



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8853rd meeting

Thursday, 9 September 2021, 3.15 p.m.

New York

Provisional

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Coveney | (Ireland) |
| <i>Members:</i> | China | Mr. Geng Shuang |
| | Estonia | Mr. Lipand |
| | France | Mrs. Broadhurst Estival |
| | India | Mr. Tirumurti |
| | Kenya | Mrs. Toroitich |
| | Mexico | Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez |
| | Niger | Mr. Aougi |
| | Norway | Ms. Juul |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Ms. DeShong |
| | Tunisia | Mr. Ladeb |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Dame Barbara Woodward |
| | United States of America | Mr. DeLaurentis |
| | Viet Nam | Mr. Dang |

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2021/759)

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this official record of the Security Council will be supplemented by a compilation of annexes (S/2021/785) containing the statements submitted by interested non-members of the Council.



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2021/759)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organization; and Ms. Malala Yousafzai, co-Founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/759, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Ms. Lyons.

Ms. Lyons: With the fall of Kabul, on 15 August, the city's population and the people of Afghanistan were confronted with a new and, for many, worrisome reality. The Taliban moved into the capital and proclaimed victory, defeating the Afghan republic that had been in place for the past 20 years. That, however, was followed by scenes of panic and chaos at Kabul airport, as tens of thousands sought to flee Afghanistan by any means available. Those scenes, watched around the world, have now been replaced by scenes of protest around the country. They show that the Taliban has won power, but not yet the confidence of all Afghan people.

The new reality is that the lives of millions of Afghans will depend on how the Taliban will choose to govern. However, we must also ask ourselves: what can we do, and what must we do? The answers I have for

the Security Council are not comfortable. They present real dilemmas and will require united leadership from the Security Council, the Member States that make up the Council, neighbouring countries and, more broadly, the international community.

As of two days ago, we are faced with a de facto Administration announced by the Taliban. Those who hoped for and urged inclusivity will be disappointed. There are no women in the names listed. There are no non-Taliban members, no figures from the past Government and no leaders of minority groups. Instead, it contains many of the same figures who were part of the Taliban leadership from 1996 to 2001.

What is of immediate and practical importance to those around the table is that, of the 33 names presented, many are on the United Nations sanctions list, including the Prime Minister, the two Deputy Prime Ministers and the Foreign Minister. All Council members will need to decide which steps to take regarding the sanctions list and the impact on future engagement.

First, however, we must focus on the pre-existing humanitarian crisis, mostly in rural areas, that is worsening as we speak. Addressing this crisis cannot wait for political decisions regarding the removal of sanctions. Millions of ordinary Afghans are in desperate need of help. That means that needed humanitarian aid must be provided through the United Nations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, there are countries that have their own sanctions that apply to certain members or groups that are now part of the de facto authority. Relevant mechanisms must be found quickly to allow for the United Nations organizations and NGOs to provide the necessary humanitarian relief. In the meantime, we look forward to the high-level conference in Geneva on 13 September, which the Secretary-General will convene, that seeks pledges to meet the requirements of the humanitarian appeal on which Afghan lives now depend.

In the current environment, the United Nations role must be clear and must build on our humanitarian imperative. There is an immediate and pressing need to deliver, on a huge scale, essential humanitarian aid in areas such health, food security, non-food items and sanitation.

Secondly, there is an additional, looming crisis to which I must draw the Council's attention. Billions of assets and donor funds have been frozen by members of the international community. The understandable

purpose is to deny these funds to the de facto Taliban Administration. The inevitable effect, however, will be a severe economic downturn that could throw many more millions into poverty and hunger, may generate a massive wave of refugees from Afghanistan and set Afghanistan back for generations. As the Afghan currency plummeted, prices of fuel and food skyrocketed. Private banks no longer have cash to distribute, meaning that even Afghans with assets cannot access them. Salaries cannot be paid. Afghanistan is heavily import-dependent and will be unable to finance its imports of food and medicine, as well as fuel, electricity and other essential items.

A modus vivendi must be found quickly — one that allows money to flow to Afghanistan in order to prevent a total breakdown of the economy and social order. Safeguards must be found to ensure that this money is spent where it needs to be spent and not misused by the de facto authorities. The economy must be allowed to breathe for a few more months in order to give the Taliban a chance to demonstrate flexibility and a genuine will to do things differently this time, notably from a human rights, gender and counter-terrorism perspective.

As I mentioned, we are disappointed in the lack of inclusivity of the so-called caretaker cabinet, but the new reality in Afghanistan is, in fact, still being shaped. A mixed picture has formed in the weeks since the Taliban took power. For the most part, with some exceptions, the premises of the United Nations in Afghanistan have been respected. We are, however, increasingly worried by the growing number of incidents of harassment and intimidation against our national staff. We will continue to do everything possible to support our staff and keep them out of harm's way. The United Nations cannot conduct its work — which is so essential for the Afghan people — if its personnel are subjected to intimidation, fear for their lives and cannot move freely.

We are also concerned that despite the many statements granting general amnesties to Afghan National Defence and Security Forces personnel and those who have worked as civil servants, there have been credible allegations of reprisal killings of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces personnel and the detention of officials who worked for previous Administrations. We have received reports of members of the Taliban carrying out house-to-house searches and seizing property, particularly in Kabul.

And while the Taliban have provided many assurances that they will respect the rights of women within Islam, we are receiving increasing reports that the Taliban have prohibited women from appearing in public places without male chaperones and have prevented women from working. They have limited girls' access to education in some regions and have dismantled departments of women's affairs across Afghanistan and targeted women's NGOs.

We are also extremely disturbed about the increasing violence used against Afghans who are protesting Taliban rule. That violence includes shooting above the crowds, persistent beatings, intimidation of media and other repressive measures. Instead, the Taliban should seek to understand the legitimate grievances of these many Afghans who fear for their futures.

Despite these concerns, perhaps we can still help to shape this new reality into a more positive direction. In our initial engagements with Taliban leaders over this past year and in recent weeks, we have received a clear message — that they need and want international assistance. Some have asked for patience and even advice as they attempt to transition from a military insurgency to a Government. They have complained that the widespread corruption of previous Government officials left many parts of the country without assistance and squandered the generosity of the international community. But they themselves risk squandering the potential generosity of the international community if they govern against the explicit interests and rights of their own people.

The impact of these recent developments is also being felt beyond the Afghan borders. Many countries around Afghanistan are apprehensive about how Taliban rule will affect their own security. They fear the effect of an expanded Islamic State that the Taliban cannot contain. They fear a wave of refugees coming across their borders. They fear the consequences of the large number of arms left behind in Afghanistan. They fear that the Taliban will be unable to thwart the illegal economy and the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. It is most important now that the region use its available mechanisms to not just speak with one voice but to act in concert for the benefit of the entire region. We therefore look forward to the upcoming meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Dushanbe. Other mechanisms include the extended troika format created by Moscow, which last met in Qatar in August, as well as ad hoc mechanisms, such as the regional

foreign ministers meeting hosted by Pakistan that took place this week. But it is also important that the wider international community not become irrevocably divided. There is now a more urgent agenda for regional and international cooperation around Afghanistan. Without it, the negative repercussions will be felt near and far, and will be much more difficult to address later on.

Certainly, a key part of this agenda is counter-terrorism. Al-Qaida members remain in Afghanistan, visibly welcomed and sheltered by the de facto Taliban authorities. The Islamic State-Khorasan Province remains active and could gain strength. Concerns on these essential matters of international terrorism will not be allayed simply by Taliban promises. On this issue, the region and the wider international community share clear, common and critical interests.

Of course, the United Nations family remains in Afghanistan, committed to doing what we have done for the past 75 years — delivering to the people of Afghanistan. What is essential for this effort, and for Afghanistan in general, is a functioning airport in Kabul. We are grateful, therefore, for the prompt and generous actions taken by Qatar and Turkey to begin restoring the airport, in cooperation with the Taliban, so that it is fully functional and regular commercial flights can resume. Thanks to these efforts, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service is already in a position to begin making regular flights to Kabul, and the UNAMA air fleet of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will soon be able to do so as well.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for agreeing on short notice to host a United Nations satellite office to support our efforts in Afghanistan.

Our commitment to delivering for the people of Afghanistan means that we must engage with the Taliban on operational and security issues. The recent visit, therefore, of Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths to Kabul earlier this week paved the way to continue discussing the terms of future humanitarian assistance, as well as to prepare the ground for the Geneva conference on 13 September.

I cannot express enough my admiration for those United Nations staff, national and international, who are in Afghanistan now, facing the daily uncertainties. Their presence and their persistence are proof of our

ongoing commitment to delivering to the people of Afghanistan.

I would also like to make a final comment on the subject of UNAMA's mandate, which is due for renewal in about a week. Members of the Security Council are, like us, still evaluating the new situation. I look forward to our ongoing discussions regarding the United Nations role in Afghanistan at this critical time and as we move forward.

The best and still possible outcome would be for the Taliban to demonstrate that it seeks to create an Afghanistan where people do not live in fear, where those with talents are invited to participate in the rebuilding of their country, and where boys and girls, young women and men, can receive the sort of education that will allow this development to continue. Now is the moment for the Taliban to visibly demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan — to all the people of Afghanistan — that it is committed to each and every one of them, in guaranteeing their safety, their freedoms, their health, their education and their future prosperity.

The Afghan people are the least responsible for this unfolding crisis and yet the most affected by it. It is clear that they will still need the Security Council and the international community.

I thank the President and Council members for their consideration of Afghanistan at this very important time.

The President: I thank Ms. Lyons for her work and her briefing. I would ask her to pass on the thanks of the Security Council to all the United Nations staff who continue to work in very challenging and uncertain conditions across Afghanistan and in Kabul in particular.

I now give the floor to Ms. Frogh.

Ms. Frogh: I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to share my and my colleagues' perspectives with the Security Council. I am grateful to Ireland's presidency of the Security Council for inviting me, and I wish all members a productive meeting.

Where should I begin?

