



Security Council

Distr.: General
26 March 2021

Original: English

Letter dated 25 March 2021 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 Ms. Shaharzar Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Afghanistan”, convened on Tuesday, 23 March 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of Afghanistan.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Germany, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar and Turkey.

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

(Signed) Linda **Thomas-Greenfield**
President of the Security Council



Annex 1**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons**

Over six months have now passed since the launch of the Afghanistan peace negotiations on 12 September. It has been one year since the signing of the agreement between the United States and the Taliban, and the concurrent joint declaration between the Government of Afghanistan and the United States. It is therefore a timely moment to take stock and to assess what more must be done to support the Afghan people on their path towards peace. The killings, the displacement, the suffering of the Afghan people must end now.

Since my last briefing (see S/2020/1274), progress at the negotiations in Doha has slowed. Afghans and their international partners have begun to voice understandable frustrations about the lack of real outcomes, against the backdrop of extreme violence around the country. It is notable that both sides have been dedicated to remaining at the negotiating table. In my recent trip to Doha, I was encouraged to hear from both sides of substantive progress being made on key agenda items. But more must be done to demonstrate to Afghans that the negotiations are truly progressing in the interests of the Afghan people.

As talks continue, many stakeholders are increasingly looking to the United Nations to play a more prominent role. I welcome the appointment of my experienced colleague Jean Arnault as the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues, which will enhance and complement our ongoing work on regional cooperation. We in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will be working closely with the Personal Envoy in support of Afghan peace and regional engagement.

For their part, Member States have played a vital role in coming up with new initiatives to reinvigorate the peace process. International attendees at the recent meeting in Moscow made it clear that they all wanted to see fresh impetus in the negotiations. The extended troika — comprising Russia, China, the United States and Pakistan — released a statement advocating a “durable and just political resolution” resulting in “the formation of an independent, sovereign, unified, peaceful, democratic, and self-sufficient Afghanistan”.

The proposed meeting to be held in Turkey is another opportunity to solidify the principles on which the process will be based and potentially lay the foundations for a just and inclusive political settlement.

These initiatives must be focused and coherent. Above all, they must reinforce, rather than undermine, the Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha. As we enter this upcoming period of heightened intensity, all of us — neighbours, regional players and international partners — have the responsibility to ensure that our actions are well integrated, mutually reinforcing and, most importantly, are in the best interests of the Afghan people.

Given the many interests involved — domestic and international — we always knew that this would be a complicated peace. Decades of conflict have created real grievances on all sides and there remains a lack of trust among the parties. There are also genuine and profound differences between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban over their desired end state.

None of this can be resolved in the work of a moment or in a few meetings, no matter the location or format. Addressing these issues will require patience and commitment on both sides. But my experience, from speaking to the parties in Doha

and to Afghans from all walks of life, tells me that peace is possible. Afghans are not just ready for peace: they are demanding it. And all sides need the violence to stop.

If the peace process is to be sustainable, the parties must look not to Afghanistan's past, but to its future. Any peace settlement must take into account the views and concerns of all Afghans — not just those of an elite few. I pay tribute to Ms. Akbar, who, along with her colleagues in the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and other organizations, such as the Afghan Women's Network, has done tremendous work to make the process more inclusive — of women, of youth, of ethnic minorities, of victims of war. As the international standard bearer for human rights, the United Nations is working side by side with all Afghans to promote an inclusive peace.

I have followed with admiration the work of many Afghan women throughout these negotiations. While still too few in numbers, they are demonstrating through their contributions how the country has changed over the past two decades. Women must and will inform discussions on all topics. They must be present in the room and at the table when the future of the country is decided on.

Because this is not the Afghanistan of 20 years ago! Both the peace process and any peace agreement must reflect the Afghan population of today. Allow me to recall that half of all Afghans were born after the signing of the Bonn Agreement in 2001. This generation has grown up in a different Afghanistan — one in which women have access to positions of power; young people aspire to a proper education; media play a vital civic role and civil society has had the space to flourish. These Afghans are now a majority. They deserve to have their voices heard during negotiations and to have a substantial role in Afghan society after a peace agreement is concluded.

But all Afghans are suffering from unprecedented levels of violence, even as peace negotiations continue. In the first two months of 2021, we have witnessed the continued trend of rising civilian casualties, documented since the start of the Afghanistan peace negotiations in September. Particularly worrying is the spate of attacks deliberately targeting civilians. Already this year, UNAMA has documented more than 80 Afghans — including in the media, civil society, members of the judiciary, religious scholars and government officials — who have lost their lives in these brutal targeted attacks.

But this does not convey the full, crippling impact of the violence on Afghanistan's civic life. For every Afghan killed, there are many more who leave their professions or intend to leave their country. I thank members of the Council for their statement of 12 March condemning the recent spate of attacks deliberately targeting civilians (SC/14464). We must all raise our voices against these egregious acts of violence.

Against this backdrop, Afghans continue to suffer from a deepening humanitarian crisis, and the threat of drought is looming. Food insecurity is at record levels, with more than 40 per cent of the population in emergency and crisis situations. The low precipitation and high temperatures witnessed over the La Niña season have raised concern over a further deterioration, and as always, the poorest Afghans will suffer most. I count on you, and all Member States, to contribute generously to the humanitarian response plan, which stands at just 6 per cent funded. Much more support is needed if Afghanistan is not to fall further behind.

But money alone is not enough. Humanitarian workers continue to be targeted with threats, violence and interference with the impartial delivery of assistance. Such acts are illegal and unjustifiable. They also have grave consequences for the lives and livelihoods of Afghans. Humanitarian partners must be able to operate without being illegally taxed, harassed, threatened or killed. I raised this issue recently with

the Taliban, and members of our humanitarian team are following up with them in Doha. We have also been working with the Afghan Government to ensure its legislative framework protects the space of non-governmental organizations carrying out humanitarian work.

For now, Afghanistan seems to have weathered the second wave of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. While we must remain vigilant about a potential third wave, vaccinations have now begun, thanks to donations from the Government of India and the support of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility. As the vaccination campaign continues to ramp up, we must ensure that vaccines reach all prioritized groups across the country.

Developments in Afghanistan do not affect only Afghans — they affect the global community. To take just one example, the cultivation and trafficking of illegal narcotics continues to threaten stability in Afghanistan and the region. Last year saw opium poppy cultivation increase by over a third, while the number of counter-narcotics operations was reduced significantly. We know from other processes that an illicit economy can continue to threaten peace and security long after a peace agreement is signed. Sustained cooperation will be needed to mitigate this threat to Afghanistan and the region.

Another enduring threat is that of transnational terrorism, particularly associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In the last quarter, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for 25 violent attacks, a steep increase over the previous three months. Recently, the group claimed responsibility for the brutal killing of three female media representatives in Jalalabad city. This violence is a vivid demonstration of the ongoing threat that terrorism poses to Afghanistan, the region and the world.

When I speak to you next, we will have passed the proposed date for the withdrawal of international troops under the United States-Taliban agreement. I hope that by then, we will be able to discuss real progress, brought about by continued negotiations in Doha, tangible outcomes from the Turkey meeting, and, if not a ceasefire, at least a substantial de-escalation in violence. The coming months will also see further increased activity on the regional front, starting with the Heart of Asia ministerial meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, at which regional countries will gather and, I know, reaffirm their ongoing support for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

All this could mark a turning point, but the road ahead is still not clear. We will continue working with all parties — the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, community leaders and the international community — to foster coherent support for a much-needed peace.

Annex 2**Statement by the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Shaharзад Akbar**

I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council. I would like to thank the United States for inviting me to share my perspectives on human rights in Afghanistan and the Afghanistan peace process.

Let me begin by thanking the Council for its statement on 12 March condemning the targeted killings in Afghanistan (SC/14464). It was a welcome recognition of the unbearable cost of targeted killings to Afghanistan's present and future, and the environment of fear and intimidation created by this horrendous tactic. The war in Afghanistan remains one of the deadliest conflicts for civilians in the world. The ongoing targeting of civilians that may constitute war crimes is almost a daily occurrence. The onslaught of attacks has further shrunk the civic space, leading to self-censorship for journalists, human rights defenders and religious scholars, among others, thus impacting the quality of public engagement and debate on issues critical to Afghanistan's present and future. Every day I hear about another activist or businessperson that has decided to leave owing to security concerns. As efforts for peace intensify, there should be a greater sense of urgency to end the violence and declare a ceasefire, to save lives and improve public engagement and participation.

I previously had the honour of addressing the Council last June (see S/2020/597), at the kind invitation of France, before the intra-Afghan peace negotiations began in Qatar in September. At the time, I stressed the importance of an inclusive, transparent peace process and a comprehensive ceasefire. Ten months later, I regret to report that the situation has worsened and therefore my message is more urgent than before. Since the talks began, the violence towards Afghans has intensified and the public has lost hope in the process.

We need your attention. With re-energized regional and international engagement, there could be renewed hope in the possibility of peace, but a rushed process could tip the country back into full-scale war. The recent events have displayed a trend towards the capture of the negotiations by a group of elite men, some of whom have been responsible for perpetuating the violence. Any settlement that excludes the wider public will almost certainly be short lived and is unlikely to lead to lasting peace.

I urge the Council to not look the other way as members push us towards a peace deal doomed to fail. Building peace takes more than a deal among elites. It must be an inclusive national endeavour. We urgently need the killing to stop and we urgently need to begin that national dialogue with all Afghans.

Only if the process is inclusive, represents the diversity of Afghanistan and is not cut too short to avoid difficult but critical issues does it have a chance of success.

We in the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission urge the peace negotiations to include a fair representation of persons from a range of backgrounds in order to reflect the experiences and needs of different communities, including religious, regional and ethnic groups. The process should ensure the participation of women, minorities, youth, civil society and the vibrant Afghan media, as well as victims. Women's equal participation and full involvement in the peace process are essential. A minimum of 30 per cent of the participants in the talks should be women with the steps being taken to achieve full gender balance. Women and civil society's participation in the process contributes to the success and durability of peace agreements everywhere. A process that excludes women or tokenizes their participation will lack credibility and fail to inspire public confidence. At the recent

conference in Moscow, I, like many Afghan women, was shocked and angered to see only one Afghan woman, Dr. Habiba Sarabi, in a room full of men discussing the future of my country.

Afghan women have fought for their human rights for many decades and have made considerable progress in education, employment and political participation. Afghan women are experts everywhere — from politics to public administration, security, business, science and information technology. Despite the environment of violence and fear, Afghan women and civil society continue to mobilize and raise their voices in support of a ceasefire, a political solution to the conflict, victims' rights and the human rights of all Afghans. Excluding or marginalizing them from the main discussions about the future of Afghanistan is not only unjust and unacceptable, but unwise and unhelpful to lasting peace.

