



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

**8834**<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Monday, 16 August 2021, 10 a.m.  
New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Tirumurti . . . . . (India)

*Members:*

China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Lipand
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Niger . . . . .	Mr. Aougi
Norway . . . . .	Mr. Kvalheim
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. King
Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Afghanistan**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Afghanistan to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and give him the floor.

**The Secretary-General:** The world is following events in Afghanistan with a heavy heart and deep disquiet about what lies ahead. All of us have seen the images in real time — chaos, unrest, uncertainty and fear. Much lies in the balance: the progress, the hope, the dreams of a generation of young Afghan women and girls, boys and men. At this grave hour, I urge all parties — especially the Taliban — to exercise utmost restraint to protect lives and to ensure that humanitarian needs can be met.

Conflict has forced hundreds of thousands from their homes. The capital city has seen a huge influx of internally displaced persons from provinces around the country, where they felt insecure or fled during fighting. I remind all parties of their obligation to protect civilians, and I call on all parties to provide humanitarians with unimpeded access to deliver timely and life-saving services and aid. I also urge all countries to be willing to receive Afghan refugees and to refrain from any deportations.

Now is the time to stand as one. The international community must be united and utilize all available instruments to ensure the following.

First, we must speak with one voice to uphold human rights in Afghanistan. I call upon the Taliban and all parties to respect and protect international humanitarian law and the rights and freedoms of all persons. We are receiving chilling reports of severe restrictions on human rights throughout the country, and I am particularly concerned by accounts of mounting human rights violations against the women and girls of

Afghanistan, who fear a return to the darkest days. It is essential that the hard-won rights of Afghan women and girls be protected. They are looking to the international community for support — the same international community that assured them that opportunities would be expanded, education would be guaranteed, freedoms would spread and rights would be secured.

Secondly, the international community must unite to make sure that Afghanistan is never again used as a platform or safe haven for terrorist organizations. I appeal to the Security Council and the international community as a whole to stand together, work together, act together and use all tools at their disposal to suppress the global terrorist threat in Afghanistan and to guarantee that basic human rights will be respected. Regardless of who holds power, those two fundamental principles, in which our world has such a deep and abiding interest, must be upheld.

The United Nations is committed to supporting Afghans. We continue to have staff and offices in areas that have come under Taliban control. I am relieved to report that, in large measure, our personnel and premises have been respected. We urge the Taliban to continue to do so and to honour the integrity and inviolability of diplomatic envoys and premises.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan affects 18 million people — fully half of the country's population. It is vital that basic services continue to be provided. In a statement issued yesterday, the Taliban said that it would work with existing institutions. It is crucial that civil servants' salaries continue to be paid, that infrastructure be maintained, that airports be reopened and that health and education services continue. The United Nations presence will adapt to the security situation.

But above all, we will stay and deliver in support of the Afghan people in their hour of need. Looking ahead, I call for an immediate end to violence, for the rights of all Afghans to be respected and for Afghanistan to comply with all international agreements to which it is a party.

Afghans are a proud people with a rich cultural heritage. They have known generations of war and hardship. They deserve our full support. The following days will be pivotal. The world is watching. We cannot — and must not — abandon the people of Afghanistan.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Isaczai** (Afghanistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak at yet another Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan and for India's leadership of the Council during this critical period. We welcome the convening of this emergency meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan and thank all the Council members, particularly Estonia and Norway as co-penholders on Afghanistan, for their role in organizing it.

Today I speak on behalf of millions of people in Afghanistan whose fate hangs in the balance and are faced with an extremely uncertain future. I speak for millions of Afghan girls and women who are about to lose their freedom to go to school, work and participate in the political, economic and social life of the country. I speak for thousands of human rights defenders, journalists, academics, civil servants and former security personnel whose lives are at risks for defending human rights and democracy.

I speak for thousands of internally displaced people who are desperately in need of shelter, food and protection in Kabul and other places. As members are witnessing for themselves, the situation in Kabul — a city of almost 6 million people — is extremely worrisome, to say the least. We have seen the chaotic scenes at the Kabul International Airport, as desperate citizens try to leave the country.

We are extremely concerned about the Taliban not honouring the promises and commitments made in its statements at Doha and other international forums. We have witnessed time and again how the Taliban has broken its promises and commitments in the past. We have seen gruesome images of the Taliban's mass executions of military personnel and targeted killings of civilians in Kandahar and other big cities.

We cannot allow that to happen in Kabul, which has been the last refuge for many people escaping violence and the Taliban's revenge attacks. Kabul residents are reporting that the Taliban has already started house-to-house searches in some neighbourhoods, registering names and looking for people on their target list. There are already reports of targeted killings and looting in

the city. Kabul residents are living in absolute fear right now.