I come to the Security Council with a broken heart. Twenty years ago, I was a young woman who believed in this institution. I was inspired by resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which

spoke to me and millions of women like me who had witnessed war first-hand and wanted to dedicate our lives to building peace in our nations.

As I sit here today, scores of villages — countless men, women and children — are stranded in the valleys of Panjshir following weeks of shelling and bombing. They have no food for their children, no medicine for the ill and no way to communicate to the rest of Afghanistan and the world about their ordeal. This week, the world saw brave women and men of Afghanistan coming out on the streets of Kabul and other cities showing their anguish about how they are being treated. The right to protest is now being taken away and the next is access to the Internet, which is being limited based on one's location in Kabul.

Just yesterday, a 25-year-old policy specialist in the now erased Ministry of Women's Affairs had to burn her work and education certificates because the homes of women activists and Government employees — people like you and me — had been raided. She found a copy of resolution 1325 (2000) from a training that she had attended in New York years ago. She had to burn that, too. Those certificates, that resolution — they were meant to give her and millions of women an opportunity for life, peace, security and dignity. Today, her best chance of life is by burning those documents and disappearing.

Why? It is because of what the world has unleashed on us and because the world did not listen to us women when we warned about the absence of a political settlement and a sudden military take over. The international community side-lined us when we begged for a chance to sit at the negotiating table; when we asked that the international community make the protection of civilians and civil society actors conditions for negotiations; and when we called for a conditional withdrawal. We women and girls and our work have been the biggest achievement of the past 20 years that the United Nations and other members of the international community could actually claim credit for.

Let me explain what we did.

I, along with my local women peacebuilders network — which includes around 100 women in 34 provinces of Afghanistan — have been working for local peace and conflict resolution for over a decade. We were the ones who advocated for inclusive and meaningful peace negotiations. We have always

been practical and realistic. We knew that a political settlement with the participation of the Taliban would be necessary. That is why, when I was serving on the Afghan High Peace Council, the women members were the ones that actually reached out to communities, to the mothers of the Taliban fighters on the ground, and initiated the first national dialogue that brought all Afghans together. We worked for the ceasefire and a national peace process. We reached out to the Taliban leaders and we advocated for ensuring that the grievances of their youth and families who had suffered were taken into account.

We wanted the Doha talks to result in an interim deal and transitional Government that reflected the true diversity of our nation — the men and women, ethnic diversity and political ideologies — and a process that would lead to democratic participation and the people having a say in who governed. We were stonewalled and kept away from the talks. In the end, we were betrayed by all, including the Afghan Government's leadership.

Where are we now that the Taliban has announced their caretaker emirate? All but three members are from one ethnic group. That means just three Cabinet members represent 60 per cent of the population — some 18 million people. If the voices of 18 million Afghans are suppressed, how long will such rule be sustained? We have seen that in other parts of the world already.

Women's lives have been flipped around since 15 August. Women are being erased from governance as we speak. Women have been told that they cannot go to work. Girls over 12 years of age have not yet started going to school. Female Government workers have been told to stay home. Thousands of women workers in non-governmental organizations are in hiding.

My nation is young, with over 62 per cent of our population being under the age of 25. Our modern State was just 20 years old, but we had 500 women judges and prosecutors working throughout the country. We had some 12,000 women in the police and the army. Today, they are all in hiding, fearful for their lives and for their families. On 4 September, Nigar Banu, a police officer in Ghor province, eight months pregnant, was tortured and killed in front of her own children.

Right now, I have in my phone at least 500 unread messages from women in the security sector. What do I say to them? I am trying to find words, because what I am fearing is that tomorrow or the next day I might not be able to find them alive.

So much damage has been done — so much avoidable, unnecessary damage. If we together do not act now — urgently — the repercussions will be felt across the region and globally.

I have therefore come to the Security Council because I still believe that it has the power, the ability, and the responsibility to mitigate this damage.

I have the following four immediate requests. First, as each of member of the Council is engaging with the Taliban caretaker Government, no matter what the strategic focus of his or her Government, I would ask that they remember that there are some 16 or 17 million women and girls in Afghanistan who do not know what tomorrow holds for them. These women can be included in Council members' own mediation teams. Council members can also facilitate meetings of delegations of women across different professions — peacebuilders, judges, security officers, educators, doctors, businesswomen — with the Taliban. Please do not stonewall us anymore.

Secondly, thousands of women and men from civil society, media, former Government employees, judges and prosecutors, artists, musicians are at risk of reprisal. They are stranded inside Afghanistan and are in hiding. They need immediate protection and evacuation until and unless their security and ability to live peacefully is evident. Please welcome them, grant them visas, give them a chance for a productive life. If Council members do this, their countries will be receiving some of the Afghanistan's greatest natural resources.

Thirdly, the humanitarian crisis is looming. Some 18 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian aid. Women and children constitute the majority of this population. To reach them, especially given the gender-segregated ideology of the Taliban regime, it is imperative that the United Nations ensures the protection of Afghan female aid workers and other civic professionals and community organizers, who are critical to the distribution and delivery of aid to the needy. It is entirely within the Council's control. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and chart and other agencies must put in place a practical and clear gender-responsive aid plan. Without it, they and the Council are at the risk of increasing the harm.

Finally, Mr. Griffiths and others say that the Taliban has asked for the world to be patient as they take charge. Well, why not ask them to demonstrate

their commitment to peace through their actions? Ask them to stop beating women on the streets or shooting at them. Ask them to stop torturing journalists. Ask them to stop searching people's homes and threatening them. Ask them to fulfil their responsibility to protect and respect all Afghans regardless of their age or sex or ethnicity. If they care for Afghanistan as much as we do, let them show it by preserving our culture and respecting our people.

I would like to express my gratitude to the countries that have actually gone out of their way to evacuate and protect women activists and journalists at risk, notably, Canada, Germany, Norway and many other Asian and European Union countries, whose efforts are worth mentioning. Also, I would like to thank international civil society partners in the region and internationally — organizations such as the International Civil Society Action Network and others — which have shown sisterhood and solidarity. We will never forget that in the difficult times.

In 1994, United Nations predecessors sat in this Chamber and played politics while Rwanda's genocide unfolded. Today, it is the Afghans who are at risk.

We are told that some members of the Council do not like each other. We are told that they are competing with each other and that a resolution to enable action will not be adopted. But my plea to the Security Council is that its members put aside their political differences and act as one voice in support of the people and the women of Afghanistan.

I pray that no Council member experiences losing his or her country overnight, as we did in Afghanistan. As a civil society leader in exile, I am doing all I can to save the lives of women in my country so that I can face my daughters in the years to come.

Please ask yourself, Mr. President, given your power and position and privilege, can you face your daughters?

The President: I thank Ms. Frogh for her powerful briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Malala Yousafzai.

Ms. Yousafzai: Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Security Council as it considers the urgent situation in Afghanistan. I am grateful to the presidency for prioritizing education in this critical moment for Afghan girls.

I do not speak on behalf of Afghan girls and women today. As Council members have heard from Ms. Frogh, women and girls in Afghanistan are speaking out for themselves. But I do want to remind the Council what life is like for a girl living under extremism and terrorism.

I heard bombs, gunfire and explosions. My brothers and I ran into our parents' arms for protection. I was 10 years old.

I saw banners on shopping malls announcing that women were not allowed. I saw notices on school gates declaring girls were prohibited. I saw women flogged in the streets. I was 11 years old.

I saw my home transformed from a place of peace to a place of fear in just three years. I saw thousands of displaced people. I saw homes and schools destroyed. I was 12 years old.

I saw injustice, and I raised my voice for every girl's right to go to school. I saw a gunman stop my school bus, call my name and fire a bullet at me. I was 15 years old.

Now I am 24. I carry the scars of six surgeries to repair the damage of that one bullet.

That is a story that many Afghan girls may share if we do not act. Here are some of the stories that we are already hearing. Roshan, a female teacher and the sole breadwinner for her family, has been told not to come to work anymore. She is now without an income and no longer able to do the job that she loves. Aaria, an 11-year-old student, is worried she may not be able to return to school or pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer. Her thoughts have turned to how she can help her father provide for the family. Afghan women are demanding the right to choose their own future. In Kabul, their protests are met with tear gas, rifle butts and metal clubs.

I have had the privilege of working with many Afghan educators and advocates who have spent the last two decades rebuilding an education system from scratch. Because of their efforts, 39 per cent of children attending school in Afghanistan last year were girls. Today, that progress and those girls' future are under threat.

Our partners tell us that the doors to secondary schools in Afghanistan have been shut. Teachers and students have been told to wait at home. Many female

teachers have been told that they no longer have jobs because they are barred from teaching boys.

International human rights law guarantees girls the right to an education. But it is not only an issue of individual rights. The education of girls is a powerful tool for building peace and security, and I urge the Security Council to recognize it as such. When girls go to school, countries are able to recover from conflict more quickly once peace is established. Educating girls helps create stability and binds communities. People with a greater number of years of education tend to coexist in harmony and peace. But we also know that when girls receive an equitable and inclusive education, it also helps prevent conflict. In some countries, where the percentage of students finishing secondary school has doubled, the risk of conflict has been halved.

The United Nations and its members must remember their commitment to the protection of the dignity and worth of the human person. We must support education for Afghan girls because it is their human right and because it is vital to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. I am therefore here today to call on the Security Council to protect Afghan girls and women and the future of the nation in four ways.

First, the Council must send a clear and unequivocal message to the Taliban that a fundamental condition of any working relationship is upholding girls' right to education, in accordance with international treaties and conventions. Statements are not sufficient. The Taliban Government must guarantee and protect the rights of women and girls.

Secondly, the Security Council must build on resolution 2593 (2021) by supporting a robust monitoring mechanism to track and monitor abuses of human rights in Afghanistan, including a specific focus on girls' education. I echo the call made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for Muslim-majority countries to share how they successfully have implemented international human rights norms in their cultural and religious contexts.