If they are to lead to a lasting peace, the talks should address human rights and victims' rights. A robust reparations programme, a national community-based programme focused on reconciliation, a truth-seeking process, memorialization and victim recognition should be key elements of the peace agreement. The existing legal obligations in relation to fundamental rights must be respected by both parties to the peace agreement and by any new government. This includes a commitment to the bill of rights in the current Afghan Constitution and to Afghanistan's commitments under international human rights treaties, which include respect for the rights of women and minorities and the equality of all citizens. Amnesties for certain crimes are permissible at the end of conflicts but cannot be applied to war crimes, crimes against humanity or grave human rights violations. Impunity for such egregious crimes is unlawful and undermines sustainable peace.

Afghans are exhausted by war and yearn for peace. With the start of negotiations and international support for a political solution to Afghanistan's conflict, many of us experienced a glimmer of hope and began to imagine a better future for ourselves and our children. That hope can be sustained and strengthened only if Afghans get relief from the relentless violence; the peace process reflects the concerns and aspirations of all our society, including women and victims; and our fundamental rights as citizens, without gender, ethnic or other discrimination, are recognized and upheld, not violated or bargained off.

Peace in Afghanistan will contribute to peace in the region and the world. The Commission welcomes the United Nations heightened role in the process. By standing with Afghans to ensure a process that is more likely to end the violence and deliver a just and durable peace in my country, the Council will be fulfilling its historic mandate.

Annex 3**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese and English]

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for the briefing and I listened carefully to the statement by Ms. Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to address the Council at this meeting.

At present, the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. Political means provide the only right way to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan, which is the common goal of all parties. Since the start of the intra-Afghan talks last September, the Afghan Government and the Taliban have agreed on a code of conduct to advance the talks, and progress has been made. We appreciate the efforts of all parties in Afghanistan in this respect. As the intra-Afghan talks are hard to come by and the negotiations enter the substantive stage, the process will not be an easy one. But as long as the two sides set store by the interests of the country and the people, demonstrate political determination and wisdom, and remain committed to dialogue and consultations, they will arrive at a viable path towards a political solution.

In the light of recent developments, I would touch on three points.

First, the Afghan peace process should continue to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. China has taken note of some new initiatives on the Afghan issue on the part of the international community recently. We welcome all efforts conducive to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. At the same time, China has always maintained that the Afghan peace and reconciliation process must adhere to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned principle. The future of Afghanistan should be in the hands of the Afghan people themselves. The country's future political arrangement should be decided independently by the Afghans and no solutions should be imposed from the outside. All elements in Afghanistan, especially women, should fully participate in the peace process on an equal footing. Efforts by the international community should serve to encourage and support the peace and reconciliation process and must respect the ownership of the Afghan people. We welcome the positive outcome of the extended troika held in Moscow last week. This helps build international consensus and encourages all parties in Afghanistan to advance the peace talks. At present, there are various international mechanisms on the Afghan issue, along with some recent initiatives to hold conferences on it. We hope that the relevant parties will fully communicate and coordinate with each other and define the goals in order to form synergy. Relevant conferences should yield tangible results and should not be convened for the sake of convening. China notes that the Secretary-General appointed a Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues last week, whose mandate and objectives should be further fleshed out along with the division of labour with Special Representative Lyons, among others.

Secondly, we should help Afghanistan achieve security and stability as soon as possible. The cessation of fighting and violence and the enjoyment of peace are the greatest aspirations of more than 37 million Afghans, and also the common expectation of regional countries and the international community. The current frequent violent attacks and insecurity in Afghanistan remain worrisome. China condemns the violent attacks against civilians and civilian facilities, such as schools, medical facilities and hospitals, and calls on all parties in the country to actively respond to the Secretary-General's global ceasefire initiative and stop the fighting

and violence as soon as possible. The international community should continue to support the Afghan security forces in their capacity-building, so that they can effectively respond to the threats of transnational crimes and drug-trafficking, crackdown on the activities of terrorist organizations, such as the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, protect civilians and ensure the protection of women and children from violence. Consideration should be given to the impact of the withdrawal of foreign forces on peace and security in Afghanistan. China maintains that foreign troops cannot come and leave as they wish. The withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan should be orderly and responsible to avoid leaving a security vacuum that would undermine the security and stability of the Afghanistan and other countries in the region.

Thirdly, we should support Afghanistan in carrying out regional cooperation to promote its economic and social development. Afghanistan is the hub for South and Central Asia. Only by strengthening connectivity and engaging in regional cooperation can Afghanistan fully tap its geographical advantages, promote development and improve people's livelihoods. The international community should help Afghanistan engage in regional cooperation and connectivity, implement its 2021-2025 National Peace and Development Framework, and resolve a series of thorny issues, such as poverty, refugees and drugs, so as swiftly to achieve stability and prosperity. China has all along actively supported Afghanistan's economic and social development and helped deepen connectivity and economic and trade cooperation with regional countries under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. China encourages the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to make good use of the working group of the six neighbouring countries, and actively contribute to promoting regional cooperation and connectivity between Afghanistan and regional countries.

The coronavirus disease has posed huge challenges to the economic and social development of Afghanistan. China has delivered multiple shipments of anti-pandemic materials to Afghanistan. We will continue to work with the international community to provide necessary help in controlling the pandemic as soon as possible and promoting economic and social recovery.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that, as a good neighbour and a true friend of Afghanistan, China will as always stand with the Afghans and be a supporter, a mediator and a facilitator for the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. We will continue to contribute to the achievement of peace, reconciliation, development and prosperity in the country.

Annex 4**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Lyons and Ms. Akbar for their detailed and sobering briefings on the situation in Afghanistan. With the violence and attacks on civilians, the need for humanitarian assistance and the coronavirus disease pandemic, conditions in Afghanistan today are looking worse than they have in a decade.

It is deeply troubling to hear that the security situation has deteriorated to its worst level since the deployment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The intensifying armed clashes continue to take the heaviest toll on the civilian population, with the number of casualties noticeably increasing since the start of the peace negotiations. The recent wave of deliberate attacks targeting civilians is indefensible. These assassinations — in particular, of prominent civil servants, human rights defenders and journalists — must be investigated and the perpetrators held accountable. I would like to recall that the Council has recently underlined that these targeted killings of civilians may constitute war crimes and must stop immediately.

The increased violence has been accompanied by the humanitarian situation deteriorating to unprecedented levels. Nearly half the population of Afghanistan is in need of humanitarian assistance, but, at the same time, increasing violence is severely impeding humanitarian access and claiming the lives of ever more aid workers. It is vital to support UNAMA's efforts to improve the accessibility of humanitarian aid to people in dire need.

I would like, separately, to highlight the distressing effect the conflict is having on children in Afghanistan, with almost one-third of all civilian casualties being children and half of all kids under the age of five now facing acute malnutrition.

Today, we reiterate once again our call for an immediate, permanent and comprehensive ceasefire to save the Afghan people from more meaningless suffering and to create a conducive environment for sustainable peace in the country as well as stability in the region. The current soaring violence has contributed to diminishing public confidence and trust in efforts towards peace. All parties, particularly the Taliban, must fulfil their commitments and work towards ending violence to save civilian lives.

We welcome the recent agreement to accelerate intra-Afghan peace negotiations. Sustainable peace can be achieved only through a sustainable political settlement accepted by all constituencies, including marginalized groups. To achieve this, the peace process must protect and reinforce the rights of all Afghans, including women, youth and persons belonging to minorities, and preserve the gains achieved in the past two decades and guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution. We emphasize the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the peace process. Women are equally experiencing the devastating impact of this unending war and have been fighting for the survival of countless families.

Estonia and the European Union remain ready to support Afghans as they pursue the peace process. Such sustained cohesive support of the international community, in particular the countries of the region, is crucial to facilitating and guaranteeing peace in Afghanistan. We welcome active outreach by all parties in support of the peace process and endorse here the engagement of UNAMA and the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues, Mr. Arnault.

This is certainly the most difficult phase that UNAMA has witnessed since the beginning of the Mission in Afghanistan. I would like to conclude by commending

UNAMA for its continuous efforts, in particular for its work in promoting the role of women with regard to peace and security agenda, addressing the situation of children affected by armed conflict, supporting transitional justice, victim-centred justice and the inclusion of civil society, and for its activities in supporting the protection of human rights under challenging conditions in Afghanistan.

Annex 5**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst**

[Original: French]

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Deborah Lyons and Shaharзад Akbar for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. Each in her own way — with her experience, commitment and total dedication to a country and its security — reminds us, as if there were still any need, of the central role that women play in peace negotiations. In this regard, I would also like to welcome Habiba Sarabi, 2021 laureate of the Simone Veil Prize of the French Republic, and to welcome her commitment to reconciliation and lasting peace.

The numerous diplomatic initiatives under way give us grounds to hope for momentum towards and prospects for peace, which are most welcome. They are invaluable for the resumption the Afghan-led intra-Afghan talks in the context of the process taking place in Doha between the negotiating teams designated by the two parties.

In this regard, we welcome the appointment of Jean Arnault alongside Deborah Lyons. Thanks to his extensive experience, we expect him to help ensure the overall coherency of these multiple initiatives, in close collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and regional partners. The full, active and effective participation of women in all formats of the peace process is an essential condition for its long-term success.

Moreover, the process must be inclusive. In this regard, we advocate the participation of Afghanistan's major supporters. The European Union, as leading donor and whose member States contribute almost half of all troops on the ground, has a rightful place in these discussions.

While there is renewed hope for peace, this must not hide the fact that trust has been sorely tested and weakened by the level of violence. The Security Council recently firmly condemned targeted attacks in its press statement of 12 March (SC/14464). The murder women and men participating in the life of a democracy is unacceptable. Such violence is an obstacle to peace, as recalled in the troika statement issued following the Moscow conference on 18 March.

We call for the implementation of a ceasefire, in accordance with resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2565 (2021). The protection of civilians, in particular women and children, and of civilian infrastructure must be an absolute priority. Respect for international humanitarian law, human rights and press freedoms, by all parties, is non-negotiable. Those responsible for these horrific crimes must be held accountable. There can be no impunity for them.

Many speakers highlighted the serious and deteriorating humanitarian situation: one in two children under the age of five will be acutely malnourished by 2021. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has contributed to doubling the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in one year. In the face of this situation, donor mobilization is essential. Accordingly, we welcome the European Union's pledge at the donor conference last November of €1.2 billion over four years.

Access for medical and humanitarian personnel to all those in need, as well as their protection, must be guaranteed. The number of incidents impeding humanitarian access more than doubled in 2020; this is unacceptable. We must also ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. In this respect, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility has a key role to play.