There is no time for a blame game anymore. We have an opportunity to prevent further violence and prevent Afghanistan from descending into a civil war and becoming a pariah State. Therefore, the Security Council and the Secretary-General should use every means at their disposal to call for an immediate cessation of violence and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law; call on the Taliban to fully respect the general amnesty offered by them, cease targeted killings and revenge attacks and abide by international humanitarian law; urge that no public institutions or service-delivery infrastructure be demolished, including works of art in museums and media institutions; stress that anyone violating the human rights of Afghan citizens and international humanitarian law will be held accountable; and urgently establish a humanitarian corridor for the evacuation of those at risk of the Taliban's retribution and attacks.

They should furthermore call on neighbouring countries of Afghanistan to open their borders and facilitate the exit of people trying to escape and the entry of goods for humanitarian relief and operations; call for the immediate establishment of an inclusive and representative transitional Government that includes all ethnic groups and women representatives that can lead to a dignified and lasting solution to the conflict, bring peace and preserve the gains of the past 20 years, especially for women and girls; and stress that the Council and the United Nations will not recognize any administration that achieves power through force or any Government that is not inclusive and representative of the diversity of the country.

They should also unequivocally state that they do not recognize the restoration of the Islamic emirate, as reaffirmed in previous Council statements and agreements; establish international guarantees for the implementation of a future political agreement; and, lastly, mobilize urgent humanitarian assistance for the 18 million people of Afghanistan, particularly those displaced by the current conflict. The United Nations humanitarian appeal of \$1.3 billion remains funded at 40 per cent. We urge the international community to meet the remainder of this life-saving appeal to provide critical aid to all internally displaced people.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the United Nations and the many other organizations that are on

the ground providing life-saving humanitarian support and monitoring human rights on the ground.

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

**Mr. Lipand** (Estonia): I welcome the presence and strong messages of the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

Last week (see S/PV.8831) we highlighted our grave concern that the number of civilians killed and injured in Afghanistan had reached the highest on record, with the Taliban responsible for the largest share of casualties. Today, having declared control over Afghanistan, the Taliban bears even greater responsibility and accountability for the safety and security of all people in Afghanistan. Estonia calls on those in power and in positions of authority in Afghanistan to adhere to international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and uphold the norms and standards concerning human rights.

What has not changed is that more than half the population of Afghanistan is in need of humanitarian aid. It is of critical importance to ensure that humanitarian access not be hindered and that aid providers can work in safety. We call on all parties to allow immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and other actors providing assistance. This is the time for building, repairing and healing, not retaliating, looting and profiteering. It is the critical time to establish peace.

The people of Afghanistan deserve peace and security. A sustainable end to the conflict in Afghanistan can be ensured only through an inclusive political settlement that upholds the constitutional protections for the rights of all people of Afghanistan, particularly women, children and persons belonging to minorities. Only an inclusively negotiated political solution can lead to a durable peace in the country, as well as stability in the region.

I would like to reiterate Estonia's commitment to the people of Afghanistan. However, our cooperation with any future Afghanistan leadership will be based on its willingness to uphold the positive achievements of recent decades and act according to the norms and standards of international law, including international human rights law. Our political and financial support continues to be conditional on the preservation of the country's human rights and democratic achievements.

We welcome the efforts by Afghanistan's neighbours and partners that have offered their help by providing shelter to those escaping the dangers and uncertainties that accompany armed conflict.

I end with special thanks to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The efforts of the Mission are now more important than ever, as is the safety and security of its staff.

**Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway): I thank you, Mr. President, for calling this emergency meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his participation and his briefing, as well as Ambassador Isaczai for his remarks.

In echoing the Secretary-General and previous speakers, the situation in Afghanistan is extremely serious. Over the past few weeks, amid an ongoing violent conflict, the national security and defence forces of the country have almost collapsed entirely. Over the past 24 to 48 hours, the leadership of the central Government disintegrated. The country and its population are now facing a multi-layered crisis of very significant proportions — suffering and hardship because of violent conflict, drought and food insecurity, as well as the coronavirus disease pandemic and other infectious diseases, such as polio and measles.

We, the Security Council and the entire international community, need to show our continued commitment to them, in both words and actions. In this unprecedented situation, Norway calls for an immediate end to the violence in Afghanistan, the restoration of security and civil order and urgent talks to resolve the current crisis of constitutional authority and arrive at a peaceful settlement.

