ground in the face of the pandemic. For the years 2018 to 2020, Turkey has pledged \$150 million for Afghanistan's development. From 2018 to date, we have conducted almost 300 projects throughout the country, focusing primarily on education, health, good governance, capacity-building and agriculture. We will continue to play our part in helping the Afghan people, particularly in terms of capacity-building, education for girls and developing health infrastructure.

Let me also emphasize our strong support for the central role assumed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in assisting the Afghan people in various fields. We hope that the negotiations regarding the renewal of its mandate will be finalized successfully so as to enable UNAMA to continue with its critical activities.

Finally, Turkey reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. We remain committed to Afghanistan's development on all fronts, and we will continue to support the Afghan people's aspirations to a peaceful, secure and stable future.