Finally, peace will not be sustainable as long as drug trafficking continues to gain ground. The fight against drugs in all its dimensions, from prevention to the eradication of production and trafficking, must be a priority. Terrorist groups benefit from the resources generated by drug trafficking and use them to destabilize not only Afghanistan but the whole region. We welcome the role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in combating this scourge and call on all parties, in accordance with their commitments, to resolutely undertake to fulfil this objective. The challenges are numerous, but I can assure the Council that France is ready, alongside its partners, to assist Afghanistan on the road to peace.

Annex 6**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons for her comprehensive briefing and join other members in expressing appreciation for the work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for her briefing. I deeply appreciate the statement delivered by Ambassador Adela Raz of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is going through a critical phase. The violence, unabated terror attacks and targeted assassinations have reached unprecedented levels. Targeted attacks on Afghan security forces, ulamas, innocent students in schools and universities, women occupying positions of responsibility, journalists, civil rights activists, youth and minority communities only serve to highlight the concerted effort by terrorists and their sponsors to erode the gains of the last two decades. The report of the Secretary General (S/2021/252) makes it clear that the commencement of the intra-Afghan talks has, regrettably, not resulted in a decrease in violence; on the contrary, it has only increased.

Members of the Security Council came together earlier this month to strongly condemn the alarming number of attacks deliberately targeting civilians in Afghanistan (see SC/14464). They also expressed their deep concern about the threat posed by terrorism to Afghanistan and the region. These attacks are aimed at forcing the Afghan people to make predetermined choices through coercion and at spreading fear and intimidation within the society. As Afghanistan's immediate neighbour, we are deeply concerned at the rising use of violence as a tool for pressure tactics.

India believes that an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan is the need of the hour. This is not only in the interest of the people of Afghanistan, who have been the victims of unrelenting violence, but a basic prerequisite for the success of the peace process. It goes without saying that talks and violence cannot go hand in hand.

India supports all efforts aimed at achieving sustainable peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. Such a process must be transparent, inclusive, Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled, fully respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

The gains of the last two decades must be preserved in any constitutional framework that Afghanistan designs for itself. The rights of women, minorities and the vulnerable need to be protected, and respect for human rights and democracy must be ensured. The full participation of women and ethnic and religious minorities in the peace process is essential to preserving a democratic and pluralistic polity.

For enduring peace in Afghanistan, terrorist safe havens and sanctuaries must be dismantled immediately and terrorist supply chains be broken. There needs to be zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It is important to ensure that the territory of Afghanistan is not used by terrorist groups to threaten or attack any other country. Those providing material and financial support to terrorist entities must be held accountable, without any double standards.

For Afghanistan's economic development, it is important that it have unhindered access to the high seas. The international community should work towards the removal of artificial transit barriers imposed on the country and ensure the full transit rights guaranteed to Afghanistan under bilateral and multilateral transit agreements without any hindrance.

As neighbours, India and Afghanistan share a natural and long-standing historical relationship. Our strategic partnership and enduring commitment to the development of Afghanistan reflect this time-tested partnership. In pursuance of the same, over the last 20 years, India has committed over \$3 billion towards development, reconstruction and capacity-building in the country. We have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Afghanistan for building the Shahtoot Dam, which would provide safe drinking water for the residents of Kabul city. India is also launching phase IV of its high-impact community development projects in Afghanistan, which include more than 100 projects, valued at \$80 million. As of today, our developmental footprint is spread across all 34 provinces of the country.

To provide greater regional connectivity, India has operationalized air-freight corridors and the Chabahar port. India has extended humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan with the transfer of 75,000 metric tons of wheat through Chabahar port in order to overcome food insecurity resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Further, as a part of our endeavour to help Afghanistan get through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have contributed a supply of 968,000 Made-in-India vaccine doses to the country, 500,000 of which were supplied by India in the form of a grant.

Several Indian nationals, in particular our diplomats, including my dear colleague V. Venkateshwara Rao and also Brigadier Ravi Datt Mehta, as well as engineers and doctors, have sacrificed their lives for Afghanistan while on duty. We in India therefore have faced the highest stakes in ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan. We are ready to work with all stakeholders, including countries of the region, towards that objective.

India continues to stand with Afghanistan in ensuring restoration of normalcy through a legitimate democratic process that is essential for the long-term stability of the country and the region. India will continue to provide all support to the Government and the people of Afghanistan in realizing their aspirations for a peaceful, democratic and prosperous future, free of terror, so as to protect and promote the rights and interests of all sectors of Afghan society.

Annex 7**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I want to thank Special Representative Lyons and Ms. Akbar for their informative — and, I must say, sobering — briefings today. I also want to welcome to the Security Council my dear friend and colleague Ambassador Adela Raz, whose compassion for her people humbles many of us in this meeting today.

Today's debate comes at a pivotal moment for the country and the people of Afghanistan. We have heard a lot to remind us of the truism that peace really is a process and not a moment. We have heard about the ongoing challenges for the country, including the high levels of violence. We are forced once again to call for an end to that violence and for a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire. This is clearly what the Afghan people desire and demand, and it is surely what the Afghans deserve.

Through Special Representative Lyons, I want to express Ireland's appreciation and full support for the critically important work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has taken on under her leadership, in what we all know are really challenging circumstances in the country.

The Security Council's recent condemnation of targeted attacks against women, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, medical personnel and humanitarian workers, among others, demonstrates the scale of — but also the unity of our own purpose against — this horrific violence. Ireland stands in support of those in Afghanistan who demonstrate such bravery in the face of threats, lest we forget, as Mrs. Raz poignantly said this morning.

Ms. Akbar recently wrote powerfully about the terror and fear that those attacks have generated, including forcing many into silence or into leaving their own country, Afghanistan. She highlighted that this would create a void in the country that will take another generation to fill. This violence and intimidation cannot stand. In response to the escalating threats, Ireland is increasing the assistance we provide in the country to support those who are in danger.

Today we are also at a critical juncture on the path to peace — with new initiatives, we hope — in addition to the ongoing Doha negotiations. It is crucial that Afghans themselves remain engaged at the core of all processes. We urge all parties to work in good faith to reach a negotiated settlement and a fully inclusive and sustainable, dignified peace that reflects and respects the needs and wishes of the Afghan people, who, after decades of conflict and instability, deserve no less.

Special Representative Lyons said this morning that building peace takes more than a deal among elites, that the process must be inclusive, which is a point that we reiterate. It is vital that all peace negotiations protect the hard-won gains of the last two decades and reinforce fundamental rights. The international community has a role to play in supporting these negotiations. As a long-standing partner of and significant donor to Afghanistan, the European Union (EU) can make an important contribution to any future discussions, while recognizing that, above all, it is the Afghan people — all Afghans, including men, women, youth, and minorities — who belong at the heart of their own process, building their own future together — a future based on equality, democracy and the rule of law. Only an inclusive peace, which upholds the inalienable rights of the Afghan people, will be sustainable.

Ireland is very proud to co-chair, with Afghanistan, the United Nations Group of Friends of Peace Processes. We are committed to ensuring that all peace initiatives, including the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, occur not just in

words, but in actions. Women's participation in the room and at the negotiating table is fundamental to the success of any peace process. I am very concerned at the shockingly low levels of female representation at the meetings in Moscow last week. I share the opinion expressed by Habiba Sarabi, the sole female delegate, that "the views of 51 per cent of people should not be ignored". As my good friend Adela Raz has often said, "peace will fail if women's rights are not guaranteed".

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/252) highlights the extremely high levels of violence faced by women and children in Afghanistan, as well as the difficulties victims of gender-based violence encounter in accessing justice. I echo the call on the Afghan Government to strengthen the implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women.

The Special Representative's briefing on the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan today was really marked and stark. Half of the population, some 18.4 million people, are in humanitarian need. The ongoing violence is exacerbating this crisis. Interference with humanitarian access is always unacceptable and always prolongs the suffering of vulnerable people.

We are gravely concerned about the impact of drought, combined with the coronavirus disease, on what is already the world's second worst — I underline this — the world's second worst food-insecurity crisis. At a time where the humanitarian plan for Afghanistan is chronically underfunded, Ireland, the EU and the wider international community will continue to stand with the Afghan people to provide the required assistance.

In conclusion, the challenges facing Afghanistan are many and complex. But peace would create the space in which they could be tackled. As we have heard, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan is also critical for regional security, stability and development. We value the role played in Afghanistan by UNAMA and also welcome the appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues.

Together with the EU and our international partners, Ireland continues to stand with the people of Afghanistan at this moment of hope and expectation, to achieve a dignified peace that will build a stable, inclusive and prosperous future for all Afghans.

Annex 8**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino**

My delegation thanks Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for their briefings, and welcomes the participation of the Afghanistan Permanent Representative at today's meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/252) and for appointing Mr. Jean Arnault as his Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues.

Kenya's delegation notes with concern that, since September 2020, when the Afghanistan peace negotiations began, the number of targeted attacks and killings have continued to rise. Kenya joins other delegations in condemning these atrocities. Our sympathies and condolences go out to the families of the targeted civil servants, judiciary staff, media and health-care personnel, members of the civil society and ethnic and religious minorities who have been affected by the violence in one way or another.

Kenya is opposed to the use of terrorism or any form of violence and intimidation as a means for political ends. We urge all parties to immediately cease hostilities, bring a stop to targeted attacks and embrace dialogue as the only viable means to achieve sustainable peace. In this regard, we welcome regional and international efforts in support of the peace process.

In order to maintain the desired renewed commitment and sustain the efforts to advance the inter-Afghan negotiations, Kenya's delegation wishes to make four points. First, the Government of Afghanistan should do more to stem the culture of impunity. It must conduct thorough investigations into the ongoing killings and other forms of violence and promote genuine accountability and ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted.

Secondly, it is imperative for the parties to honour their obligations under international humanitarian law in all circumstances, including the protection of civilians and in facilitating humanitarian access. Kenya notes that Afghanistan is facing an acute food-insecurity crisis with more than 40 per cent of the population at crisis or emergency levels. Regrettably, the widespread insecurity, which grew by 146 per cent from 2019 to 2020, regularly delayed assistance and prolonged the suffering of vulnerable people.

Thirdly, sustainable peace in Afghanistan will require a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process that is aimed at a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, as well as an inclusive political settlement. In this regard, Kenya fully supports the ongoing intra-Afghan peace talks and hopes that the aspirations of the population for peace and stability will be delivered, bringing the decades-old conflict to an end.

Fourthly, the inclusive political peace process must have the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. Although women's networks continue to amplify calls for a ceasefire, they remain underrepresented in key bodies, including both negotiating teams, as well as the High Council for National Reconciliation.