The reality with which the international community must now contend is that the Taliban movement exercises de facto control over much of the Afghan territory, including the capital, Kabul. We have taken careful note of statements by Taliban representatives over the past few days. Those include assurances that the security and safety of all Afghans, diplomats and humanitarian workers will be guaranteed. It has been communicated that Government workers, whether military or civilian, will not face retribution of any kind. Furthermore, Taliban representatives have stated that women and girls will have access to work and education. Those are encouraging words. However, the Taliban will be judged not by words, but by actions in the days, weeks and months ahead. How Taliban

members conduct themselves in actual deed will matter a great deal in terms of whether or not, and how, the international community will be willing and able to relate to, cooperate with and support a future new Afghan Government in which the Taliban participates.

Restoring law and order in Kabul must be the utmost priority. There have been disturbing reports of looting and chaos. The current situation at and around Kabul International Airport is also unclear and deeply worrisome. We call on all parties to ensure that all Afghan and foreign nationals who wish to leave the country can do so in a safe and orderly way.

The ongoing violence across Afghanistan, including in urban areas, has caused grave harm to civilians, especially children, as well as the interruption of services and damage to civilian infrastructure, including those providing water and sanitation, food and education and health services. Safe access to those services must be immediately restored.

We are deeply concerned about the number of reported serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses in communities affected by the ongoing armed conflict across the country, and stress the urgent and imperative need to bring the perpetrators to justice. All parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law in all circumstances, including those related to the protection of civilians. A sustainable end to the conflict in Afghanistan can be achieved only through an inclusive, just, durable and realistic political settlement that upholds human rights, especially for women, children and minorities.

We express our support for the ongoing political and diplomatic efforts centred on both Doha and Kabul to ensure a transition that is orderly and prevents further bloodshed. We commend the ongoing diplomatic efforts by several key stakeholders, including the United States, Qatar and Pakistan.

The future new Government must be united, inclusive, representative and participatory. It must have the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. It must adhere to Afghanistan's international obligations, including with regard to respecting universal human rights.

Finally, for peacebuilders, human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, especially the brave women who for years have stood up for their rights and

demanding equal participation and say in their future, the situation feels desperate. Consistent marginalization at negotiations, as well as reprisals and targeted violence against them and their family members, gives rise to deep concerns about their safety and the goal of an inclusive political settlement.

In the current situation, we, the Council and the wider international community, all have a responsibility to ensure their protection, and must use all means of support and diplomatic and political channels to amplify their voices and protect them from harm.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I thank Secretary-General Guterres for his sobering briefing and strong statement. His role, along with the roles of his Personal Envoy, Jean Arnault, and Special Representative Lyons and her team on the ground, is especially vital now as we enter an uncertain and crucial period that requires the international community to speak with a clear and unified voice.

The United States deeply appreciates the continued efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and of other United Nations actors on the ground in Afghanistan that are continuing to provide life-saving assistance to Afghans in need.

We also thank the delegations of Norway and Estonia for calling today's meeting, and India for convening it, given the events of the past 72 hours. We welcome the participation of the delegation of Afghanistan in today's meeting.

Over this past weekend, members of the international community joined together to state unequivocally that every Afghan should be able to live in safety, security and dignity. We also called on all parties in Afghanistan to ensure safe departures and the protection of human life and property.

Today I would like to reiterate, re-emphasize and reassert that call. Civilian populations, including journalists and non-combatants, must be protected. Attacks against civilians and civilian objects must stop. And the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghan citizens, especially women, girls and members of minority groups, must be respected. We also call on all parties to prevent terrorism, and we must all ensure that Afghanistan cannot ever again be a base for terrorism. We also call on the Taliban to permit humanitarian organizations to continue their vital work in Afghanistan.

In addition to the ongoing violence, the Afghan people are suffering acutely from the effects of the coronavirus disease and drought. Those urgent humanitarian needs must remain top of mind for all of us in the coming hours, days, weeks and beyond. Humanitarian personnel and agencies must have safe, unhindered access to provide life-saving assistance to the increasing numbers of Afghans in need. We are deeply concerned that right now aid is not flowing to people in crisis. According to the World Food Programme, more than 500 tons of aid are currently sitting at border crossings taken over by Taliban forces. Those aid deliveries must resume immediately, and the World Food Programme must have immediate and sustained safe passage to deliver this much-needed assistance.