Thirdly, the international community needs to put resolution 2593 (2021) into action, with a significant increase in humanitarian and development assistance to the United Nations and international organizations so as to ensure that all schools can operate safely. Right now, the people of Afghanistan are facing a political crisis, a months-long drought and the coronavirus disease. The Council must support additional assistance to

neighbouring countries and help provide education for refugee children. I urge leaders to agree to a generous financing package at Monday's emergency aid conference in order to ensure that all Afghan children can return to school as soon as possible.

Lastly, the United Nations presence is needed in every region of Afghanistan more than ever before. In order to do that, a strengthened mandate and resources for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other United Nations agencies in Afghanistan are essential.

A united Security Council, speaking with one voice on girls' education, can compel the Taliban to make real concessions. That is vital not only for Afghan women and girls themselves, but for long-term security in the region and our world. I hope and trust that the Security Council will stand with the girls and women of Afghanistan.

The President: I thank Ms. Yousafzai for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence of Ireland.

First, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Deborah Lyons, and the exceptional United Nations country and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) teams for their essential work and commitment to the Afghan people. I also thank Wazhma Frogh for powerfully detailing how violence and intimidation are impacting the people of her country, destroying lives, inciting fear and exacerbating existing challenges, especially for women and girls. I thank Malala Yousafzai for clearly reminding us of what is at stake for future generations of Afghan children, particularly girls. I am sure that she never thought that she would see that country take the backward step like the one we have seen in recent weeks.

We meet today at a pivotal point for Afghanistan — a country facing a serious humanitarian and human rights crisis. The world has watched in horror the violence and chaos in recent weeks. Millions of Afghans urgently require support, including those recently displaced by conflict, violence and intimidation — and they are in the millions. Collectively, we can avert a humanitarian tragedy in Afghanistan, but it will take an enormous effort. I urge the Taliban to facilitate full, safe and

unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations and all of their personnel, regardless of gender. They should be able to carry out their life-saving and life-sustaining work without interference. In order to ensure such access and the right of Afghans and foreign citizens to safely leave Afghanistan, it is vital that the Kabul airport and Afghanistan's land borders be fully open and operational.

The international community has a responsibility to continue to support humanitarian relief efforts. Ireland will play its part, including by participating at the high-level meeting on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 13 September, as we build on our announcement last month of emergency funding to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in recognition of our responsibility to Afghan refugees and host countries.

Afghanistan also faces a governance crisis. Participation in political and civic life is the right of all Afghans — women, men, young people, minorities and civil society. A Government that does not harness the full strength, talent and diversity of the Afghan people and that does not allow for the right to peaceful protest and free and independent media cannot lay the groundwork for a peaceful and secure Afghanistan into the future. We know from our own experience in Ireland that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and political stability.

Ireland urges the Council to place clear priority on women's involvement in the processes that shape their future. We owe that much to the women peacebuilders, many of whom have given everything and are risking their lives for peace. The rights of women and girls to full and equal access to education, health care and freedom of movement in their own country and to participate fully in public life are universal rights. They are not rights that are reserved only for women and girls from certain countries, ethnicities or religious traditions. They are rights that belong equally to all 7 billion people of the world's population. Quite simply, women and girls in Afghanistan must be treated as equal citizens.

It has been said time and again around this table that only an inclusive negotiated political settlement offers a sustainable future for all Afghan people. Frankly, we have seen no evidence of that in the approach of the Taliban so far. What they have said and what they have

done seem to mean two very different things. Those who have seized power now bear the ultimate responsibility to ensure the safety, security and human rights of the Afghan people. Any new Administration must adhere to Afghanistan's obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law.

I call on the members of the Council to send an unequivocal message that those who violate international laws and perpetrate human rights violations must and will be held accountable by the international community. The events of 26 August left us in no doubt that terrorism remains a present danger in Afghanistan. I want to express, from this chair, the deep sympathies of the Irish people to the families of those killed and injured in the horrifying attack at Kabul airport. Afghanistan must never again become a haven for international terrorism.

I repeat the demand of the Council that Afghan territory not be used to threaten or attack any country, shelter or train terrorists or plan and finance a terrorist attack. The Taliban must unequivocally break ties with all international terrorist organizations or continue to face censure and isolation. The fundamental responsibility of the Council is to the maintenance of international peace and security and to uphold the Charter of the United Nations. If we are not attempting to do that, we need to ask ourselves a serious question in terms of what the role of the Council really is. The adoption of resolution 2593 (2021) last week was a positive first step, clearly demonstrating the expectations of the international community and a statement of unity and intent of the Council, but the Council can and must do more. It is essential that we act with clarity, determination and, perhaps most importantly, unity.

At this time of uncertainty, United Nations operations in Afghanistan are more essential than they have ever been. UNAMA's mandate expires on 17 September. Ireland is actively engaging with fellow Council members to ensure that UNAMA's vital activities continue and to allow them to work on next steps. This is surely a moment for the Council to stand united. That unity will be vital to achieve consensus on a mandate that supports a peaceful, equal and inclusive future for all Afghans. That unity will be vital if we are to influence the decisions of Taliban leaders currently deciding on the future of their own country.

In the Chamber today, we heard from Ms. Lyons, Ms. Frogh and Ms. Yousafzai about the reality of what the Afghan people face. Their testimonies will stay with every person in the Chamber and serve, I hope, as a reminder of the Council's responsibilities. We all have an obligation to act together and not to fail the people of Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I wish to thank Special Representative Lyons, Ms. Frogh and Ms. Yousafzai for their briefings and for sharing their experiences.

It has been less than two weeks since we last met to discuss Afghanistan (see S/PV.8848). One of the welcome developments in the meantime has been the flash appeal for aid to address the increasingly precarious humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Even before the recent surge in hostilities, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was one of the worst in the world. Together with the ministerial meeting to be hosted by Secretary-General Guterres next Monday, we hope the appeal will provide for the necessary increase in aid for the people of Afghanistan.

We understand that the first humanitarian aid flights and shipments have already arrived. However, the delivery of aid still faces obstacles inside the country, notably in the delivery of essential health services for women and girls, who have been particularly impacted by the changes over the past three weeks. Estonia reiterates its call on all parties to allow immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and other actors providing assistance, including for female aid workers to deliver assistance to those in need.

In Estonia, the start of September means the start of a new school year for our children. This year, especially today, on the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, the eyes of the world are on Afghanistan and whether all girls in the country will be able to continue with their schooling safely, as well as whether their mothers, and all other Afghan women, will be allowed to continue moving about freely and participating in employment.

Estonia's commitment to the people of Afghanistan continues. However, our cooperation with any

Afghanistan leadership will be based upon its willingness to uphold the positive achievements of recent decades and act by the norms and standards of international law, including international human rights law.

Violations and abuses of human rights must stop, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. In particular, we condemn the recent use of violence against peaceful protesters and journalists, for whom Afghanistan continues to be one of the most dangerous places in the world in which to work.

The Taliban, having declared control over Afghanistan, bears great responsibility for, and accountability to, the Afghan people. The makeup of the caretaker Government has been noted here with great disappointment. Ignoring the diversity of the people of Afghanistan and excluding women are clear decisions that go against the expectations of the international community. Not only does that undermine women's right to full and equal participation in decision-making, but it also fuels concerns over continued future instability in the country. Moreover, those steps do not match earlier public statements made by the Taliban, thereby undermining confidence in its other claims.

Estonia again emphasizes that sustainable peace in Afghanistan can be ensured only through an inclusive political settlement that upholds constitutional protections for the rights of all the people of Afghanistan, particularly women, children and persons belonging to minorities.

I end with special thanks to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the broader United Nations in Afghanistan, whose efforts for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan have been vital during this time of crisis.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Allow me to thank Special Representative Lyons for her important briefing amid unprecedented challenges for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the whole of Afghanistan. We also thank Ms. Frogh and Ms. Yousafzai for their powerful interventions. It is very important for the Security Council to hear their voices and perspectives, especially on the future of women and girls in Afghanistan.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/759) rightfully points out that Afghans have experienced generations of war and hardship. We fully agree that

they must not be abandoned. We therefore welcome the decision to convene a ministerial meeting on the humanitarian situation to ensure that support to the people of Afghanistan is scaled up.

A sustainable peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through an inclusive political settlement. We take note that an interim Government has now been announced in Kabul. The composition of that Government gives cause for considerable concern. In contrast to previous indications from the Taliban, that Government is neither inclusive nor representative.

A new Government must be inclusive and representative, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. In Afghanistan, like everywhere else, there can be no trade-off between security, stability and progress and the rights of women. On the contrary, gender equality and the inclusion of women in public life leads to security and stability and serves as a path towards progress.

The conduct and composition of the Afghan Government will determine the scope and magnitude of cooperation and support from the international community. We also emphasize that Afghan territory must not be used to threaten or attack any country, shelter or train terrorists or plan or finance terrorist acts. We will hold the new Government accountable in that regard.

We have noted assurances by the Taliban that Government workers, both military and civilian, will not face retribution of any kind. Taliban representatives have also stated that women and girls will have access to work and education. We will closely follow how that is translated into action. Afghanistan must continue to adhere to its international obligations, including full respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

We urge all parties to ensure that humanitarian workers and civil society organizations get full, safe and unhindered access to people in need in accordance with international humanitarian law. We also call on all parties to ensure that Afghans and foreign nationals who wish to leave the country can do so in a safe and orderly way.

Prolonged conflict, drought and the pandemic have caused substantial humanitarian suffering. In addition, Afghanistan is one of the world's most vulnerable

countries to climate change and climate-related security risks.

In this critical time, it is vital to preserve the capacity of the United Nations to stay and deliver. The choices we make in the coming days on the UNAMA mandate will be decisive. As a co-penholder on Afghanistan, we encourage our fellow Council members to secure consensus on that indispensable mandate.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Lyons for her briefing. As she said, these have been extraordinary and challenging times, and I should like to thank her and, through her, her team for the courage and dedication with which the United Nations family in Afghanistan has responded.