On the sanction regime, Kenya's delegation is of the view that any review of the 1988 sanction measures, targeted on the Taliban, should be in line with resolution 2513 (2020) and predicated on the Taliban demonstrating commitment to ceasing all forms of violent activities and targeted attacks. Further, any proposal to delist some of its members should be considered only on the merits and on a case-by-case basis.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate the imperative of making progress in the Afghanistan peace process. Any setback or a failed Afghan peace process would be costly, given the enormous material and human capital already invested and the desire of the Afghan people for durable peace and stability.

Annex 9**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I begin by thanking Special Representative Lyons and Chairperson Akbar for their briefings. We welcome the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan and acknowledge the work carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

As has been well said, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. We recognize the challenges inherent in negotiating the Afghan peace process and we therefore join the call on the parties to redouble their efforts to build a just, sustainable and inclusive peace. The progress made has been very important and should not be diluted or dissipated by the stalemate in the negotiations.

Mexico will continue to support all diplomatic efforts in the framework of the peace process, in particular the meeting of the extended troika that took place in Moscow on 18 March and the high-level meeting that will take place in Turkey in the next few weeks. In this regard, we welcome the appointment of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues, Mr. Arnault, and recognize the role played by the countries of the region, whose work is essential to creating an environment conducive to promoting peace efforts.

Securing a plurality of Afghan voices in this process is essential. Women are underrepresented, both in the negotiating teams and in the High Council for National Reconciliation. We acknowledge the creation of 13 commissions to work on specific issues concerning the peace process, with the involvement of civil society and international observers, including the Commission on Women's Affairs. However, we note that of the 46 members of that Committee, only 9 are women. We therefore call on the Government of Afghanistan to increase the participation of women in all structures that concern the peace process, and we reiterate to both parties the importance of having the full, equitable and meaningful participation of women in order to ensure that their interests are reflected at the negotiating table.

Mexico recognizes the Government's commitment to continuing to work to guarantee and strengthen the rights of the Afghan people. It is essential that, within the framework of dialogue, fundamental rights and freedoms — in particular the economic and social rights of women, youth and minorities — be preserved. It would be unacceptable to renounce the progress made in the past two decades.

We have also heard how the security situation in Afghanistan has seen a regrettable deterioration. The figures reflecting that decline in 2020 were the highest since the United Nations began keeping records in 2007. This trend is worrying and unacceptable in the framework of a peace process. The normalization of violence is a sign of outright social deterioration. It should be ended as soon as possible.

Mexico most emphatically condemns deliberate attacks on civilians, in particular against women, officials, the media, health and humanitarian sector personnel, and human rights defenders. The murder of two Supreme Court judges in Kabul last January, and the case of the three women employees of a radio station who were killed in Jalalabad earlier this month, are tragic evidence that women continue to be targeted by deliberate attacks in Afghanistan. Furthermore, we call for an end to the use of mines and improvised explosive devices, which disproportionately affect civilians, and for redoubled efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of air strikes on the civilian population.

We support efforts in the fight against terrorism, aware of the threat it poses. Mexico reiterates that the strategy against this phenomenon must be comprehensive and include a gender dimension; that prevention strategies are essential to addressing its underlying causes; that control over the transfer of small arms and light weapons is essential; and that the fight must be carried out by legal means, in full compliance with international law, without affecting human rights.

Almost half of the Afghan population is in need of humanitarian aid. We regret the fact that, coupled with the armed conflict, the deteriorating food insecurity situation, natural disasters and the challenges added by the coronavirus disease pandemic, they are exacerbating a humanitarian situation that was already very sensitive. We follow with concern reports of access problems for humanitarian personnel, and we underline the importance of respecting international humanitarian law and allowing safe and unrestricted access for humanitarian personnel.

My country reiterates its support for the efforts led by the United Nations and the countries of the region to cement a lasting and inclusive peace in Afghanistan. We recall the Secretary-General's appeal for respect for the ceasefire, which would undoubtedly constitute a fundamental measure of confidence, an opportunity for diplomacy and the well-founded hope of an Afghanistan in full peace.

Annex 10**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I would first like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons for the quality of her briefing.

The Niger commends the tireless efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to promote peace, governance and development in Afghanistan. Coordination among all United Nations entities and other humanitarian actors is important to achieving optimal effectiveness of action, especially in these times of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The testimony of Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, which we have just followed, gives us a clear idea of the environment in which human rights organizations operate in Afghanistan. That is why we salute the courage and resolve of these actors in all of their contributions to the return of peace and the final resolution of the crisis in that country.

I would also like to reiterate that my delegation condemns in the strongest terms attacks deliberately targeting civilians in Afghanistan. Having been the target, again this week, of such violence, the Niger expresses its deep sympathy and offers its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured.

The intra-Afghan negotiations are undoubtedly a crucial step for the future of Afghanistan. My delegation wishes once again to assure the Government and the people of Afghanistan of its full support in this regard. We dare to hope that the latest statements of the various parties, aimed at accelerating the talks, will be translated into concrete actions on the ground, in particular as regards a lasting ceasefire. Attacks and other acts of intimidation against civilians should not be used as leverage to obtain concessions from the other party in negotiations.

The Niger welcomes the commitment of several neighbouring countries and friends of Afghanistan to working to find an enduring, peaceful solution to this conflict, which has lasted too long. We also welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of his new Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues and wish him every success in his mission.

In the context of these talks, it behoves us to keep in mind that any viable negotiated solution must include the protection of the constitutional rights of Afghan women and youth, as well as the preservation of the achievements of the past two decades, including with respect to human rights and minority rights, as embodied in the Constitution.

Equally important is the post-conflict and reconstruction period in Afghanistan. It is imperative that these negotiations address the issue of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as security sector reform.

Finally, it is incumbent on us to place particular emphasis, during this process, on the need to provide the country with significant economic support and humanitarian assistance in sectors as important as health, education, infrastructure and agriculture, given that, in addition to the conflict, Afghanistan is facing the coronavirus disease pandemic, the vagaries of climate change and food insecurity, all of which are exacerbating an already delicate situation.

To conclude, at this time when a dynamic of peace, however modest, is emerging in Afghanistan, the violence must stop, because no peace can be obtained in a context of the killing of women and children.

Having lost 205 people to terrorist attacks in recent days alone, my country, the Niger, expresses its solidarity with the Afghan people and its strong support for the Special Representative.

Annex 11**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

We welcome this meeting today on Afghanistan, our first as penholder together with Estonia. Let me take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and her dedicated staff for their relentless efforts to address the demanding issues confronting Afghanistan. I also thank Chairperson Akbar for her insightful briefing and the important work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We also welcome the appointment of the experienced diplomat Jean Arnault as the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues.

Norway has four overarching priorities for our time on the Council: peace diplomacy, the equal participation of women, the protection of civilians and climate change and security. These are all highly relevant to Afghanistan and we intend to bring these issues to the forefront. Part of pursuing these priorities is working towards an end to the conflict that has haunted Afghanistan for more than four decades. Recent developments in the country give cause for both hope and anguish.

The humanitarian situation remains grave. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance nearly doubled last year, now accounting for almost half of the total population.

Furthermore, almost 17 million Afghans are experiencing crisis level or emergency level food insecurity, making it the second worst food insecurity situation in the world. The dire humanitarian needs are driven by conflict, insecurity and natural disasters — all exacerbated by climate change. Climate change amplifies conflict risks. And sustainable solutions will require the coming together of our humanitarian, development, peace and climate efforts.

UNAMA has reported that the number of civilian deaths and casualties in Afghanistan in 2020 — a year with an active peace process — was the lowest since 2014. While this is a positive development, we are still troubled by the continued high levels of violence. The targeted killings of human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, judges, prosecutors, religious scholars, political analysts, civil servants and other civilians are particularly disturbing. These killings target Afghans with skills and talents that are needed to build a successful and sustainable post-conflict society. We reiterate our strong condemnation of these attacks. They must end immediately.

The perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law must be brought to justice. In this respect, we are also deeply disturbed by attacks on health facilities and workers, which increased in 2020. Important vaccination campaigns for the coronavirus disease, but also for other diseases like polio, are likely to be negatively impacted. Health workers must have unimpeded access and the security they need to do their vital work. Children have also been disproportionately affected by the challenges facing Afghanistan. The continuing recruitment of children in armed conflict and attacks on schools need to be addressed.

Norway strongly supports the ongoing peace talks, and we hope that they will finally bring peace after so many years of conflict. We urge the parties to pursue negotiations in good faith and with a sense of urgency. We also welcome recent initiatives towards securing international support for the Afghan peace process, including the recent meeting in Moscow and the upcoming meeting in Turkey. It is important that these initiatives complement and build on the Doha talks. And we

value the proposal for a stronger United Nations role. At the same time, the Afghan parties must own the process and fulfil their responsibility by leading the way to an inclusive peace. The process is far more likely to succeed if the broader Afghan society is involved, including minorities, youth and victims.

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women is also essential, not only at the negotiating table but in every room where decisions about the future of Afghanistan are being made. A sustainable peace process — and indeed, sustainable peace — should be inclusive and preserve the rights of all Afghans, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

Progress made during the last two decades must not be reversed.

Annex 12**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

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 thoughts and assessments of the situation in Afghanistan. We are firmly convinced that UNAMA plays an important role in coordinating international assistance to that country. We also thank the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, for her briefing. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Adela Raz.

Russia has consistently supported the Afghan-led peace process. We have done much to promote national reconciliation and direct intra-Afghan dialogue.

On 18 March, Moscow hosted a regular meeting of the extended troika, comprising representatives of Russia, China, the United States and Pakistan. The event was attended by representatives of the Afghan sides: the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, prominent Afghan political figures and leaders of the Taliban movement, as well as of Qatar and Turkey as guests of honour.

Since the troika was established in 2019, that mechanism has played a meaningful, positive role. Last week, it once again proved relevant and highly in demand, as well as capable of promoting peaceful settlement.

The negotiations resulted in the extended troika's adopting a statement that put matters into perspective and called on the sides to act flexibly. We expect these results to be taken on board by the Afghans as they discuss substantive issues on their agenda in order to achieve the long-awaited progress in the intra-Afghan talks.

Preserving regional consensus on peaceful settlement in Afghanistan remains a priority task. We are in favour of combining the efforts of the extended troika and the Moscow format, which includes Afghanistan, all its neighbours and the United States. It was the Moscow format that in November 2018 first brought together the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban at one negotiating table.

It is now vital to seize every opportunity to achieve political solutions and compromises in the interests of national reconciliation. We proceed from the need to consolidate all international and regional efforts. New initiatives should be thoroughly considered and issues relating to their added value, agenda and modalities clarified.