Finally, and critically, all Afghan nationals and international citizens who wish to depart must be allowed to do so safely. President Biden has made clear that any action that puts United States personnel or our mission at risk will be met with a swift and strong military response. The United States promises to be generous in resettling Afghans in our own country, and I am heartened by the pledges we have seen from other nations to do the same. We all need to do more, and the time to step up is now. We urge Afghanistan's neighbours and others in the region and beyond to give refuge, be it temporary or permanent, to Afghans attempting to flee. Together, we must do everything we can to help Afghans who wish to leave and seek refuge.

I will conclude where I began. The Afghan people deserve to live in safety, security and dignity. We in the international community stand ready assist them.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting at such a tragic and historic moment for Afghanistan. This is indeed a grave time, as a page is being turned and the future of the country, which has already suffered so much, is more uncertain than ever. We heard the Secretary-General express his concerns, which we share. Our eyes are on Kabul, where the peace and security of Afghanistan and the entire region are at risk.

I would like to begin by reiterating our strong condemnation of the violence and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law currently occurring in Afghanistan. All parties to the conflict must fulfil their obligations, particularly with regard

to the protection of civilians. We call for an immediate ceasefire and respect for international law.

In the midst of the violence, I spare a thought for all those who have built today's modern Afghanistan and must be protected. Their protection, but more broadly the protection of civilians, especially women and children, must be an absolute priority. Those responsible for abuses will not go unpunished. The Security Council must remain attentive to the evolution of the situation. Civilians, especially women and children, must not be forgotten. Women must be protected, and their rights must be respected.

Democratic progress, the fight against organized crime — in particular the fight against drugs — and the protection of cultural heritage are all advances that have brought Afghanistan into the concert of nations in the past 20 years and must not be erased.

The third priority is, of course, Afghan unity. Peace can be achieved only if everyone participates.

The security situation must not overshadow the urgency of the humanitarian situation. The conflict is causing the number of displaced persons to increase and intensifying the already immense needs of the population. Humanitarian aid must reach everyone. Access for medical and humanitarian personnel to all those in need, as well as the protection of such personnel, must be guaranteed.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the Council that France stands by the people of Afghanistan and all its partners in order to move forward on the road to peace. The first of those partners is the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I commend the courage and hard work of the teams of that absolutely outstanding Mission under the leadership and coordination of Ms. Deborah Lyons. I also welcome the work of Mr. Jean Arnault.

The United Nations has an essential and indispensable role to play in Afghanistan, but it cannot do so alone. The resolute commitment of the international community to the Afghan people will be equally decisive in the months and years to come.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

What is happening now in Afghanistan is a tragedy. We have long believed that the only path towards sustainable peace in Afghanistan and regional stability

lies in a negotiated political settlement. We have worked hard to breathe life into peace negotiations between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, working closely with the United States, our leading allies and other regional Powers.

The Taliban pledged, at Doha, to engage in those talks in good faith. Its actions on the ground have betrayed that promise. The Taliban must immediately do three things.

First, it needs to cease all hostilities and military action to ensure the protection of civilians and to allow the safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals and others who wish to leave.

Secondly, it must commit unequivocally not to harbour or give safe haven to terrorist groups that endanger other countries.

Thirdly, the Taliban must honour its promises to protect and uphold human rights, including those of women, girls and minorities.

We have seen evidence of Taliban human rights abuses in areas where it has taken control, including the persecution of minority groups, harsh restrictions on women, allegations of forced marriage and the use of civilians as human shields. If the Taliban continues to abuse basic human rights, it cannot expect to enjoy any legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people or the international community.

Given the fragile security situation, Afghanistan is now facing a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The lack of access has masked the true scale of the problem. Half of the population was already in need of humanitarian assistance at the start of the year, and the situation is much worse now. The Taliban must respect international humanitarian law and permit humanitarian organizations to continue their work by guaranteeing safe, unhindered access to those in need.

The United Kingdom has long been a leading provider of humanitarian aid to Afghans both in Afghanistan and in the region. Over recent years, the United Kingdom has been proud to be one of the leading contributors to the Afghanistan humanitarian fund. We will continue to work with our partners in the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and, most important, the region to deliver a more stable and inclusive Afghanistan for all its people.

It is vital that the international community coordinate closely in the coming days and weeks to ensure that we speak with a single message in our engagement with Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will use its presidency of the Group of Seven and membership of the Council to help forge such closer coordination and address the humanitarian plight that the Afghan people now face.

**Mr. Kimani (Kenya):** I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — namely, Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the latest developments in Afghanistan. The A3+1 reiterates its support for the stabilization efforts deployed by the United Nations in the search for a durable solution to the Afghan crisis, which has been developing in worrisome ways in the past few days.