We are in a new situation. We all remember the Taliban's previous period in power, so we approach it clear-eyed. But we have also heard that some in the Taliban may now want a different approach. So we are also open-minded. Our approach will be shaped by what the Taliban now do. Resolution 2593 (2021) sets out the Council's minimum expectations. We call on the Taliban to distance themselves from terrorism and to live up to the commitments they made during the Doha talks. It is in the shared interests of all countries that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for Al-Qaida, the Islamic State and other terrorist groups and does not undermine regional stability. We must all hold the Taliban to that.

We welcome the Taliban's commitments to allow safe passage for foreign nationals and Afghan citizens with documentation for travel. Again, we call on the Taliban to ensure that their actions reflect that.

We, too, are deeply concerned by the impact of recent events on the Afghan people. The United Kingdom is doubling its aid to Afghanistan to £286 million this year. We warmly welcome the United Nations flash appeal. We encourage the Taliban to create the safe environment needed in order to deliver humanitarian support, including by ensuring unimpeded access for aid workers and no interference in the work of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. We call for the protection of human rights and of the gains of the last two decades, especially the education of girls, the employment of women and the rights of minorities. And I thank Ms. Wazhma Frogh and Ms. Malala Yousafzai for their briefings today.

We have today seen disturbing images in the press of journalists who have been beaten. We are clear that the Taliban's actions must be consistent with their words, and we will calibrate our approach accordingly. The caretaker appointments announced by the Taliban on 7 September did not reflect the diversity of the country's regions and communities or women, and we call on the Taliban to pursue inclusive politics and an inclusive society.

Finally, the members of the Security Council share a common interest in making sure that Afghanistan does not return to the chaos of the past. We must now work together, and we will need the United Nations family to continue its brave work. I commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan as we enter this new phase. The United Kingdom stands ready to work with it.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): I thank the Special Representative, Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her briefing. I join the others in extending our unflinching support for the work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in these challenging times. India has consistently called for a central role of the United Nations in Afghanistan. I also thank the other briefers for their remarks and insights.

We have witnessed dramatic changes in the situation in Afghanistan over the course of the last month. The Security Council met thrice in August and has collectively pronounced on the prevailing situation. In particular, resolution 2593 (2021), on Afghanistan, clearly sets out the Council's expectations on a range of critical and immediate issues.

As Afghanistan's neighbour, we were privileged to preside over the adoption of a substantial and forward-looking product of the Council on Afghanistan. It took into account some of our collective concerns, in particular on terrorism, where it noted the commitment of the Taliban not to allow the use of Afghan soil for terrorism, including by terrorists and terrorist groups designated under resolution 1267 (1999). It has underlined that Afghan territory should not be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter or train terrorists, or to plan or to finance terrorist acts. As witnessed from the deplorable terrorist attack at Kabul Airport last month, terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to Afghanistan. It is therefore important that the commitments made in that regard are respected and adhered to.

Resolution 2593 (2021) also took note of the Taliban statement that Afghans will be able to travel abroad in an unhindered manner. We hope that those commitments will be adhered to, including regarding the safe, secure and orderly departure from Afghanistan of Afghans and all foreign nationals.

The situation in Afghanistan continues to be very fragile. The current situation is of direct concern to us as its immediate neighbour and a friend to its people. Uncertainties abound about the future of the Afghan people as well as about sustaining and building on the gains achieved over the past two decades. In that context, we reiterate the need for the voices of Afghan women to be heard, the aspirations of Afghan children to be realized and the rights of minorities to be protected. We call for humanitarian assistance to be provided urgently and underline the need to provide unhindered access to United Nations and other agencies in that regard.

India calls for an inclusive dispensation in Afghanistan that represents all sections of Afghan society. A broad-based, inclusive and representative formation attained through an inclusive, negotiated political settlement would gain greater international acceptability and legitimacy.

Afghanistan has already seen enough bloodshed and violence in recent years. We call on the international community to come together, rising above any partisan interests, to stand together with the people of Afghanistan in their desire for peace, stability and security in the country. We need to enable all Afghans, including women, children and minorities, to live in peace and dignity.

During the Council's most recent discussion on Afghanistan (see S/PV.8834), when the Secretary-General contributed his valuable insights, he stressed the need for the international community to speak in one voice on the evolving developments in Afghanistan. Perhaps it is more important for us to adhere to the Secretary-General's call, both in letter and spirit, for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan. We therefore call upon all members of the Council to ensure that when we decide on the future of the UNAMA mandate, we keep our focus centred on the Afghan people and their expectations that the international community will stand by them in this hour of crisis.

India has contributed significantly over the past decade to the development of Afghanistan. In that context, Indian development projects have been

undertaken in critical areas of power, water supply, road connectivity, health care, education, agriculture and capacity-building. India's emphasis has been on the welfare and well-being of the people of Afghanistan. India has undertaken more than 500 development projects in each of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. We also extended humanitarian assistance through the delivery of 75,000 tons of wheat last year to Afghanistan. We hope that those developments projects and the education and human-resource development imparted by India over the years will help in contributing to the development of an inclusive and progressive polity.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely, Kenya, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Niger.

We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for her briefing on the most recent developments in Afghanistan. The A3+1 reiterates its support for the Special Representative and the dedicated staff of the United Nations and thanks them for their efforts in assisting the valiant Afghan people at this challenging time in their country. We would also like to thank Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organization, and Ms. Malala Yousafzai, co-Founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund, for their contributions to today's debate.

The A3+1 remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Given the urgency and lack of clarity about how the coming days, months and years will unfold, in particular with regard to the political and security situation, priority should be given to humanitarian access. It is important that the Taliban guarantee the safety and security of United Nations personnel and humanitarian staff, as well as the freedom of movement of those workers, men and women alike, to reach people in need. We note the Taliban's stated intention to cooperate to ensure the continuation of humanitarian assistance.

The A3+1 welcomes the high-level ministerial meeting on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan to be held on 13 September in Geneva and hopes that the meeting will mobilize the necessary resources to assist the people of Afghanistan. The A3+1 acknowledges the efforts of neighbouring countries to host a large number of Afghan refugees. We underscore the need for the international community to support those countries.

The A3+1 notes the announcement by the Taliban, on 7 September, of an interim Government. However, we deplore the Taliban's lack of inclusivity. We believe that the Council must reiterate its calls for the Taliban to make sustained efforts to embrace peace, cut ties with terrorist groups and their affiliates and engage in meaningful dialogue with all segments of society, so that Afghanistan can become a haven for peace.

To ensure lasting peace and successful post-conflict reconstruction, the participation of women, young people and ethnic minorities is crucial. It is important to underscore the fact that the quest for peace must include respect for the human rights of Afghans, in particular those of the groups just mentioned. Moreover, access to education, employment, health care and other services must be guaranteed.

The Taliban's assumption of power has broad implications, extending beyond the borders of Afghanistan. In the light of the current situation, neighbouring countries and regional stakeholders fear instability and the attendant risk of the possible exportation of terrorism. The Council should give due consideration to those legitimate concerns. The A3+1 encourages the countries of the region to enhance their cooperation to create more stable conditions that would bring about a peaceful solution to the situation in Afghanistan and improve regional security.

Turning now to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the A3+1 remains committed to supporting lasting peace, development and human rights in Afghanistan. We stand ready to engage constructively during upcoming negotiations.

In conclusion, Kenya, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Niger reaffirm their unwavering solidarity with the people of Afghanistan during this uncertain time. We reiterate our support for their vision of a peaceful and progressive country.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome your personal participation, Mr. President, in today's meeting.

On 11 September, exactly 20 years will have elapsed since the tragic events in New York, when nearly 3,000 innocent lives were lost. We thank Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield and other colleagues from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America for the opportunity to attend the

memorial on 11 September today to pay tribute to the innocent victims of that monstrous act. We extend our condolences to the Government and the people of the United States of America and to the families of those who lost loved ones.

Terrorism is a basic evil and can be vanquished only through joint efforts, which should not hinge on political situations. The tragic events of 11 September have a direct impact on the topic of today's meeting, as they marked the start of the 20-year campaign in Afghanistan.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her insights and assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. We also listened carefully to civil society representatives Ms. Wazhma Frogh and Ms. Malala Yousafzai. We welcome the fact that representatives of countries in the region have the opportunity today to speak about an issue of particular relevance to them.

We have all been closely following the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. Today's meeting is being held against the backdrop of the Taliban's announcement on 7 September of its caretaker Government. New structures of authority are now being created. We continue to trust that those structures will be inclusive and reflect the interests of all Afghans and ethnopolitical forces, as that is the only way to achieve peace. We have continued to underscore our interest in maintaining stability in Afghanistan. That is our main aim, and one we all share. We cannot allow ourselves to ignore the situation on the ground or the new reality.

Nonetheless, the root causes of the new situation did not appear overnight. Recent events clearly show that Afghans will not accept external management of their development. Only Afghans themselves can decide the fate of their country. At the same time, decisions should be taken on an inclusive basis, while bearing in mind the interests of all segments of society — all ethnic groups — while, of course, ensuring the rights of women and respect for basic human rights.

We have followed the steps of the new Government, which has announced that it will end the fighting and bring order to the country. It has announced an amnesty for Government workers and plans to address the narcotics trade. We have heard about guarantees of security for diplomats. We trust that, in the current situation, the safety of United Nations staff, as well as

the inviolability of its facilities in Afghanistan, will also be guaranteed.

At this stage, it is most important to focus on the most pressing issues, in particular those linked to the timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all in need. According to our information, humanitarian workers themselves have not faced serious problems in providing assistance. Efforts are under way to build rapport with new authorities across the whole country to broaden humanitarian access. First and foremost, financial support should be provided to bolster the efforts of humanitarian workers. We trust that key donors will provide the necessary assistance for the socioeconomic recovery of Afghanistan, not just in word but also in deed.