We have closely studied the recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations activities and efforts in Afghanistan (S/2021/252).

First and foremost, we share its assessments about the unprecedented level of violence and its toll on civilians, women and children. Unfortunately, throughout the years of war deadly terrorist attacks have become a sad routine for the Afghan people. Many of the large-scale attacks are the responsibility of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We note that, despite numerous losses, the Afghan wing of ISIL has not abandoned its regional plans and seeks to enhance capacity and spread its terrorist activity to neighbouring Central Asia.

The situation with the drug threat is also far from optimistic. Despite certain counter-measures taken by Kabul, the drug industry is flourishing and re-energizing terrorism. It remains a serious challenge for Afghanistan, the region and the entire

world. Against this backdrop, we are disappointed by the delay by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the publication of its regular report. This topic is insufficiently covered in the Secretary-General's report as well. Attempts to silence or underestimate the presence and scale of terrorist and drug threats in Afghanistan are unacceptable. We appreciate the fact that Special Representative Lyons highlighted the topic of drug threat in her briefing today.

Afghanistan cannot counter these challenges without the support and assistance of the regional States, above all its neighbours, and the global community. Therefore, it is fundamentally important to engage the full potential of the relevant mechanisms, first and foremost the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the renewed SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization. We will continue to provide help and assistance to our Afghan friends, including in the framework of the Paris Pact Initiative.

Let me conclude by saying that Russia has been Afghanistan's friend and partner for many years, and we stand for establishing the long-awaited sustainable peace in that long-suffering land. To that end, the Afghans will need to work on a unifying platform. It is only they who can guide the peace process in Afghanistan. No scenarios must be imposed from the outside. As for the regional and international partners, they should be creating the environment necessary for negotiations and providing lasting political and economic support.

Annex 13**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Inga Rhonda King**

I begin this morning by expressing our condolences to the people and Government of the Niger for the senseless killings of innocent civilians in south-western Niger. We condemn that action in the strongest terms, and we stand in solidarity with the people of the Niger as they mourn the loss of life and grapple with that most recent and heinous terrorist attack.

I also thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, for her comprehensive briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Shaharзад Akbar, for her invaluable contribution to this debate.

Today violence levels in Afghanistan are unacceptably high, undermining confidence in the negotiation process. The only path to durable peace in Afghanistan remains an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process towards a political settlement and an immediate, unconditional and comprehensive ceasefire to facilitate the peace negotiations. Women's participation in and support for the peace process is crucial to ensuring its effective implementation and sustainability.

Despite the United States-Taliban agreement made on 29 February 2020 and the initiation of Afghan peace talks in September 2020, many challenges remain. The Afghan peace negotiations represent a real prospect for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. We welcome the joint statement of the extended troika on peaceful settlement in Afghanistan following the Moscow international conference. We also take this opportunity to encourage the parties to accelerate peace talks and hope that they can recommit to that process.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains precarious. We condemn in the strongest terms acts of violence committed against civilians, which have exacerbated an already alarming humanitarian situation. Far too often civilians and civilian objects, such as hospitals and schools, are targeted on purpose. We recognize the urgent need for a humanitarian response and to mobilize resources for the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021. In reaffirming the enduring commitment of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to Afghanistan and its people, we underscore the urgent need to minimize the harm and suffering caused by the armed conflict, protect civilians and allow unhindered access of humanitarian relief to the affected areas. We also renew our call on the parties to the armed conflict to end the violence and promote confidence-building. All parties to the armed conflict must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to better protect and assist the civilian population.

It is also particularly worrisome that women and children account for the majority of those adversely affected by the armed conflict. Specific measures must be taken to maintain the safety of victims of armed combat, with an emphasis on women and children. We encourage the Government to bolster its promotion and protection of the rights of women and children and address the needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence in the conflict.

A unified approach to increasing the quality of life for all Afghans must be built by the Afghan Government and all segments of society. In that connection, we welcome and support the second version of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework for 2021-2025. Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals, such as Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions,

should remain an integrated and indivisible package in ensuring that no one is left behind in Afghanistan.

Finally, we reiterate our support for the work of UNAMA, acknowledging its close cooperation with key stakeholders, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. We also welcome the appointment of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues, Jean Arnault, and wish him every success in his new role aimed at strengthening relations with regional countries and supporting the peace negotiations. At this critical juncture, we reiterate our call on the international community, particularly regional countries, to support the conditions for advancing sustainable development, peace and stability in Afghanistan and the wider region.

Annex 14**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for their briefings. I welcome the participation of Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, and thank her for her insightful intervention.

Tunisia reiterates its full support for the peace process in Afghanistan. While regretting that the negotiations initiated between the Government and the Taliban in Doha in September 2020 have not yet brought the results expected, we welcome the discussions held in Moscow last week and hope that tangible progress will be achieved during the next round of negotiations, scheduled in April in Istanbul.

In that regard, we would like to renew our appreciation for the continuing support by the international community and all Afghanistan's neighbours for the peace process.

We remain deeply concerned by the continuing high level of violence and the security situation in Afghanistan. We reaffirm that there can be no military solution to this protracted conflict, and we stress again the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The extremely high number of victims among the civilian population in Afghanistan, especially women and children, continues to be a source of great concern.

We stress again the importance for all parties to abide by their assigned responsibilities according to international humanitarian law and international human rights law and prevent civilian casualties. In that connection, we underline that all allegations of violations against civilians in Afghanistan must be investigated and the perpetrators be held accountable.

We are especially troubled by the deliberate targeting of civilians, particularly women, including media representatives, judges, health and humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and ethnic and religious minorities.

In that regard, we welcome the unity demonstrated by the Council earlier this month in condemning in the strongest terms such attacks, which have more than doubled since the start of the peace negotiations. On this occasion, we would also like to pay tribute to the courage and dedication of Ms. Akbar and her colleagues and to echo her appeal to respond quickly to the environment of fear and terror created by the attacks in order to restore hope in the peace process. In that context, we reiterate our call to the Taliban to put an end to the attacks perpetrated by its members, honour its counter-terrorism commitments and negotiate in good faith with the Government.

We would like to underline again the importance of an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, with the meaningful participation of women and young people, in order to achieve a sustainable peace. Lastly, we reiterate our firm belief that any future peace agreement should clearly include guarantees to protect and promote fundamental rights and freedom for all in Afghanistan, with a particular focus on women's rights and their active and substantial participation.

Annex 15**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

I thank Special Representative Lyons for her briefing and for guiding the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's activities in support of peace, human rights and the rule of law. I also thank Shaharзад Akbar for her courageous leadership in advancing human rights, women's inclusion and justice. Finally, I thank Ambassador Raz for participating and sharing her views with us today.

As Secretary Blinken told our Congress recently, the United States is enlisting the help of international partners, including the United Nations, in support of Afghanistan's peace. Afghanistan's neighbours and other supporters, including the members of the Council, have a critical role to play in securing the region and ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan. Last week's extended troika meeting reflects the growing international consensus on the need to accelerate the Afghan peace process.

To that end, we look forward to the upcoming meeting of senior Afghan leaders in Turkey. We expect that effort to be complementary to, and coordinated with, the United Nations efforts and the ongoing Doha process.

We also welcome the appointment of Jean Arnault as the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues. Mr. Arnault has decades of experience helping parties find political solutions to conflict and will help the United Nations fulfil its critical role. An Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours is in all of our interests.

Today, I would like to discuss three key components of achieving that common goal: stopping attacks against innocent civilians; supporting women and girls; and addressing Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis.

First, the ongoing violence, including targeted killings of civilians, is just simply unacceptable. Violence now prevents progress towards a sustainable peace. Journalists, human rights defenders and civil servants cannot continue to live in fear at a moment when they are needed most. We condemn those attacks and reiterate our deepest sympathies to the families of those who have lost their lives. For a peace agreement to be durable and just, it must respect the universal human rights of all Afghans, including women, girls and members of minority groups.

Secondly, we must do more to support the women and girls of Afghanistan. Any agreement must preserve their gains if Afghanistan wants to ensure the international community's continued political and financial support. We will not give an inch on that point. Earlier this month, I joined First Lady Jill Biden and Secretary Blinken to honour seven brave Afghan women who were killed last year. I am in awe of their courage. Their deaths are a devastating testament to the violence perpetrated against women simply for contributing to their communities.

The violence was meant to silence. Well, I will not be silent. I know that the women of Afghanistan will not be either. Throughout this conflict, Afghan women have bravely stepped up, often at great personal risk, to call for a sustainable, just peace. Their strong voices must be fully included in all discussions about the country's future. The United States will continue to advocate with both Afghan sides for women to have real, meaningful participation in upcoming gatherings on peace.

Thirdly, and finally, we must address Afghanistan's humanitarian crises. The ongoing conflict, coupled with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, refugee and migration flows and the threat of drought, has put innocent people in a

desperate situation. More than 16.9 million people — and Council members heard this number repeated several times today — are now acutely food insecure, including 5.5 million at emergency levels of food insecurity — the second highest rate in the world. I say that again, and we heard it earlier — the second highest rate in the world. These are real people, and they may die without our help.

For its part, this past year, the United States provided \$276 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in the region. To support the growing COVID-19 response, the United States has provided more than \$39 million in development, economic, health and humanitarian assistance. Our hope is that this will help to alleviate the country's deep suffering. We welcome the efforts of others to contribute to that vital humanitarian cause.

We thank the Security Council, the United Nations and all our partners for working together towards a lasting peace — a peace that the people of Afghanistan so desperately want and deserve. Let us hope that we can achieve it soon.

Annex 16**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, Dang Dinh Quy**

At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Shaharзад Akbar for their statements. I welcome Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, to this meeting and thank her for the comprehensive statement.

Viet Nam continues to closely follow the situation in Afghanistan, and we reiterate our support for the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process.

While some progress has been made, long-term peace in Afghanistan cannot be taken for granted. We are concerned about the alarming increase in the level of violence and civilian casualties. We strongly condemn the attacks by the Taliban and other terrorist groups targeting civilians, including women, children, students, health-care workers and civil servants, during the past months.

In the context of this meeting, I wish to raise the three following points.

First, it is crucial that a timely permanent ceasefire can be achieved, thereby putting an end to the ongoing violence. The Afghan people have suffered for far too long. We call on the relevant parties to overcome their differences so as to reach an agreement on the ceasefire as soon as possible. The intra-Afghan peace negotiations need a stable and conducive environment in order to succeed and achieve a lasting political solution.

To that end, the continued support of the United Nations, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), regional countries and other international partners will remain crucial. We welcome regional cooperation and the role of regional countries in promoting peace and development in Afghanistan. We congratulate Mr. Jean Arnault on his appointment as the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues and look forward to his efforts in supporting the peace process in the country.