This meeting follows on the heels of a similar meeting we held on 6 August (see S/PV.8831). If at that time we still had hope — as slim as it might have been — for the Taliban to heed our appeal and stop its attacks, today we are faced with a *fait accompli* with the effective collapse of the Afghan Government and a takeover by the insurgents. The A3+1 deplores the violence, human rights abuses, loss of life and suffering endured by the civilian population who are being forced to leave their homes because of the latest fighting across the country. We reiterate our call for an immediate end to the hostilities.

We also reiterate our principled rejection of any seizure of power by force and call for the establishment of an effective dialogue, as we are convinced that the only viable solution to the conflict is a negotiated political settlement. We take note of the discussions between the Taliban and different Afghan stakeholders. We hope that those negotiations will result in an interim transitional Government that is inclusive and takes into account other political voices within the country. We also urge the international community and all regional Powers that have leverage on the warring parties to use that influence and advocate for a lasting ceasefire, which is a condition for true dialogue.

While it is difficult to predict how the coming days, months and years will unfold, in particular with regard to the political and security situations, one thing remains certain: Afghanistan is on the brink of

a humanitarian catastrophe, the first victims of which are women and children. The A3+1 would therefore like to highlight the importance of finding an urgent and sustainable solution to the already dire humanitarian crisis, which has been worsened by the recent fighting.

The effects of the recent upsurge in violence, combined with those of climate change and the coronavirus disease pandemic, have created a situation where more than a third of the population is experiencing food insecurity and thousands are internally displaced, the overwhelming majority of whom are women and children. We call on the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to step up their support to the displaced populations and honour the pledges made to the Afghan humanitarian plan.

The Afghan people need, now more than ever, the support and solidarity of the international community and regional players to help them navigate this challenging time. Every effort must be made to mitigate the pains of the civil war and assist them in their search for peace and a stable environment conducive to the pursuit of democratic governance, as well as social and economic well-being.

The A3+1 continues to welcome and fully support the good offices of the United Nations and all other diplomatic efforts by neighbouring countries to reduce tension in order to reach a negotiated solution to the crisis. Furthermore, we emphasize that the search for peace must not be at the expense of Afghan human rights, particularly those of women, children and Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities.

While making peace requires settlement between combatants, we believe that the international community does not wish for peace processes to reward and legitimize the use of military interventions and association with terrorist organizations through political recognition. We recall how the Taliban came to be thrown out of power because of its support of Al-Qaida. Reports of the release of prisoners affiliated to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and Al-Qaida by the Taliban are extremely disturbing. Such actions will embolden terrorist networks and motivate a resurgence of increased export of terrorism, particularly to countries in regions that have active conflict situations.

In its statement of 6 August (see S/PV.8831), the A3+1 recalled the Council's decision to split the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions list in response to

efforts by the Afghan Government to negotiate a peace process with the Taliban that would lead to national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The purpose of that decision was to provide a future lifeline for members of the Taliban who renounce violence and disassociate themselves from Al-Qaida. The Council must therefore not relent in its demand that the Taliban make sustained efforts to embrace peace, cease its links with Al-Qaida and ISIS and engage in a peace process that will transform Afghanistan to a net exporter of peace.

As we conclude, the A3+1 notes that the situation in Afghanistan is extremely volatile and unpredictable. Armed insurgent groups and terrorist groups across the world are watching closely in order to replicate the unravelling events. The Council must therefore carefully consider the decisions that it takes, fully aware that building political tracks for entities using terrorism to achieve political ends will in the end be counterproductive.

Finally, Kenya, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Niger reaffirm their unwavering solidarity with the people of Afghanistan during these uncertain times, and we reaffirm our support for their vision for a peaceful and progressive country.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland): I want to thank the Secretary-General for his presence here today and for his very powerful words at the beginning of our meeting.

We supported the convening of this urgent meeting to discuss the unfolding tragic developments in Afghanistan. Over the past weeks, as we heard, we have witnessed in real time the Taliban seizing control of Afghan cities by force, culminating in the loss of Government control in Kabul. We have all seen the scenes of chaos at the airport. We cannot say that we were not warned of this possible outcome. In the Chamber, we heard many worrying alerts, not least in the courageous testimonies of members of Afghan civil society. Sadly, and tragically for so many, we failed to heed those warnings. We will now have to address the consequences. In the face of an unfolding crisis of tragic proportions, the Council will now have to assume its responsibilities and act.