As the situation shows, despite the endless streams of funding and the foreign military presence over the past 20 years, poverty, the lack of food in Afghanistan and other pressing issues have not yet been solved. Addressing those problems in the current circumstances is more challenging, given the basic lack of funding. The country is on the brink of economic collapse. The deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian situation does not bode well for the future. On the contrary, it will inevitably lead to destabilization and an even greater humanitarian crisis, which, in turn, will exacerbate the migration crisis in the region and around the world. We trust that access will be granted to Afghanistan's frozen assets in the interests of the Afghan people.

Over the years, the threat posed by terrorism and narcotics has continued unabated. As in the past, we are concerned about the ongoing presence in the country of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-Khorasan, whose terrorist activities could spread across the borders of Afghanistan and jeopardize the security of neighbouring States in Central Asia and beyond. ISIL is not interested in establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan and still pursues the ultimate goal of building a global caliphate. It is in our vital interests that Afghanistan never again be a hotbed of terrorism.

The risk of militants infiltrating the region, including disguised as refugees, is of great concern to our Central Asian partners. We are in regular contact with all five countries of Central Asia. Cooperation among regional organizations — the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), including

the CSTO Working Group on Afghanistan and the updated mechanism of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group — is more important than ever.

The problem of the production and smuggling of Afghan drugs is inextricably linked to terrorism. Afghanistan continues to be the largest supplier of opiates. More than two thirds of the country's provinces produce drugs. We have mentioned this issue many times, but nobody wants to hear about it. The usually rather narrow coverage of this topic in the Secretary-General's reports is dispiriting. It is also clear that the efforts of the previous Government to fight this scourge were insufficient. Moreover, the scale of cultivation has increased significantly. We hope that the new authorities will be able to solve this problem, as they have stated, in order to spare the region from the drug threats coming from Afghanistan.

We see that the situation in Afghanistan is now being discussed in practically all international platforms, and proposals to create new platforms are mushrooming. Many States, including those far from the region, are trying to hastily find a solution to the Afghan problem by using standard responses and applying their own spin. Many mistakes have already been made, for which the Afghan people have had to pay. We call for patience and for a balanced and thoughtful approach that takes into account the lessons learned. Repeating past errors will be much more costly.

For its part, the Russian Federation remains interested in the expeditious stabilization of Afghanistan and its post-conflict recovery. We would like to ensure that this country never poses a threat to the region and the world.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank and commend the briefers for their presentations and their commitment. The presence of three women in particular — Ms. Wazhma Frogh, Ms. Malala Yousafzai and Special Representative Lyons — before the Security Council today reminds us that women must not be forgotten in the Afghan crisis. Instead, they must be at the heart of any solution.

I would like to express our full support to Deborah Lyons. I also salute the courage and determination of the teams of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and, beyond that, of all the United Nations staff in Afghanistan. Those who are still there are working in a very deteriorated security and humanitarian context. Their safety must be a

constant concern for us all. The Secretary-General's report (S/2021/759) reminds us of this as we negotiate the renewal of UNAMA's mandate.

The international community's demands on the Taliban are extremely clear. They were set out explicitly in resolution 2593 (2021) and have been repeated by France and its European partners on many occasions.

The first is the safe and unhindered departure of Afghans and foreign nationals who wish to leave the country. That is central to resolution 2593 (2021), which was supported by France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The Taliban made concrete commitments in that regard in their 27 August 2021 statement, and they must uphold those commitments. We are working with all partners concerned, including Afghanistan's neighbours, to ensure that they do so. One of the priorities is that those who wish to leave Afghanistan should be able to do so via Kabul airport, where access must be free, safe and secure.

The second priority is to guarantee humanitarian access throughout Afghanistan. The situation on the ground continues to worsen. Almost half of the Afghan population is now dependent on external humanitarian aid. France will take part in the 13 September ministerial meeting in Geneva and will contribute to the international effort to help the Afghan people. But aid is nothing if it does not reach all those who need it most. The protection of humanitarian and medical personnel must be guaranteed. The Taliban made commitments in that connection. However, words do not suffice; we expect concrete actions and assurances. Female humanitarian workers must be able to complete their missions.

All parties must meet their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. We will also not budge on respect for human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls. We heard two poignant testimonies from Ms. Frogh and Ms. Yousafzai. They reminded us — each in her own way and with her own story — of the courage of Afghan women and girls who have fought hard for their rights over the past 20 years. Protecting those gains is a top priority, and the violation of those rights will not go unpunished.

Girls must be able to continue to go to school and aspire to leadership positions. Their elders must be able to continue to work and enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms without hindrance. We know the

determination of Afghan women, and we will support them in their future struggles as we have done in the past.

Afghanistan must not become a sanctuary for terrorist groups again. We demand that the Taliban break all direct and indirect links, including financial ones, with terrorist groups, in particular Al-Qaida.

France has constantly reiterated that it would support the establishment of a transitional Government that represents the Afghan people as a whole and attends to the needs of the population. It is evident that the composition of the new interim Government announced by the Taliban yesterday does not meet that requirement at all.

In conclusion, France will continue to lend its full support to the Afghan people and will be vigilant to ensure that the commitments made by the Taliban are respected and translated into concrete action on the ground.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons, Ms. Malala Yousafzai and Ms. Wazhma Frogh for their briefings. My country highly values their testimony, and I am sure the same is true for other countries.

The Security Council has before it today the important task of considering the role of the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, in supporting Afghanistan in overcoming the complex humanitarian, political and security situation. I express my country's appreciation for the work of the Mission. Its efforts to protect human rights, promote gender equality and facilitate humanitarian assistance is now more important than ever.

The testimony of the briefers makes it clear that the Afghan people need the support of the United Nations and the international community more than ever. Mexico stands in solidarity with the Afghan people and reiterates its willingness to provide assistance for humanitarian reasons to those whose lives are in imminent danger or are at risk of physical harm. An example of this was the humanitarian protection and asylum granted to media workers and their families, as well as to women from the Afghan Dreamers Team. We commend all States that have hosted refugees and reiterate the importance of respecting international refugee law.

As outlined by Special Representative Lyons, the humanitarian situation is deplorable. Between January and August, 550,000 people were displaced. Moreover, it is estimated that one in three people experience food insecurity, exacerbated by drought. It is also estimated that half of children under 5 years of age suffer some degree of malnutrition. It is clear that humanitarian assistance is urgently needed, yet attacks on humanitarian personnel continue unabated. Furthermore, there are reports that female humanitarian workers are being restricted if they are not accompanied by a man. Mexico echoes calls to guarantee unrestricted humanitarian access. We will closely follow the 13 September ministerial meeting to be convened by the Secretary-General to assess the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

The repression of popular protests — especially of women — and the violent arrests, the executions, the persecution of media workers and the impact on civilians make inclusive governance that meets all the aspirations of the Afghan people an urgent matter. It is important that those who govern in Afghanistan guarantee civilians' rights and respect international obligations.

Mexico and Ireland, as co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, once called for the future Government of Afghanistan to include the full and effective participation of women. We regret that that call was not been heeded in the formation of the interim Government.

In line with resolution 2593 (2021), we make the following appeals: first, to ensure full, safe and unconditional humanitarian access and the safety of all humanitarian workers in accordance with international humanitarian law; secondly, to ensure that anyone wishing to leave Afghanistan can do so safely and without restriction; thirdly, for respect and protection for the human rights of all Afghans and to ensure the full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes; and fourthly, to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a platform or safe haven for terrorists or threats to the security of other countries.

In conclusion, this morning's visit by Council members to the memorial to the victims of the 11 September attacks serves as a reminder of the importance of combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations in accordance with international law. We must stand united in this fight in memory not only

of those who died that day but also in memory of all the victims who have fallen from that scourge, including the victims of the heinous attack at Kabul airport.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank Ireland for convening this important meeting, and I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland for presiding over it. I thank Special Representative Lyons for her comprehensive briefing. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other United Nations personnel on the ground in these very challenging times. We also thank Ms. Frogh and Ms. Yousafzai for sharing their stories and their thoughts. I welcome the representatives of Afghanistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Iran to this meeting.

We have been following closely the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for the country and the people on the ground — Afghans, foreign nationals and United Nations personnel.

We strongly condemn the recent terrorist attacks in Kabul and express our deepest condolences to the relevant countries and families of the victims. It is our sincere hope that the situation in the country can soon stabilize for the benefit of the Afghan people and for peace and stability in the region, in particular Afghanistan's neighbouring countries.

In the light of the current developments, I wish to highlight the following.

First, the priority now is to ensure order and security in the country, as well as the safety, security and well-being of all people on the ground. We call on all relevant parties in Afghanistan to refrain from the use of force and respect their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and in line with resolution 2593 (2021). The normal operations of indispensable infrastructure and essential services for the civilian population, particularly vulnerable groups, such as women, children and persons with disabilities, must be ensured.

We note the statements from relevant parties on continuing to ensure the safe passage of Afghans and foreign nationals who wish to leave the country. We are gravely concerned about the security incidents related to United Nations personnel in Afghanistan in recent days, as is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/759). The safety and security of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers, foreign

nationals, international organizations and diplomatic missions must be guaranteed.

Secondly, it is imperative to promote an inclusive political settlement for the stability and development of the country. We call on all relevant parties in Afghanistan to continue to engage in dialogue, resolve their differences and promote national reconciliation and harmony. It is equally important to ensure the active and meaningful participation of women and youth in political and all other aspects of society.

Thirdly, further efforts are needed to tackle the increasing challenges related to the humanitarian situation, food insecurity, terrorism, migrants and refugees, the coronavirus disease pandemic and drug trafficking. The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is currently affecting over 18 million people, half of the country's population. Immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured to reach the Afghan people in need. We hope that the United Nations and regional and international partners will redouble their efforts in supporting peace and the reconstruction of Afghanistan, particularly in addressing the current humanitarian challenges.

Fourthly, we would like to commend the efforts of UNAMA and stress the importance of ensuring the security and safety of the Mission and all its personnel — international and national alike. In the upcoming period, the mandate of the Mission will need to be carefully considered given the current situation. We will engage closely with other Council members in that regard. At the same time, we call on all relevant parties in Afghanistan to fully cooperate and create favourable conditions for the United Nations and UNAMA to carry out their mandate for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan and the development of the country.