We note that attention continues to be given to women in terms of protection, socioeconomic development and decision-making. We encourage further efforts to enable the full potential of Afghan women to be free from fear and want and to lead their country on equal basis with men.

Secondly, we once again urge all relevant parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, immediately stop targeting civilians and civilian objects and allow unhindered access to humanitarian services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthened efforts are also needed to combat the threat of terrorism, crime and drug trafficking and assist people with licit sustainable livelihoods.

We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the United Nations Mine Action Service and partners in addressing pressing humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan, including mine clearance and risk education during the past months in this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thirdly, we call on the Government to strengthen efforts in promoting the economic development and reconstruction of the country, as well as in addressing pressing issues, with the assistance of the international community, such as food insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are concerned about the increasing number of people facing high levels of food insecurity since the winter period, which reached 16.9 million by March. In

that regard, we call on the United Nations and regional and international partners to continue to strengthen humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan to ensure its projected needs.

In conclusion, Viet Nam would like to reiterate its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, as well as the pursuit of peace, stability and development in the country. We reiterate our support for the efforts of UNAMA and of Ms. Lyons.

Annex 17**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Adela Raz**

It is my great honour to have the opportunity to address the Council today. Allow me to first congratulate you, Madam President, on your able leadership of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for convening this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan.

I also would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons for her comprehensive and thorough briefing, as well as for her dedicated work in leading the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (see S/2021/252).

Finally, let me thank my sister, Chairperson Shaharзад Akbar, for her persistent and strong voice as a prominent Afghan woman and for her moving and informative testimony. The important work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in advocating for the protection of human rights at this critical time is essential and needed more than ever. I thank you, Chairperson Akbar, for your outstanding work.

Like many other developing countries, Afghanistan has also been hit hard by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The economy is disrupted, our health sector is still struggling with the challenge of COVID-19, and many have lost their livelihoods.

Simultaneously, we have witnessed a record number of security incidents. The Taliban has increased its level of violence against our security forces and Afghan civilians. It is directly targeting those who strive for a better future. It is targeting our young democracy, our vibrant civil society, and our free and independent press. These attacks are meant to dissuade the participation of women and youth in the peace process, create widespread panic and crush our aspirations for peace. These attacks are against the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These targeted attacks have killed journalists working to bring the truth to their fellow citizens; they have harmed civil society advocates, who bravely stand for the rights of their Afghan brothers and sisters; and have killed and injured public servants, who chose a career in service for the new Afghanistan, and our scholars and religious leaders, who have denounced the ongoing war and continued bloodshed in Afghanistan as contrary to the core tenets of Islam.

These targeted attacks do not affect anonymous targets, but fellow Afghans with families, dreams and aspirations. Early this month, Mursal Wahidi, Sadia Sadat, and Shahnaz Raofi were murdered in Jalalabad. They were all in their early 20s and worked as reporters. Just last week, four women and a three-year-old child — Shukria Shams, Aziza Malikzada, Nargis Kohistani, Arsh Mayil and Khatera Mayil — lost their lives while going through their day riding a bus in Kabul. We must all remember their names and honour their lives by relentlessly pursuing a peace that protects our gains, our young democracy and our universal rights and the rights given by Islam. These attacks target not only the Government, but more fundamentally the very values of humankind that all of us here hold dear.

These dreadful killings and the surge in violence are occurring during one of the biggest humanitarian crises in Afghan history. We started 2020 with 9.4 million people in humanitarian need, already a high number that was driven by drought and conflict. But today the number has now hit a record of 18.4 million people. In other

words, almost half of all Afghans need humanitarian assistance. In turn, the most recent humanitarian response plan estimates that \$1.3 billion are needed to respond.

We also need to vaccinate all Afghans against COVID-19 to recover from the pandemic. The vaccination campaign has started, and we are grateful to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and our bilateral donors, notably India and China, for providing the first doses.

The overwhelming number of people in need, the pressing challenge to address food insecurity and other humanitarian concerns, including the situation of returning refugees and the continued re-emergence of polio, underscore the urgency of a comprehensive ceasefire and efforts to achieve a durable and sustainable peace — a peace in which every Afghan, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or age, sees themselves included and protected.

The dire humanitarian situation and protracted conflict in Afghanistan continue to stress our vital need for tangible progress in our quest for peace. We entered the peace process with the Taliban understanding that we were facing a long and a complicated process. We knew that it would be difficult and that we were meeting at the negotiating table a group with radically different views on what the future of Afghanistan should look like. Nevertheless, early agreements in Doha on the code of conduct of negotiations and contact groups for discussions show us the power of dialogue, while offering hope for a path forward under an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned format.

I would be remiss if I did not express our strong appreciation to the State of Qatar for its tireless efforts, as well the United States for facilitating the initial steps towards the intra-Afghan negotiations, together with our regional partners, neighbours, friends and allies.

While we are cautiously optimistic about these early results, we remain adamant that a stronger and more genuine commitment to peace must be shown and translated into action by the Taliban, particularly considering the continued high levels of violence and targeted attacks, its continued relationships with terrorist organizations, its lack of adherence to a humanitarian ceasefire despite multiple calls, and reports of its preparations for a counterproductive spring offensive.

As done on previous occasions, we again take this platform to ask the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole to continue to call on the Taliban to observe a comprehensive and a permanent ceasefire.

In moving forwards towards peace, I would like to stress the following three points.

First, the Afghan Government is firmly committed to reaching an end to the conflict in our country and achieving a sustainable peace that the Afghan people urgently demand. This commitment requires a united national approach and the support of regional and international partners in pursuing our collective efforts.

Secondly, I would like to underscore the importance of regional consensus and support to reaching a durable peace. In this regard, we welcome all regional and international efforts that contribute to the achievement of peace and stability in Afghanistan, including the recent meeting of the extended troika in Moscow and its final joint statement emphasizing the implementation of the resolution 2513 (2020) and reaffirming that it does not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate.

Similarly, we welcome the upcoming meeting to be organized in Turkey. The Government will participate in the meeting, and we emphasize the importance of an inclusive process, including the full, equal and meaningful participation of women,

youth and civil society. These groups are the cornerstone of the new Afghanistan and their voices should be heard in all peace efforts. We view these meetings as key steps to strengthen and complement the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, and we hope that the outcomes of these meetings will reinforce the progress already made and result in tangible advancement towards the achievement of a lasting peace commensurate with the will of the Afghan people.

And thirdly, we welcome the United Nations further engagement in Afghanistan and the appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues. The United Nations has been a trusted partner and ally of the people of Afghanistan for decades. Its efforts during the past 20 years are applaudable. We hope that through his efforts, Mr. Arnault will be able to complement and amplify the ongoing critical United Nations mission in Afghanistan and, together with the dedicated efforts and excellent leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons, bring us closer to a sustainable and dignified peace in Afghanistan and an end to the conflict.

As we proceed with these meetings, allow me to reiterate the Government's position once again that a sustainable peace can be achieved only if it has the support of all Afghans and only if it ensures the effective inclusion of all Afghans, including women, youth, minorities and our vibrant civil society, in decision-making. Any decision about future peace and a political settlement should be based on the free will of the Afghan people, as expressed in free, fair and just elections, guaranteed by our regional and international partners. No peace can last in Afghanistan without securing, protecting and promoting the gains that we have achieved over the past 20 years. The constitutional order must be preserved and our democracy be protected.

We also aim to promote the vision of an Afghanistan that serves as an active player in the region, a hub for connectivity and trade and a catalyst for the development and integration of Central and South Asia. We believe this is achievable, and your support will be fundamental to ensure that we fulfil this shared goal.

The people of Afghanistan want no more empty chairs in classrooms — chairs left empty by students facing insecurity or by girls banned from attending school. We want a society that defends and stands for the rights of the women, men and ethnic groups that make up our rich and diverse Afghan family, a democracy in which all are heard, respected and represented. We want a prosperous nation and a country that is at peace with itself, our region and the world.

This is a strong and firm message from the people of Afghanistan who are tired of decades of suffering and war. The Government will continue to fulfil the mandate of the people, and we call on the Taliban to genuinely commit to peace so we may see a prosperous, democratic and peaceful Afghanistan.

Annex 18**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations**

The security situation in Afghanistan remains of great concern. We condemn the high level of violence, especially against women, and the targeted assassinations of civilians over the past weeks and months. We concur with the recent press statement of the Security Council (see SC/14464) and speak out against these heinous acts. And we underline the call for an end to targeted attacks.

The Afghanistan peace negotiations in Doha have shown progress, but certainly more momentum is needed. The aim and ambition must be to achieve a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire as soon as possible, as well as an inclusive political settlement to end the conflict in Afghanistan. We call upon all parties involved, especially the Taliban, to engage in meaningful negotiations and to contribute to their outcome, including by taking confidence-building measures, such as an obligation to an immediate reduction in violence.

Recent initiatives have provided new impetus to the peace process. We welcome the fact that the United Nations has committed to playing a greater role in this process and that countries in the region and key international partners are being involved. The statement from the meeting of the extended troika in Moscow — referencing resolution 2513 (2020) — was certainly a welcome step.

For a sustainable solution to the conflict, it is important that Afghans, including women, sense ownership of the process. We urge a close coordination with the peace negotiations in Doha, which so far remain the major avenue to come to a peace agreement with the Taliban. We also emphasize the importance of ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels and all stages of the peace process, in line with resolution 1325 (2000) and all relevant resolutions addressing the women and peace and security agenda. Also, regional and international consensus needs to be inclusive and robust. Such a consensus must involve all main stakeholders required to ensure long-term peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. Germany remains prepared to assist on this path. We stand ready to continue our support.

We thank the government of Qatar for its tireless and continued efforts. Likewise, we welcome the initiative of Turkey to host a leadership conference in close coordination with the United Nations, Qatar and many other actors, including Germany.

The United Nations is key to achieving stability and boosting development in Afghanistan. We have constantly called for an active role of the United Nations in the peace process and now welcome the appointment of Jean Arnault as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues. We will support him and his team in the weeks and months ahead. We will continue to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons in her commendable efforts to steer the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. On this occasion, we repeat our offer to support the mission with experienced personnel.

Annex 19**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Indonesia to the United Nations, Mohammad Kurniadi Koba**

Allow me to begin by thanking all briefers for their insightful briefings.

Afghanistan is approaching yet another step in its long journey towards peace and prosperity. While challenges remain, Afghanistan's road abounds with Afghans' hopes for their peaceful, united and prosperous homeland.