This is a calamitous situation for all the people of Afghanistan. As we have consistently done in the Chamber, we condemn the appalling violence and the indiscriminate attacks perpetrated against civilians in Afghanistan. The violence and the intimidation must end. It is clear that we have entered a new phase in



Afghanistan. Peace will be achieved only through an agreed, inclusive and negotiated solution. Violence does not provide legitimacy, nor does it deliver durable peace. Respect for the rule of law and compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, is imperative. We call now for the utmost restraint to protect lives and to ensure that the dire humanitarian needs be addressed.

Given the urgency of the situation and the desperate plight facing the Afghan people, it is vital that we act to address the crisis facing Afghanistan. Lives are at imminent risk through the worsening violence, displacement and food insecurity. The international community has a responsibility to respond, to act to protect civilians and to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people. Safe and reliable humanitarian access must be guaranteed and protected and the work of all the relevant United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners must be facilitated without exception.

Those who have worked for peace, human rights defenders, who have tirelessly endeavoured to promote and protect the rights of their fellow citizens, must not now be abandoned.

I wish to address the women of Afghanistan directly — women who have the most at stake as the democratic Government dissolves and an uncertain future awaits. Lest there be any doubt as to the gravity of the situation, I am speaking to the women at the airport with their children and families, trying to find a way out; the women hiding in their homes; the women sleeping in the streets; and the women still fighting for peace and human rights although that may well now risk their lives.

To the women of Afghanistan, I say that we hear their pleas to the international community at this dark time. The fear, indignation and sense of betrayal that they feel is understood and is righteous. I call on the Council to stand with the women of Afghanistan. Their rights and their future participation in Afghan society cannot be sacrificed. That is our shared responsibility at this table; it must also be our shared priority. All of us around the table can, and should, agree that, as a non-negotiable principle in all discussions, the rights of women in Afghanistan must be protected. That is the future of Afghanistan.

The Taliban have reportedly said that women have nothing to fear from them, yet we hear multiple and credible reports of summary executions, forced

marriages and sexual and gender-based violence. Telling the international community what it wants to hear will fool no one. We will not turn a blind eye to the truth. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the deliberate targeting of women and girls by the Taliban. Girls must be free to attend school; women must be able to participate fully in society; and those who speak up for human rights must be free to do so.

In focusing on the needs of women, I, of course, also want to condemn the reported reprisals and attacks against and summary executions of Afghan men. That also must stop.

It is high time to learn from the past, or we will be doomed to see the worst of history repeating itself in Afghanistan. Two decades of progress are disintegrating on our watch. The Afghan people have worked too hard and lost too much to see their futures repeat the past of their mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers — generations lost to conflict.

Strong, enduring peace can be built only by inclusive and representative negotiations. Let us be clear here today — the future governance of Afghanistan can have the support and endorsement of the international community only if it guarantees the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, includes minority groups and young people, upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms and ensures adherence to the rule of law and accountability, as set out in resolution 2513 (2020).

In our view, the Council needs to be prepared to consider further measures from the toolbox at its disposal as this crisis unfolds. Afghan Minister for Education Rangina Hamidi spoke in recent hours of her fear, shared by many Afghan women, that she will be forced to pay the price for trying to make Afghanistan a better place and for being active in her society, simply realizing her rights.

Ireland calls for a clear message today from the Council. While much, including the political future of Afghanistan, is currently uncertain, what is clear is that the failure to fully respect and uphold the rights of all the people of Afghanistan, in particular the rights and safety of women and girls, cannot and will not be accepted. We owe that to the women of Afghanistan and to all the people of Afghanistan who have kept faith with the promises of the international community for a brighter future.

Our obligation is to act in solidarity with them all now in this time of crisis.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico supports the convening of today's emergency meeting. I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the latest developments in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the delegations present in the Chamber this morning, and I welcome and acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

Over the course of the last few weeks, and especially over this past weekend, the conflict in Afghanistan has entered a deadlier and more destructive phase. The Taliban's advance on major urban centres and now on Kabul has dramatically changed the power dynamics and had an extremely worrisome humanitarian impact. The military offensive makes it clear that a ceasefire has still not been negotiated, and the casualty figures for the conflict are the highest ever recorded.

Mexico rejects the use of force and violence. It emphatically stresses that Afghanistan's institutional framework of the country must be respected and that a process of national reconciliation be sought. The future of Afghanistan must be decided democratically by all Afghans.

My country also unequivocally deplors the deliberate attacks against the civilian population. Reports of summary executions, intentional targeting of women, beatings, and media restrictions and censorship are alarm bells for the international community.