Before concluding, Viet Nam would like to reiterate its full support for the pursuit of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan for the Afghan people.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Lyons for her briefing. Through her, I would like to thank the entire team of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its work and commitment, especially during these extremely challenging few weeks. I thank Malala Yousafzai, as always, for her courage and for addressing the Security Council. Her insights and experiences are invaluable. I thank also Wazhma Frog

for sharing her views and her critical work to foster women's inclusion and meaningful participation in Afghan civil life.

On 31 August, a new chapter for our engagement with Afghanistan began. In this difficult and changing environment, Afghanistan needs the United Nations and UNAMA more than ever. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield had the great privilege of meeting individually with Malala just last week. Her advocacy is a poignant reminder of what is at stake for women and girls going forward. Millions of Afghan children, particularly girls, are out of school. Some 300,000 children have been forced out of their homes. UNICEF predicts that 1 million children under the age of five may soon face severe acute malnutrition. They may die from hunger.

The United States remains committed to the people of Afghanistan. As the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, we are helping our partners on the ground provide food, protection, shelter, essential health care, water, sanitation, hygiene services and so much more vital humanitarian aid to Afghans.

But the needs are vast, and at this moment, while there is a dramatically reduced diplomatic footprint across the country, the United Nations has a vitally important role to play. We need the United Nations to help prevent human rights violations and abuses and pursue accountability for those that have already occurred. We need the United Nations to protect children and civilians. And the United Nations must help coordinate desperately needed humanitarian assistance. UNAMA's work, both in Kabul and through its field offices, is therefore absolutely necessary. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the safety and security of UNAMA's field staff, the ability of women personnel from the United Nations to do the same work their male counterparts are permitted to do, and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

First, we are outraged at reports that members of the Taliban have engaged in reprisals against United Nations staff throughout the country. This is simply unacceptable. We call on the Taliban leadership to ensure that Taliban members at all levels comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and take every action to respect the operational independence and neutrality of the United Nations and its international and national staff.

We are a strong supporter of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and other security and protective services elements of the United Nations, and we are exploring additional ways to bolster protections for UNAMA's staff and their families, whose safety and security remain a top and shared priority among Member States and our United Nations partners.

Secondly, we have also heard reports that some women, including female United Nations staff members and female staff of United States implementing partners are prohibited from coming into the office or being required to enter into their workplaces with a male chaperone. To call these reported incidents outrageous would be an understatement. All United Nations staff members must be able to conduct their work without undue burden and without discrimination as to who they are.

Thirdly, we call on the Taliban to permit humanitarian organizations to continue their vital work in Afghanistan. With rising food prices, a national drought and severe malnutrition threatening so many of the country's children, the World Food Programme's efforts to establish a humanitarian air bridge are critical for ensuring uninterrupted food aid.

I would like to end by addressing the Taliban directly. As stated in resolution 2593 (2021), which we adopted on 30 August, the Security Council expects the Taliban to live up to all of its commitments. That includes facilitating safe passage for Afghans and foreign nationals who want to leave Afghanistan. All parties must also respect their obligations under international humanitarian law in all circumstances, including those related to the protection of civilians.

If a new Afghan Government upholds its commitments and obligations, brings greater stability to the country and region, demonstrates real inclusion and protects the gains of the past two decades, we will work with it. But we will not do that on the basis of trust or faith alone.

The Taliban seeks international legitimacy and support. Our message is simple. Any legitimacy and support will have to be earned. The standards the international community has set are clear. We are watching closely to see that those standards are met.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I welcome you, Mr. President, as you have come to New York to preside over today's meeting,

and I welcome the presence of the representatives of Pakistan and other countries of the region in question. I thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons and the two civil society representatives for their briefings.

As an ancient civilization in Central Asia, Afghanistan has experienced many vicissitudes of life. Over the past 20 years, Afghanistan's peaceful development has been fraught with twists and turns and challenges, and the Afghan people have suffered immensely. Twenty years on, the various Afghan factions have failed to achieve unity, only to see their internal differences deepen and widen. Again, 20 years on, terrorist forces in Afghanistan have not been eradicated, and terrorist organizations have become increasingly bold and rampant. And for 20 years, the Afghan people have been denied development and dignity and have been teetering between poverty and instability. Only history can do justice to what has happened in Afghanistan over the past 20 years.

However, the recent abrupt changes in Afghanistan remind us once again that military interventions and power politics cannot achieve popularity, and foreign models and democratic transformations are hard pressed to gain a foothold. What relevant countries have done in Afghanistan in the past 20 years has ended in failure.

They should seriously reflect on that and correct their mistakes in a timely manner rather than walk away from the problems of their own making, leaving those problems to Afghanistan and other countries in the region. After all, they bear the inescapable political, security, economic and humanitarian responsibilities for Afghanistan and are more obligated than other countries to help Afghanistan maintain stability, prevent chaos and embark on the road towards peace and reconstruction. They should earnestly honour their commitments to the Afghan people and take concrete actions to participate in the international community's assistance efforts in Afghanistan.

As we speak, Afghanistan finds itself buried in rubble and in ruins, with myriad reconstruction tasks ahead. The Taliban in Afghanistan have announced the formation of an interim Government as a necessary step towards restoring order and commencing post-war reconstruction. According to the Afghan Taliban, the interim Government was set up to restore social and economic order as soon as possible.

We hope that the Taliban will learn lessons from history, honour its commitments, unite all ethnic groups

and factions, build a broad-based and inclusive political architecture, pursue moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, protect the rights of women and children, resolutely combat terrorist forces in all their forms and manifestations, and develop friendly and cooperative relations with other countries, not least their neighbours.

Today Afghanistan stands at a crossroads of historic import. We sincerely hope that Afghanistan can make the right choice and find a development path suited to its national conditions. The international community should, for its part, play a constructive role in Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction based on respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, honouring the will of the Afghan people and adhering to the principle of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process.

There should be more dialogue with and guidance to the new Powers in Afghanistan, and we should guard against conceiving presumptions or, worse, creating difficulties. The international community should urge and help the Taliban to take ownership of its commitments in the areas of politics, development, counter-terrorism, counter narcotics and human rights. In particular, it should prevent Afghanistan from becoming a new cradle of terrorism or a hub for terrorists. All countries should abandon double standards, and, in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions, they should resolutely combat all such terrorist forces as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, so as to prevent these groups from conglomerating and stirring up trouble in Afghanistan.

China welcomes Secretary-General Guterres' proposed meeting on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan slated for 13 September in Geneva, in the hopes that the international community — major donor countries in particular — will step up assistance to Afghanistan. At the same time, the international community should help Afghanistan tap into its advantages when it comes to natural endowment, geographical location and human resources, carry out regional cooperation and collaborative activities, promote economic and social development and improve the well-being of its people. One of the major reasons for the current economic difficulties in Afghanistan is the freezing of Afghan overseas assets. Those assets belong to Afghanistan and should be used for Afghanistan, not as leverage, threats or restraints.

The situation in Afghanistan is closely related to the peace and development of the entire region. Over the years, Afghanistan's immediate and regional neighbours have actively supported the country's peace, reconciliation and reconstruction choices and have made enormous efforts to promote peace and development in Afghanistan. Those countries are on the front lines of the fight against terrorism and its overflow, cross-border drug smuggling and the refugee and migrant exodus. The international community should understand their difficulties, respect their sacrifices and support their efforts.

A Foreign Ministers meeting was held yesterday among Afghanistan's six neighbouring countries, at which in-depth discussions were held on such topics as the current situation in Afghanistan, pandemic prevention and control, port openings, migratory regulations and controls, humanitarian aid, counter-terrorism, security and cooperation on drug enforcement, among others. Consensus was reached on a number of issues, whereby everyone agreed on addressing common concerns and strengthening communication and coordination among one another so as to create an environment that will enable the restoration of stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

As a close neighbour, China has always respected the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, adhered to the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs and pursued a friendly policy with regard to all the people of Afghanistan. In order to meet the latter's immediate needs, China will donate in 3 million vaccine doses in a first phase, which will be followed by ¥200 million in food, supplies, vaccines and medicine on an emergency basis. When security and other conditions are met, China will be poised to help Afghanistan create projects that will improve livelihoods and, to the best of its ability, support Afghanistan in its peaceful reconstruction and economic development.

In the current circumstances, China supports the United Nations in playing a greater role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and helping Afghanistan achieve a smooth transition and embark upon the path of peaceful development as soon as possible. China appreciates the work of Special Representative Lyons and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We look forward to in-depth examination and discussions with other Council members in order to come up with suitable

arrangements for the next phase of the United Nations presence in Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Isaczai (Afghanistan): I would like to thank all the previous briefers for their insightful statements, in particular my countrywoman Wazhma Frogh for bringing the voice and cries of Afghan women before the Security Council.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the start of Ireland's presidency and express my deep appreciation to Ireland for its staunch support for Afghanistan, especially Afghan women and girls. I would furthermore like to thank all members of the Council for their continued attention to the situation in my country and ask them to remain united in their support for the Afghan people and our rights and freedom. We are also very thankful for the life-saving work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations family of agencies. We commend the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and her team. Her comprehensive briefing today showed the need for extending and expanding UNAMA's mandate.

On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to all victims of terrorism around the world.

The situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, and we are learning more about the true and unchanged nature of the Taliban every day. Since the Council's previous meeting on Afghanistan, on 30 August (see S/PV.8844), the Taliban has continued to commit human rights violations and possibly war crimes, which have exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Despite the Taliban's total blockade of the Panjshir Valley, we have eye-witness accounts of the Taliban's widespread atrocities, perpetrated with the support of foreign terrorist fighters and foreign intelligence and military assets.

