



Security Council

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Letter dated 3 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Chair's summary of the open Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the theme "What can the Security Council do to support the peace process in Afghanistan?", which was held on 20 November 2020 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Sven Jürgenson**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 3 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Chair's summary of the open Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the peace process in Afghanistan, held on 20 November 2020

Introduction

On 20 November 2020, the Security Council members Estonia, Germany and Indonesia, together with additional sponsors Afghanistan, Finland, Norway and Qatar, hosted a high-level virtual Arria-formula meeting on the theme "What can the Security Council do to support the peace process in Afghanistan?".

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Urmas Reinsalu, chaired the meeting. The keynote speaker was the President of Afghanistan, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. The briefers were the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons; a member of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan negotiation team and its contact group, and member of the Board of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Fatima Gailani; and the Asia Director of the International Crisis Group, Laurel Miller. Sponsors, briefers, and current and incoming Security Council members were invited to attend and to make interventions. All other States Members of the United Nations were invited to submit written statements. All seven sponsors of the meeting and an incoming Council member were represented at the ministerial level. All seven sponsors, the current Council members and four incoming Council members took the floor. Eleven other Member States submitted written statements.

As the Security Council has a responsibility to prevent violent conflict and war, the aim of the meeting was to identify ways in which Council members and the international community could support the Afghanistan peace negotiations and ensure the maintenance of peace and stability for post-war Afghanistan. Participants in the meeting also highlighted the importance of the 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva in relation to future civilian assistance for Afghanistan.

Keynote address

In his keynote address, Mr. Ghani called on the Security Council to reiterate its support for a ceasefire, to address the link between narcotics and terrorism, to promote regional consensus and to help Afghanistan to design a process that resulted in a defined end state – a sovereign, unified and democratic Afghanistan. He also asked the Council to effectively implement sanctions to support the successful peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Briefings

The briefers emphasized that 2020 was momentous because of the start of the peace negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. They further marked the importance of advancing the peace process, saying that the two parties were close to an agreement on the Code of Conduct, which would unlock discussions on the draft agenda for the talks. The international community must see how it could reinforce those efforts, so that peace stood the best chance of eventually succeeding. Currently, the civilian casualties remained devastatingly high and nothing was more pressing than the need to reduce violence. As the talks progressed, sensitive but important issues would come to the fore: human rights, including women's rights, minority rights, freedom of expression and the rights of victims of war; the future of

democracy; education; the rule of law; transnational terrorism; and narcotics. It was important that, in the course of the negotiations, the most important gains, in particular in relation to women's rights, achieved in the previous 19 years be preserved and further strengthened. If the peace process succeeded, it would lead to a Government in which all Afghans saw themselves. The role of the country's neighbours was important in the peace process, because a prosperous, peaceful and stable Afghanistan would be in the interest of the region.

Debate

The participants stressed that the start of the Afghan peace talks marked an unprecedented opportunity to end decades of war and to build a peaceful future for all Afghans. The peace process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. The Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban should step up their negotiation efforts. The role of the international community was to support Afghan efforts. In that regard, the International Peace Support Group would be launched soon. There was a clear understanding among participants that the current level of violence, especially against the civilian population, was unacceptable. The violence must end and a permanent ceasefire must be established. The goal remained a peaceful settlement that preserved the fundamental achievements of the previous 19 years and of the Afghan constitutional order. The aspirations of all Afghans, in particular women and youth, as well as minority communities, should be supported, and their voices must be heard. Most participants condemned the terrorist attacks and warned that they might hamper achieving peace. A few mentioned that trafficking and trading in drugs remained a source of support for terrorism, posing a serious threat to the country and the region. Several members emphasized that the provision of assistance to Afghanistan and the withdrawal of international troops must remain condition-based, with progress in the peace process and an improved security situation on the ground being the essential factors. The economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan must be improved. More than 12 million people, over one third of the country's population, were severely food insecure. The donors' conference in Geneva demonstrated the international community's commitment to the well-being of all Afghan people. The conference would deliver three outcomes: a new aid architecture, a political communiqué and financial contributions. Finally, deep gratitude was extended to Germany and Indonesia for their diligent and successful stewardship of the co-penholdership of the Afghanistan file, and the willingness of Estonia and Norway to take responsibility for the Afghanistan file as co-penholders starting in 2021 was commended by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Conclusion

There was a broad consensus that the developments in Afghanistan, in particular in the peace process, required the closest attention of the international community and the Security Council. The Council supported the call by the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire and the immediate reduction of violence. The support of the Council would be critical for Afghans in their quest for peace that would protect the gains of the previous two decades. Resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#) of the Council, adopted on 10 March 2020, provided a solid and principled basis for durable peace in Afghanistan.

Recommendations from the meeting

- The Security Council can support the Afghan peace process by using its platform to condemn violence, while stressing to all parties, especially the Taliban, that it is crucial and critical to reduce the violence and that they should make progress towards peace.

- The Council must make its views known on issues pertaining to the preservation of the past 19 years' achievements, including in human rights – women's rights, minority rights, freedom of expression, and the rights of victims of war in the peace talks, as well as in the following peace settlement – and must warn of the possible consequences should the human rights situation deteriorate in the country.
- The Council should reaffirm the importance of continued adherence to the country's existing international obligations, including the seven core international human rights treaties to which Afghanistan is party.
- The Council's engagement can bolster the role of the neighbours of Afghanistan in the peace process. Along with all the resident coordinators in the neighbouring countries, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan has already started an initiative across the United Nations family to strengthen regional links.
- Assistance to Afghanistan should remain condition-based; progress in the peace process and an improved security situation on the ground are the essential factors.
- Sanctions are a key instrument in supporting the peace talks and ensuring their success. The review of the measures and the list should remain based on conditions related to the progress and outcome of the peace process.
- A Council imprimatur for a mediator would be helpful. Such an imprimatur would reflect the common interests of the Council members for a stable Afghanistan that contributes to regional stability and provides no safe harbour for transnational terrorists.