The highest price of the political and military entrenchment in Afghanistan continues to be paid by the most vulnerable. The catastrophic trajectory of violence affects a population that finds itself in increasingly precarious conditions and with very few options, especially for women and girls. Humanitarian personnel, doctors, translators and other international service providers are also particularly vulnerable at this time. The massive wave of displacement we are seeing and the desperation of civilians to flee the country are symptomatic of this vulnerability.

The military campaign has resulted in a drastic shift in control over territory and material means. My country, Mexico, urgently calls on the international community to evaluate very seriously the transfer of arms that could be diverted or end up in the wrong hands. As long as there is proliferation of weapons,

the Taliban and other groups will have the means to consolidate their objectives by force. That is why we urge that irresponsible transfers not be approved and that the highest international standards be exercised to contain the catastrophic impact of the situation in Afghanistan.

Despite the agreements signed and the existence of a robust framework of international law on combating terrorism, we are also concerned that the door is being opened for Afghanistan to once again become a safe haven for terrorist groups. Any scenario for Afghanistan's future must ensure that this does not happen.

The international community, and in particular the Security Council, must present a united front to make it clear that the present course of action is unacceptable, that agreed commitments must be respected and that the path of dialogue and political negotiation must be favoured. In addition, we call on those in direct dialogue with the Taliban to express in the strongest terms their condemnation of attacks on civilians, particularly women, children and minorities, and to call urgently for a constructive resumption of negotiations.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his thoughts and views on the situation in Afghanistan. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Ghulam M. Isaczai.

We are closely following the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. As soon as the withdrawal of foreign forces was announced, we all heard worrying reports about an uptick in violence and the number of victims. Furthermore, as we have seen, major Afghan cities have fallen without much resistance.

Since the previous discussion in the Security Council (see S/PV.8831), just 10 days have passed. However, the situation in the country over that time has changed beyond recognition. Today all our eyes are on Kabul, which yesterday was quickly abandoned by the country's leader, ordinary Afghans as well as part of the diplomatic corps. It is clear that such a sharp turnabout took everyone by surprise, including those who very recently made public pronouncements about the high degree of military fitness of the Afghan law enforcement structures that were prepared and trained over the past 20 years.

Broadly, we are continuing to closely monitor the situation in the country. Currently, we believe that there is no point in panicking. The main point is that a widespread bloodbath among civilians has been avoided. We urge all Afghan parties to refrain from hostilities and foster a peaceful settlement.

We believe that the international community must pursue its efforts to assist Afghanistan in achieving national reconciliation. The extended troika — Russia, China, Pakistan and the United States — has been actively engaged in this effort. We believe that an important role could be played in this regard by Iran as well. We will determine our further official steps in relation to the Taliban depending on the evolving situation and the Taliban's specific actions.

According to our reports, the Taliban have already sought to bring public order and confirmed security guarantees for civilians and staff members of foreign diplomatic missions. We trust, in the current circumstances, that the security of diplomatic staff and the United Nations presence in Afghanistan will be guaranteed and that their institutions will enjoy immunity. Against this backdrop, the Russian Embassy in Kabul is continuing to operate normally. Still, we remain concerned by the ongoing terrorist threat in Afghanistan, including from the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, whose terrorist activity is likely to spill across Afghanistan borders and thereby threaten the security of neighbouring countries in Central Asia.

Terrorism is inextricably linked to the drug problem. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan over recent months has led to a sharply worsening humanitarian situation. Of concern are the numerous reports of the number of internally displaced persons and the refugee flows across the country's borders, which is creating an additional burden for neighbouring States, including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Pakistan, not to mention increasing the risk of fighters infiltrating the region, *inter alia*, by pretending to be refugees. We are in regular contact with all five Central Asian countries, both bilaterally and through such regional organizations as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

We still want to see a swift peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, a subsequent stabilization of the country and a post-conflict recovery. We are convinced that an end to the years-long bloody war and the achievement of national reconciliation would benefit all — the

people of Afghanistan, its regional neighbours and the world as a whole.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I thank the Secretary-General for his presence and for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan at today's briefing.

We have followed the situation in Afghanistan, especially in recent days, with deep concern. The situation may negatively affect the security and stability not only of Afghanistan, but also the region, especially in neighbouring countries. We are particularly concerned about the high number of civilian casualties reported over the past few weeks. In that regard, I wish to highlight the following.

First, the utmost priority now is to protect civilians. All parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law and ensure the protection of civilians, particularly the most vulnerable, including women and children. The delivery of essential services to the civilian population must be ensured. The safety and security of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers, foreign nationals and the personnel of international organizations must be guaranteed.