The Council and all relevant stakeholders must also play their role effectively to ensure that the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process finally comes to fruition. On this note, let me focus on three points.

First, with regard to preserving and advancing the intra-Afghan negotiations, the intra-Afghan negotiations are the soul of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. All parties must avoid any actions that might hamper this negotiation. The enhancement of mutual trust and understanding, while prioritizing the well-being and long-term interest of common Afghans, is crucial.

Indonesia also calls for international and regional stakeholders, especially the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to maintain their support in advancing these negotiations.

Secondly, in terms of ensuring an inclusive peace process, the participation of women and youth is the key element driving and sustaining peace on the ground. We note the harrowing statistics that 42 per cent of the war victims in Afghanistan have been women and children. It is for this reason that Indonesia firmly believes that a successful Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process can only be achieved with the full and meaningful participation of all elements of Afghan, especially women.

We are encouraged by the growing participation of Afghan women in the peace process, including the Afghan Women Leaders Peace Summit, held in Dubai from 15 to 20 November 2020.

For its part, Indonesia has also been working to support the greater involvement of women in the peace process, as well as being agents of peace in all dimensions of Afghan society, including by launching the Afghanistan-Indonesia Women Solidarity Network in 2020.

Thirdly, with regard to enhancing the safety, security and well-being of Afghans, as reported by the Secretary-General (see S/2021/252), we are deeply concerned over the record-high humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, especially the high level of food insecurity being faced by the Afghans. This is happening while the Afghans are facing a deteriorating security situation and the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The progress achieved in the ongoing political process has to be reflected in the daily life of all Afghans. This is critical to restoring the trust of Afghan people and providing space for peace talks.

We also call on parties to abide by resolution 2532 (2020), which calls for a global ceasefire in the midst of the global pandemic.

Indonesia remains concerned over terrorist activities and narcotics cultivation. We support increased cooperation among all relevant entities to combat terrorism and narcotics, including through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

To conclude, Indonesia remains committed to continuing its support to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process through capacity-building programmes in various fields, including women's empowerment, in Afghanistan.

Annex 20**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

I thank Ms. Deborah Lyons, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for her briefing. Iran stands ready to cooperate with Mr. Jean Arnault, the newly appointed Personal Envoy of Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues.

At this time, the people of Afghanistan are celebrating Nowruz and the start of a new year. Conveying Nowruz wishes to all Afghans, we hope that the beginning of the new year will be the start of a new chapter in their history towards lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

The demand of Afghans from all walks of life for durable peace has never been as loud as now. Their voices must be heard and effectively supported. They must not be left alone at this critical juncture.

The mere fact that there are now a good number of efforts and initiatives on Afghanistan is a welcome development, as at least they represent the political will of internal, regional and international players to end the tragic conflict in that country. Nevertheless, peace cannot be imported or imposed; nor can the high number of initiatives ensure their success. What is needed most now is to invest in an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, United Nations-facilitated, comprehensive and inclusive peace process. It must include all Afghan factions, including the Taliban; place the interests of all people of Afghanistan above the interests of certain segments of that society; duly take into account the legitimate interests and concerns of neighbouring countries; and receive the support of the international community.

Any proposed plan must be realistic, comprehensive and balanced. It must preserve and be built upon the past achievements of the people and Government of Afghanistan, particularly the present Constitution; the right of the people to self-determination through elections; the rights of ethnic and religious minorities and of women; as well as the commitment to combat terrorism.

In this context, we recall General Assembly resolution 75/90, in which the Assembly called for the preservation of Afghanistan's Constitution and rejected the restoration of the Islamic Emirate. It is to be recalled that the present system of governance, which was chosen by the people of Afghanistan, enjoys strong international support.

As a consistent principled position, Iran continues to call for the central role and further and substantive engagement of the United Nations in an intra-Afghan peace process. Iran stands ready, in coordination with the United Nations, to further contribute to the success of this process.

At the same time, peace and violence are contradictory and cannot go hand in hand. Therefore, to reciprocate the good will of Afghanistan's Government in the peace talks, the Taliban must halt all its attacks against Afghan defence and security forces.

Afghanistan's security situation has remained a source of serious concern. On the one hand, the terrorist acts by Da'esh represent a grave threat to the security of Afghanistan and the region and, on the other, the presence of foreign forces is another source of Afghanistan's instability. We reiterate our long-standing call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan, which, as many speakers have stated, must be orderly and responsible and must not lead to a security vacuum in Afghanistan.

At the same time, prior and simultaneous to the withdrawal of foreign forces, Afghanistan's military and security forces must be supported and strengthened, and effective assistance must be extended to Afghanistan in combating the illicit production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs, which is a source of financing for terrorism and other crimes.

It is a given fact that durable peace in Afghanistan cannot be established without improving its economic situation, which requires strong regional and international support.

For our part, in addition to hosting over 3 million Afghans despite facing savage United States economic terrorism, we have promoted economic cooperation with Afghanistan and, by implementing certain projects, established the link of that landlocked country to high seas through Iran's Chabahar port and to Europe through the Khaf-Herat railway. The latter was inaugurated last December by the Presidents of both countries, who called the inauguration of this project an historic event, further strengthening bilateral and regional economic cooperation, thus enhancing the foundations of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Iran and Afghanistan enjoy common religious, cultural, linguistic and historical backgrounds and our stability, sociocultural development and economic growth are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The Islamic Republic of Iran is committed to contributing to a more secure and prosperous Afghanistan through further enhancing relations between two fraternal nations.

Annex 21**Statement by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations**

Italy welcomes the opportunity to submit its written remarks on the occasion of the debate on the situation in Afghanistan in the Security Council.

Afghanistan currently finds itself at a crucial juncture of its history, filled with challenges but also with opportunities. For the first time after more than 40 years of conflict and 20 of international intervention, a window of opportunity has opened for the country to achieve the goals of restoring stability and creating the conditions for national reconciliation.

Italy appreciates the commitment of the United States to giving greater impetus to the intra-Afghan negotiations and the overall peace process. We also welcome the reinvigorated role that the United Nations has been called to take on in this new context, ensuring coherence, consistency and coordination in the planned initiatives. In this respect, while expressing our deepest and continuous appreciation to the outstanding work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons and her team, we would like to take this opportunity to convey our sincerest wishes of success to the newly appointed Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues, Jean Arnault.

New threats are emerging in Afghanistan as we see a surge of violence that indiscriminately affects civilians. We are particularly saddened by this and categorically condemn the wave of violence that, in recent months, has ravaged the country. We are observing with great apprehension the many assassinations targeting journalists, media operators, human rights defenders, public employees, members of civil society and intellectuals, many of whom are women. These cowardly attacks block the road to peace and diminish the space for civil liberties for which the Afghan people have been so bravely fighting with the support of the international community.

It is essential that these actions, together with all other forms of violence, cease immediately to make way for real opportunities of success in the peace negotiations. By the same token, we renew our urgent appeal for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire that leaves room for conflict resolution by way of an inclusive political accord that ensures a sovereign, united and democratic Afghanistan, at peace internally, with its neighbouring countries, and with the rest of the world.

The initiatives planned for the coming weeks have the potential to open the way for the ultimate pacification and stabilization of Afghanistan and to give the Afghan people the prospect of a dignified life, which the conflict has so far denied. Every effort has to be made to seize this historic opportunity. Therefore, we strongly encourage all sides to commit, in earnest and in good faith, to keeping the peace process on the right track. At the same time, it will be crucial to ensure the support and contribution of all relevant stakeholders: the United Nations, the main regional actors and the long-standing donors and partners of Afghanistan.

Any future political settlement will have to preserve the fundamental gains of the past two decades, first of all with regard to the protection of the human rights of women, children and civil society. There can be no lasting peace, effective reconciliation, harmonious and sustainable development for Afghanistan without the meaningful participation of these actors in the societal and political life of the country. It will also be important to consolidate the substantive results achieved in the fight against terrorism, so that Afghanistan will never return to being a threat to its neighbours or to the international community.

Italy will continue to support these prospects for the Afghan people by continuing to support the peace and stabilization process and by strengthening

its bilateral cooperation with the country. It is a cause to which Italy has attached particularly great importance in these past decades. It is also on behalf of our fellow citizens who have sacrificed their lives for this cause that we will continue to stand by the Afghan people, the United Nations and our international partners dedicated to peace in the country.

Annex 22**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

I thank you for convening this video-teleconference debate on Afghanistan. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her briefing and her steadfast efforts to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan.

Just over a year ago, the international community witnessed the historic signing of the agreement between Afghanistan and the United States of America, which paved the way for the long-awaited commencement of intra-Afghan negotiations in September. Six months on, we are watching the situation with both hope and anxiety. Although the parties remain engaged in the peace process, we continue to see the unbearable human toll among innocent Afghans on an almost daily basis.

We are highly alarmed by the increasing number of targeted killings of civilians, including civil servants, journalists, human rights defenders, and religious leaders. Human security remains seriously threatened in this country. Japan strongly condemns these heinous attacks and urges all concerned parties to enact an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire.

Japan believes that a sustainable peace in Afghanistan can only be achieved through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, in which the voices of all segments of society are heard and taken into account. Political settlement must respond to the strong desire of Afghans, including women, youth and minorities, for lasting peace. Japan continues to support the Government of Afghanistan and its partners in their efforts to advance an inclusive peace process.

We also believe that a sustainable political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan requires the strong commitment and cooperation of neighbouring and regional countries, which must be well coordinated and harmonized with broader international efforts to support the Afghan stakeholders. In this context, Japan welcomes the appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues. We strongly hope that Mr. Arnault and Ms. Lyons will work closely together to effectively coordinate international and regional support to the peace process.

Japan is a long-standing partner of Afghanistan. At the 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva, Foreign Minister Motegi announced that Japan would work to maintain its assistance from 2021 to 2024 at a level comparable to that of the past four years, or \$180 million per year. As a first step, Japan announced its decision last month to provide \$122.2 million to address the negative impact of the coronavirus disease and other humanitarian and development needs. This brings the total amount of Japan's assistance since 2001 to \$6.9 billion.

The late Dr. Nakamura Tetsu dedicated more than 35 years of his life until his tragic assassination in Jalalabad in December 2019 to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. He called his ties with the country the "bonds of fate". This sentiment has been inherited by many in Japan and will continue to be the foundation of Japan's solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. We will remain fully committed to supporting Afghanistan's efforts to achieve sustainable peace.

Annex 23**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, Magzhan Ilyassov**

We commend the presidency of the United States for hosting this debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Addressing peace and security in Afghanistan has always been a priority for Kazakhstan, including during our tenure on the Security Council in 2017 and 2018. We see Afghanistan as an important regional partner and are thus working on integrating it into the Central Asian region.