They have carried out targeted executions, cut off communication lines and imposed a humanitarian blockade that is preventing food supplies from entering the province. As demanded by us before, we reiterate our call for accountability and the urgent deployment of a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan to assess violations of human rights, not only in Panjshir but also

in other areas, such as Spin Boldak, Malistan and other provinces of Afghanistan.

The Taliban has also violently suppressed peaceful demonstrations in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and other cities in Afghanistan, as other speakers previously mentioned. Members have probably seen the graphic images of brave Afghan women protesters who were threatened and beaten by heavily armed Taliban members on the streets of Kabul. Photos circulating online also show the tortured and bruised bodies of two journalists who were detained after covering the protests in Kabul. Two innocent young lives were also lost in protests in Herat because of the Taliban's violent response.

I call on the international community to condemn the Taliban's suppression of such peaceful protests and stand with the Afghan women who are defending their rights. Yesterday the Taliban's new Ministry of the Interior banned all public protests. They have also banned music and women and girls' sports and have prevented most female workers from returning to work until further notice.

Those actions prove that the Taliban's earlier promises to allow Afghanistan's independent media to operate freely and safely and respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, are just empty words intended to deceive the international community. The members of the Council rightfully said that they would not judge the Taliban on their words, but their actions. They have now acted, and the Council cannot be silent in its response.

After much waiting and a modicum of optimism, the Taliban announced their so-called cabinet on September 7, which includes solely senior Taliban members predominantly representing one ethnic group. It fails on all metrics of inclusivity and has been rejected by the absolute majority of the Afghan people, including political and civil society groups. Their so-called cabinet, which includes multiple individuals listed in the sanctions regime established by resolution 1988 (2011), will undermine Afghanistan's political and ethnic diversity and is leading to increased tensions and damaging the prospect for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the country.

The Council has on multiple occasions committed itself to not recognizing an exclusionary Government or supporting the re-establishment of the Islamic emirate, as stipulated in resolution 2513 (2020). The Afghan

people expect the Council to keep that promise and pressure the Taliban to pave the way for an inclusive Government that all segments of our society can accept and feel part of. The people's protests in the past few days sends a strong message to the Taliban that Afghans of all backgrounds and creeds will not accept a totalitarian system imposed upon them. They demand their freedom and want to have a say in shaping the future destiny of their country.

I therefore ask the Council to withhold any recognition of any Government in Afghanistan unless it is truly inclusive and formed on the basis of the free will of the people. I further urge members to draw a fundamental red line regarding the Taliban's treatment of women and girls and respect for the rights of all Afghans. The Council must use all its diplomatic tools, including the full implementation of existing multilateral sanctions, to make the Taliban engage in sincere and genuine talks for a comprehensive settlement.

The Council should also re-evaluate its approach to granting travel-ban exemptions to Taliban leaders on the United Nations sanctions list after they failed to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. Any further extension of the mechanism would be misused for the purpose of gaining international recognition for their new non-inclusive Government.

While the Taliban is celebrating its victory by shooting guns in the air on the streets of Kabul, a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding. According to the United Nation's flash appeal for Afghanistan, aid organizations are witnessing a dangerous deepening of humanitarian needs across the country and the situation is about to get worse.

A perfect storm is brewing. The devastating impact of Afghanistan's second major drought in four years is taking hold; a cold and dangerous winter is approaching; the pandemic continues to spread; the economy is in a state of collapse; and there is no Government that can provide even the most basic services to the people. The facts from the ground are devastating. People are running out of cash and selling their meagre belongings to survive. The 2021 harvest is expected to be below average, and the next lean season is expected to be more intense and longer. Severe malnutrition will hit 50 per cent of Afghan children. Thousands more are likely to be displaced and leave the country. Therefore, the Afghan people need the help of the Council to survive.

I extend Afghanistan's most sincere gratitude to the entire humanitarian community for its commitment to stay and deliver and the United Nations for its dedicated support. We also thank all Member States and other partners that have already announced increased humanitarian funding. But it is not enough.

In that respect, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for convening a high-level humanitarian conference for Afghanistan on 13 September in Geneva. I urge all members of the Council to commit increased funding during that conference.

The negotiations on UNAMA's mandate come at a time of extreme challenges for Afghanistan. We ask the members of the Security Council to consider a comprehensive and strong UNAMA mandate to empower it to address the humanitarian crisis and monitor and report on the human rights situation on the ground. The people of Afghanistan are in desperate need and the international community cannot afford to leave them behind.

On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the horrendous terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the world cannot turn its back on Afghanistan and accept the new status quo as normal. We still have an opportunity to build on the successes of the past 20 years and work with all parties to establish a political system that is representative of Afghanistan's diversity, that conforms with Islamic values and international norms and commitments and that prevents Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. In order to achieve that, the unity and decisive action of the Security Council are paramount.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioglu (Turkey): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Deborah Lyons, for her comprehensive briefing. I also thank Ms. Wazhma Frogh and Ms. Malala Yousafzai for their insightful statements.

Over the years in this Chamber, we have emphasized time and again the importance of supporting Afghanistan on its journey of political, security and economic transformation. We have highlighted our collective achievements and responsibilities to reach lasting peace.

Despite all obstacles, with the help of the international community, Afghan people made major

gains at important costs over the past two decades in the field of fundamental rights and freedoms, especially the rights of women and girls. We believe that the protection of those achievements will be first and foremost in the interest of the Afghan nation. The interim Government of Afghanistan knows very well that it will be held accountable if it violates human rights, especially the rights of women and girls. We should be watching developments in that context very closely.

Afghanistan stands at an important crossroads today. We note the announcement by the Taliban this week about the formation of the interim cabinet. We hope that those efforts will ultimately result in the creation of an inclusive and representative Government. That is essential for long-term stability. To that end, we believe that gradual engagement is the right approach. We need to engage with the Taliban in order to see whether its promises will be put into action or not. It has to earn our trust by translating its words into deeds. It will, of course, be judged by what it does, not by what it is saying.

Now more than ever, the Afghan people and vulnerable groups in particular need our support and solidarity. One of our urgent tasks should be to ensure the continued functioning of Kabul International Airport. In his latest report (S/2021/759), the Secretary-General underlines the preservation of infrastructure and the reopening of airports as vital for the continuation of basic services.

In recent weeks, we have done our best to support our allies and partners in their evacuation efforts. Together with Qatar, we have undertaken efforts to ensure the safe and secure operation of Kabul airport. It is critical to keep the airport operational in order to connect Afghan people with the world. It is also the most rapid and safest route to ensure the transfer of humanitarian assistance to people in need. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of resolution 2593 (2021) and call for its swift implementation.

Let me also touch briefly upon the humanitarian situation, which requires our immediate attention. We are witnessing the worsening of living conditions throughout Afghanistan, with half of the population in need of urgent assistance and one third facing hunger. We have already stepped up our aid efforts through the Turkish Red Crescent. However, global efforts are urgently needed in order to respond to the deteriorating situation.

The high-level ministerial meeting to be hosted by the Secretary-General next week will definitely provide an important opportunity to mobilize the international community in that direction. Our endeavours should also include neighbouring countries that are already hosting a large number of Afghan refugees and struggling with the socioeconomic impact. Unless we take immediate action now, we will face greater humanitarian consequences and security repercussions in the region and beyond.

Turkey and Afghanistan have deep-rooted historical, cultural and ethnic ties. For many years, my country has assumed a significant role to support Afghanistan on every front. While we have actively contributed to its security, we have also carried out the most comprehensive development programme in our history through countless projects, including many on the empowerment of women and girls. Through regional initiatives and platforms such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and trilateral cooperation mechanisms, we have strived to find comprehensive and pragmatic solutions to regional issues.

Our commitment to Afghanistan and the Afghan people is open-ended. We will never abandon them, and we will not let them down. Together, we should strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for the future. Lasting peace and stability require political reconciliation. Afghanistan can overcome the current challenges only through enhanced unity and solidarity. We should help them to achieve that.

In conclusion, let me recall that an immediate request by the Afghan people to the Council is the continued presence of the United Nations in Afghanistan in all fields. The Council should uphold its responsibilities and enable the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to conduct its activities without any hindrance. For our part, we are ready to assist in any way we can to facilitate the central role of the United Nations at this critical time.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Ilyassov (Kazakhstan): We commend the Irish presidency for hosting this debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the efforts of which, under the sterling leadership of Ms. Deborah Lyons, we acknowledge with great appreciation.

The peace and security of Afghanistan have always been a priority for Kazakhstan and other countries in Central Asia. In the spirit of Kazakhstan's comprehensive cooperation with the United Nations and as part of Kazakhstan's commitments as a full-fledged member of the Organization, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has taken the decision to fulfil the request of the United Nations to temporarily relocate UNAMA to Almaty. That relocation will streamline the work of the United Nations in the region and primarily for Afghanistan in these challenging times. That decision showcases the mature and robust partnership between the United Nations and Kazakhstan. Our Government is looking forward to working with the United Nations and UNAMA to contribute to the peace and safety of the Afghan people.

UNAMA was relocated to the city of Almaty, which already hosts 18 United Nations agencies with multi-country, subregional and regional mandates in the International Organizations Building. Bonding with UNAMA could turn that hub into an efficient regional centre for the Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to stability in the region and in Afghanistan in the long term, including in crucial areas such as education and human capital.

For example, for over a decade, Kazakhstan has provided educational scholarships for young Afghans to study at Kazakh universities.

Together with the European Union, in 2017 we launched a project on the economic empowerment of Afghan women through secondary education and training in Central Asia. On January 21, together with the European Commission, we started the second phase of the project, which enrolled an additional 100 Afghan women in the universities of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Despite the current situation, my Government decided to continue that programme for Afghan students as long as it is feasible and safe for them.

UNAMA is currently the only effective international actor on the ground. We must fully support the Mission, politically, financially and logistically, with a primary focus on delivering humanitarian aid to those in need. While my country shares in all the political pleas, messages and concerns, I would like to focus on the practical aspects of humanitarian aid, because we all spoke about how important this is. Our colleague from France said that humanitarian aid means nothing

so long as it does not reach the people. Our colleague from Estonia mentioned that even now it is very hard for humanitarian aid workers to reach some parts of Afghanistan.