Kazakhstan traditionally co-sponsors an annual General Assembly draft resolution on Afghanistan, as we see its significance for peace in the country.

Kazakhstan also supports the international community's efforts to continue with peace talks, which will, hopefully, result in a ceasefire and a reduction of violence in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is of the strong conviction that the settlement of the Afghan conflict must be based on the principle that it is Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled. We see dialogue, compromise and mutual understanding as the only means to de-escalate the conflict and lay the foundations for stability in the country. At the same time, positive perspectives for the Central Asian region's own future are directly related to corresponding stability in Afghanistan.

We highly appreciate the role of UNAMA, which contributes to the bilateral and multilateral interactions of the Central Asian States with Afghanistan. Bearing in mind that the stability of Afghanistan is closely linked with its economic development, Kazakhstan has been providing long term financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. In 2020, we provided food and other humanitarian aid to pandemic-hit Afghanistan. Despite the negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the global economy, we managed to increase our bilateral trade turnover by 55 per cent.

Both Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, like the rest of Central Asian States, are landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and have therefore been particularly hard-hit by COVID-19. Our trade and supply chains have been severely damaged and our ability to invest in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in countering the COVID-19 pandemic has been substantially reduced.

To mobilize funds and efforts towards structural economic transformation, export diversification and recovery from COVID-19 pandemic in LLDCs, Kazakhstan, as the global chair of LLDCs for 2020-2021, has initiated the adoption of the innovative Roadmap for Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for LLDCs in the Remaining Five Years.

Afghanistan needs a comprehensive strategy on infrastructure, trade, investment, transit and transport development to integrate into the region. Thus, projects, such as the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline provide the much-needed natural land bridge connecting Afghanistan to Central Asia, South Asia and beyond.

To enhance the country's infrastructure and increase connectivity and access, Kazakhstan is participating in the Khaf-Herat railway project.

Another major step we have taken is the establishment of the United Nations regional centre for the Sustainable Development Goals for Central Asia and Afghanistan, in Almaty. The regional centre will be based in the new United Nations

building in Almaty, opened in May 2019 by President Tokayev, where 18 United Nations agencies with regional and subregional mandates are located.

The Centre is aimed at ensuring efficiency and improved coordination among all stakeholders towards delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional level. We believe that an expanded United Nations presence in Central Asia and the establishment of the United Nations regional centre in Almaty will contribute to sustainable development in the region.

Education is a critical agent of social change, and so we value our partnership with Afghanistan in building its capacity and expertise. Since 2010, more than 1,000 Afghan students have graduated from Kazakh universities on grants sponsored by the Government of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is also implementing, together with the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and Japan, several triangular cooperation projects on education, training and capacity-building for Afghan women and youth. To institutionalize our development assistance to Afghanistan and other countries in the region, Kazakhstan recently established an official overseas development assistance agency, KazAID.

To conclude, Kazakhstan is strongly committed to assisting Afghanistan in partnership with Central Asian countries and other States Members of the United Nations to lay the long-term foundations for an enduring economic recovery and peace in the country.

Annex 24**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Munir Akram**

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Deborah Lyons for her briefing today.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked by the unbreakable bonds of geography, history, culture, ethnicity and faith. Our destinies are intertwined.

Afghanistan has endured endless conflict and suffering for the past 40 years. We have shared its trials and tribulations and hope to share its joy when peace returns to the country.

Pakistan has consistently maintained that the conflict in Afghanistan can be ended not by military force but through a political settlement involving the full spectrum of Afghanistan's political landscape. Towards that end, Pakistan has contributed actively to advancing the Afghan peace process. We facilitated the commencement and the conclusion of the United States-Taliban peace agreement and the subsequent intra-Afghan negotiations.

The Doha peace process has made important progress in the last year. We are glad that the relevant Afghan parties, including the Afghan Government and Taliban representatives, are fully engaged in this peace process.

It is time for the Afghan leaders to seize this historic opportunity and continue to work constructively to secure an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement. A peaceful and stable Afghanistan is indispensable to peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Terrorism has had a devastating impact on Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. We share the determination of the international community not to allow Afghanistan's territory to be used by Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or other international terrorist groups and their affiliates to threaten or attack any country.

Some who have waxed eloquent about terrorism today are the very ones who wish to continue to foment terrorism from Afghanistan's ungoverned spaces to conduct their war of terrorism against my country. It is regrettable that the Council has been prevented from considering the evidence of their sponsorship of terrorism.

A reduction in violence is a natural expectation from the peace process. All sides should work towards a reduction of violence leading to a ceasefire. The continuation of violence will strengthen the hands of spoilers, both within and outside Afghanistan, to subvert the peace negotiations and prevent a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan. We must guard against those who desire to frustrate a peaceful settlement on the pretext of safeguarding democracy and human rights and to continue to use Afghan territory against its neighbours.

We hope that despite the multiple challenges facing them and possible periodic setbacks, all Afghan parties will persevere in the pursuit of a political settlement.

We welcome the recent efforts to re-energize the peace process. We should assure ourselves that such efforts complement, not subvert, the peace process. Bringing spoilers to the table will retard the prospects of an early settlement.

Pakistan will welcome and support the consensus between Afghan leaders and the Taliban on any inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan. It is the Afghans who must be the masters of their destiny and decide their own future, without outside influence or interference.

Annex 25**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**

[Original: Arabic and English]

I wish to thank you for having convened this meeting, Madam President, and for giving us the opportunity to participate in it. We congratulate you on your effective presidency of the Council for this month. We also thank Mrs. Deborah Lyons for her briefing, and we commend her efforts at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We have taken the initiative to participate in this meeting, which is being held at an important juncture, within the framework of the role of the State of Qatar as an international partner of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and a mediator in support of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. We hope that this process will lead to a comprehensive political settlement.

Concrete gains were made on Afghanistan's path towards that desired peace last year, when the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban came to fruition on 29 February thanks to the sustained good offices made lately by the State of Qatar to bring the parties to the table for dialogue and by holding several rounds of negotiations in Doha. The Doha agreement enabled the taking of significant steps towards ending the war and opening the door to intra-Afghan negotiations, as stated in resolution 2513 (2020).

Among the most import steps enabled by the agreement was the launch of the intra-Afghan peace negotiations on 12 September in Doha, which constitutes a significant step towards achieving a comprehensive political settlement by putting an end to violence and human suffering and paving the way to stability and prosperity. Indeed, negotiations in Doha have made progress that includes reaching an agreement on procedural matters.

Other gains have also been made as a result of the Afghan dialogue facilitated by the State of Qatar last summer, namely, the ceasefire during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and the successful exchange of prisoners between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Last January, the second round of talks between the Government and the Taliban began in Doha, and teams appointed by the two sides held a series of meetings to agree on the agenda.

At this critical stage, every possible effort should be made to preserve the gains made thus far within the Doha process, especially since we have witnessed first-hand, through our role as facilitator of the talks between the Afghan parties, how they are approaching the peace process with eagerness and awareness of the need to end the state of war and achieve lasting peace.

The sincere endeavours of the State of Qatar to support the peace process to support the peace process in Afghanistan reflect its well-established foreign policy, which attaches importance to the settlement of disputes through peaceful means, mediation and international cooperation, including with the United Nations. The State of Qatar is therefore keen to coordinate with its international partners, be they the United Nations or friendly countries, with a view to supporting and making the Doha process a success. In that regard, this month the State of Qatar received Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad, the United States Special Envoy for Peace in Afghanistan, once again, as well as Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

The State of Qatar participated in the expanded troika meeting that was hosted by the Russian Federation on 18 March, which deemed valuable the role of the State of

Qatar in facilitating the peace process and supported the ongoing Doha negotiations. The State of Qatar also looks forward to convening, along with the Turkish Republic, a meeting next month to promote the peace process. My country also welcomes the appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues and looks forward to supporting and cooperating closely with him.

The Afghan people have recently made some gains. Now they need the support of the international community in order to preserve those gains, complete the transitional phase and overcome the numerous challenges that they face in terms of security, economy and sustainable development. The State of Qatar commends the efforts made by neighbouring countries and countries that are friends of Afghanistan in providing support, including in, but not limited to, the political, humanitarian and development fields.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reaffirms its support for our brothers in Afghanistan in their quest to consolidate peace, security, stability and development, and, in collaboration with the United Nations and international partners, will continue to make every effort to have successful peace negotiations and achieve their intended goal.

Annex 26**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu**

I would like to express our appreciation to Special Representative Lyons and Ms. Akbar for their briefings and to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Raz, for her statement. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2021/252).

The level of violence in Afghanistan, especially the high number of civilian casualties and the deliberate targeting of civil service employees, civil-society activists, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, is cause for grave concern.

The Secretary-General reports that the security situation worsened in 2020, with the number of security-related incidents reaching record levels since the United Nations started documenting incidents in 2007. Violence continued to inflict serious casualties on children. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 86 cases of violence against women and girls from November 2020 to January 2021.

We once again call for a cessation of violence. A time-bound ceasefire or at least a clear-cut, significant reduction in violence is necessary to build confidence between the parties. That could also create an environment conducive to making meaningful progress in the peace process.

After decades of conflict, Afghanistan is now at a new crossroads. The intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha have opened a window of opportunity for ending the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan through a political solution. We fully support that process.

On the other hand, the desired progress has not been achieved in these talks so far. In that regard, we support the recent international efforts to reinvigorate the peace process, building upon the existing talks in Doha. We believe that bringing together high-level representatives from the relevant sides may help make rapid progress. With that understanding, we are working on co-hosting a high-level meeting in Turkey together with Qatar and the United Nations, with a view to complementing and energizing the talks in Doha. That could be a platform for discussing a future political road map for Afghanistan.

The constructive role assumed by the United Nations in peace endeavours in Afghanistan is key. We hope that the recent appointment of Mr. Jean Arnault as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan and Regional Issues can bring added value to the existing efforts.

We also appreciate the international community's contribution to peace efforts in Afghanistan and value its support to the Istanbul meeting that aims to advance the peace process.

I take this opportunity to underline the importance of the meaningful representation of women at the negotiating table.

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, Turkey acknowledges and supports the Afghan people's desire for a more peaceful future. The ultimate objective should be fair and lasting peace, so that all Afghans, especially women and children, can continue to enjoy the achievements made during the last two decades.

We cannot emphasize enough the need to consolidate the gains made to date, in particular in the field of human rights. That requires the sustained support of

the international community for the Afghan people. We commend UNAMA for its efforts in assisting the Afghan Government and people in their endeavours to bring about a stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

Addressing the challenges to the establishment of durable peace, stability and security in Afghanistan remains central. Turkey continues to stand ready to contribute to Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation efforts.