Winter is coming in two months. Most parts of Afghanistan will be cut off, and even the efficient functioning of Kabul airport will not mean that all this humanitarian aid will reach those people. My Government therefore considers it important that all the pledges that we make and all the financial resources that we will allocate for that and all the humanitarian aid that will be collected should be efficiently and safely delivered to the provinces and to the people that are really in need. Delivering such assistance only to Kabul airport, unfortunately, does not mean that it will reach the people in need in the provinces.

We consider it necessary, therefore, to establish an alternative regional hub for storing and distributing international humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. In that respect, given that in Almaty we have approximately 250 capable UNAMA officers, it takes less than two hours to fly from Almaty to Afghanistan. Given the infrastructure and the logistical possibilities of my country, we are ready to engage with the United Nations on establishing an alternative humanitarian hub for Afghanistan in Almaty to efficiently deliver such aid.

The President: I thank the representative of Kazakhstan very much for that suggestion in particular. I am sure that it will be followed up on.

I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like first to congratulate Ireland on having assumed the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and to welcome you here, Sir, to preside over this meeting.

It is also the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and I should like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere condolences to the delegation and to the people of the United States.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ireland for ensuring the participation of Afghanistan's neighbours in this important debate.

Four decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan have killed more than a million Afghans, injured, maimed and traumatized many more and devastated its already fragile economy, society and polity. Today

Afghanistan stands at a critical juncture in its history. The Afghan people can, with the support of the international community, restore peace and revive the prospects of development.

Other than the people of Afghanistan, it is Pakistan that has been most severely impacted by the consequences of the conflict in that country. In the so-called war on terror, 80,000 Pakistanis were killed in terror attacks and thousands were injured. Our economy has suffered an estimated damage of more than \$150 billion.

Even as the world fears an outflow of Afghan refugees, Pakistan continues to host more than 3 million Afghan refugees, with nominal support from the international community. Thus, for Pakistan, the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan is an imperative.

Despite the fragility of the situation in Afghanistan, the fear of widespread bloodshed has been averted. The acting Government in Kabul was constituted, as we understand, as a necessary step to establish law and order and a sense of security in the country, restore basic services to the people and achieve the purpose of distributing international humanitarian assistance.

Pakistan, for its part, has so far helped to evacuate more than 12,000 individuals from 30 countries from Afghanistan, including diplomatic personnel and staff of international organizations. We hope that all future evacuations will be well organized and orderly, in consultation with the acting Government in Kabul. It is important that we do not create a sense of fear, which is likely to generate a flood of refugees from Afghanistan. Indeed, Afghanistan needs its skilled people to stay and rebuild the country, not to flee it.

Learning from the past, the international community must remain engaged in Afghanistan. Instability or economic collapse will perpetuate conflict and prolong the suffering of the people of Afghanistan. That will benefit no one, except those who see continued conflict in Afghanistan as an opportunity to utilize turmoil to sponsor terrorism from Afghan territory.

Owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic, to conflict and to the failure of past Governments and their corruption, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is dire, with nearly 18 million Afghans in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. We must prevent the situation from deteriorating any further, which could trigger a

huge outflow of refugees and complicate the prospects of building peace and security.

We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a high-level ministerial meeting on 13 September. We hope that the international community will actively participate and generously contribute towards the Afghanistan flash appeal.

As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons has advised, Afghanistan's access to its financial reserves is essential to prevent any further exacerbation of the fragile economic situation and the collapse of the economy. That will be imperative to prevent runaway inflation, rising prices, growing poverty and, consequently, a mass refugee outflow.

We take note of the meeting and the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths, with the de facto authorities in Kabul.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as other agencies, have a crucial role to play in ensuring the timely and expedited delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. All such activities must be carried out in line with humanitarian principles while fully respecting Afghan sovereignty.

We urge the acting Government in Kabul to allow full and unhindered access to United Nations agencies and personnel for humanitarian operations as well as to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and other humanitarian workers.

On its part, Pakistan will continue to play its role in addressing the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. In coordination with United Nations agencies, we have established a humanitarian air bridge for the provision of supplies of essential food and medical items to Afghanistan.

Pakistan is immediately dispatching three planeloads of humanitarian assistance composed of food and medicines for the people of Afghanistan. The first of those humanitarian flights arrived in Kabul yesterday. We will also dispatch supplies to Afghanistan through land routes as well, and we are willing to establish a land corridor to provide humanitarian help to Afghanistan.

Yesterday Pakistan hosted a virtual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan's immediate neighbours — China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

and Uzbekistan. At the conclusion of the meeting, a joint statement was issued. I would like to read out a few excerpts of it that might be of interest.

The statement expressed support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and non-interference in its internal affairs. It noted that the future of Afghanistan should be determined by its people. It stressed the necessity of forming an open, inclusive governmental structure that practices moderate and sound internal and external policies and respects fundamental human rights, including those of ethnic groups, women and children. It cautioned against the possibility of incitement and the role of spoilers in Afghanistan. It affirmed the importance of sustained international engagement on Afghanistan.

The statement condemned the terrorist attacks on Kabul airport and emphasized that Afghanistan's territory should not be allowed to pose a threat to other countries. It reiterated that terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army, Jondollah and others, should not be allowed to maintain a foothold on Afghan territory. It urged the international community to provide adequate, predictable, regular and sustainable financial support, in line with the principle of responsibility sharing on Afghan refugees. It noted the fundamental importance of major international energy, transport, communications, infrastructure and other projects for Afghanistan.

That meeting and mechanism will continue with a follow-up meeting in Tehran and the establishment of a standing mechanism among the six neighbours of Afghanistan to provide Afghanistan with all possible support and help in the future. For its part, Pakistan remains available for consultations, including in the format of the extended troika, to try to promote peaceful progress towards an inclusive Government and the provision of humanitarian help to Afghanistan.

It is obvious that the threat posed by terrorist groups must be addressed; but it must be addressed comprehensively and cooperatively, not selectively. Pakistan has endured hundreds of terrorist attacks by the TTP, which was sponsored by hostile intelligence agencies. More than 100 attacks occurred against Pakistan from Afghan territory in 2020. We will work with the authorities in Kabul and with the international community to put a halt to TTP terrorism. We will

also work with our friends in order to put a halt to all terrorism from Afghanistan.

Peace in Afghanistan is in the interests of the entire international community. We hope that the international community, including all of Afghanistan's neighbours, will develop an agreed approach to respond to the new realities in Afghanistan and restore peace and stability in that country. A fractured and competitive approach will squander the opportunity to promote peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan and the entire region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's presidency of the Security Council this month. I thank the briefers for their briefings today.

Afghanistan is passing through a critical juncture. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans have fled their country; nearly 600,000 others have become internally displaced; essential food supplies are running short and, 18.4 million people need humanitarian assistance. The situation is primarily the direct result of the intervention by the United States and other foreign forces in Afghanistan and their irresponsible withdrawal. When they entered Afghanistan, they brought catastrophe for Afghans; when they withdrew, they left calamity for Afghans.

From 2001 to 2021, nearly 165,000 Afghans have been killed, and direct child casualties of the conflict are estimated at approximately 33,000. Those statistics alone indicate the gravity and scale of death and devastation. War crimes committed by foreign forces in Afghanistan must not go unpunished.

Bearing in mind the very basic needs of the millions of people in Afghanistan, Iran stands ready to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, through Iran's seaports, airports, railways, roads and border crossings. For well over four decades, we have hosted millions of Afghan refugees. After the recent crisis, many more refugees have entered Iranian territory. We expect the international community to shoulder its responsibility and do much more in providing assistance to those refugees.

Afghanistan's people must also be helped to achieve lasting peace, stability and prosperity. The full realization of that objective must be facilitated and

strongly supported by the international community, particularly neighbouring countries. The first meeting of Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, held virtually yesterday, was meant to serve that purpose. Its next round will be held in Tehran in the near future.

Iran has always made every effort to help all Afghan parties settle their differences peacefully. Last July we organized high-level peace talks between the delegations of the Afghan Government and the Taliban. They agreed to continue their talks at a later meeting. Iran is ready to host the next round of such talks.

Iran continues to urge all Afghan leaders from various religious, linguistic, ethnic and political backgrounds to place the interests of all the people of Afghanistan above the interests of certain segments of the society, as Afghanistan belongs to all Afghans. The recent unjustifiable attack and condemnable fratricide in Panjshir is in contradiction with the united position of the international community that any Government that comes to power through force in Afghanistan will not be recognized.

Indeed, the path to stability, durable peace and sustainable development in Afghanistan passes through intra-Afghan talks, with the active and equal participation of the true representatives of all ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, aimed at finding a just, peaceful and durable solution to the crisis, while achieving national reconciliation and establishing a truly inclusive, broad-based and fully representative Government. That Government should emerge from free and fair elections, including with the full participation of women, both as voters and candidates. It should

be committed to combating terrorism and organized crime, as well as to guaranteeing and protecting, based on true Islamic teachings and principles, the human rights of all Afghan people, including ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities and women. We expect the Taliban to honour its commitments in that regard. Such a Government will enjoy Iran's support.

Like Afghanistan's other neighbours, we are gravely concerned about insecurity and instability, as well as threats of terrorist networks and organized criminals active in trafficking in drugs and persons. We also strongly believe that Afghanistan's territory must not be used, under any circumstances, to threaten or attack any country, shelter or train terrorists or plan or finance terrorist acts. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh, which represent a grave threat to Afghanistan and the region, must not be allowed to operate in that country.

Afghanistan needs to be supported to overcome its current economic difficulties. We have established the link from Afghanistan, as a landlocked country, to the high seas, through Iran's Chabahar Port and to Europe through the Khaf-Herat railway. We stand ready to further develop and deepen our cooperation with Afghanistan in all fields and to contribute to a more secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I thank everyone for their contributions. I suspect that the Council has much more work to do in the context of Afghanistan.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.