Secondly, we join others in calling for an end to violence and the restoration of security and civil order. We call on all parties in Afghanistan to engage in dialogue, resolve their differences and promote national reconciliation, respecting the aspirations of the Afghan people to long-term peace, stability and the country's development.

Thirdly, efforts are urgently needed to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in the country. Essential services for the civilian population must not be disrupted, including those addressing food insecurity and the coronavirus disease pandemic. Immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance must be ensured to help Afghan people in need. We call on the United Nations regional and international partners to redouble their efforts to meet the aforementioned priorities, while according special and urgent attention to the protection of and assistance to the civilian population during this difficult time.

Last but not least, we would like to commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and stress the importance of ensuring the security and safety of the Mission.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and thank him for his briefing at today's meeting. I listened closely to the statement by the representative of Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan has undergone major changes. We respect the will and choices of the Afghan people. The war in Afghanistan has gone on for more than 40 years. Ending the war and achieving peace is not only the collective aspiration of more than 30 million Afghan people; it is also the shared hope of the international community and the countries of the region.

Currently, the urgent task at hand is to restore, peace, stability and order as soon as possible in order to avoid senseless casualties and a large-scale flow of refugees to the greatest extent possible. The rights and interests of diplomatic missions and personnel in Afghanistan are inviolable. The safety, security and interests of foreign nationals in Afghanistan must be respected and guaranteed. It is incumbent upon all parties in Afghanistan to safeguard people's lives and property. They should provide assurances for the safety of the foreign citizens who remain in the country and ensure an orderly evacuation of those who decided to leave.

China has always maintained that a political solution is the only way out for Afghanistan. Currently, the national prospects of Afghanistan are at a historic crossroads. China takes note of the statement made by the Taliban yesterday that the war in Afghanistan has ended and that it would negotiate the establishment of an open, inclusive Islamic Government and responsibly take action to ensure the safety of Afghan citizens and foreign missions in the country.

China expects that those commitments will be fulfilled so as to ensure a smooth transition, curb terrorism in all its forms and criminal acts, and keep war and chaos at bay from the Afghan people so that they can rebuild their beautiful homeland. We hope that the Taliban will unite all parties and ethnic groups in Afghanistan to establish a broad and inclusive political structure commensurate with its national needs in order to lay the foundation for achieving lasting peace in the country.

Over the past 20 years, terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, have settled and grown

in Afghanistan, posing a serious threat to international and regional peace and security. Afghanistan must never again become a haven for terrorists. This is the bottom line to which any future political solution in Afghanistan must adhere. We hope that the Taliban will earnestly deliver on its commitments and make a clean break with all terrorist organizations.

All countries should uphold their obligations in accordance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, work with one another in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and take resolute action to prevent terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, from taking advantage of the chaos.

As we speak, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is very dire. Humanitarian assistance and pandemic prevention and control are under tremendous pressure. The international community should scale up humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, which have received a large number of displaced persons from Afghanistan, so as to help alleviate the regional humanitarian crisis. The parties concerned should ensure that the work of international humanitarian relief agencies can continue unhindered. The international community should also continue to help Afghanistan and its neighbours control the pandemic without delay.

The current chaos in Afghanistan is directly related to the hasty withdrawal of foreign troops. The countries concerned should deliver on their good-faith commitment to supporting peace, reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan and playing a constructive role in the issue of Afghanistan. Based on respect for Afghan ownership and the unwavering efforts of neighbouring countries in the political, security, development, humanitarian and counter-narcotics areas, constructive assistance to Afghanistan should be provided on a continuing basis.

Several Council members said in their statements that they would like to see Afghanistan's neighbours and countries of the region play a greater role. We have learned that such countries asked to participate in today's meeting. It is regrettable that their requests were not granted.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has long played an important role in supporting the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Given the current situation on the ground, which is undergoing major changes, we hope that the Secretary-General will take the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the Mission's personnel. We also look forward to the Secretary-General's timely presentation to the Security Council of practical and actionable recommendations on the future of the United Nations presence in Afghanistan.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

Allow me, at the outset, to warmly welcome the Secretary-General and his very important remarks. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative Afghanistan to the United Nations.

The Security Council is meeting for the second time in a period of 10 days (see S/PV.8831) to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. In this short period of time, we have witnessed dramatic changes in the situation. We have also seen very unfortunate scenes at the Hamid Karzai International Airport, in Kabul. There is widespread panic among the people. Women and children are in distress. Incidents of gunfire have been reported from the city, including at the airport. While the security situation remains precarious, a grave humanitarian crisis is unfolding.

We have heard urgent appeals from all quarters, including from the Secretary-General. It is time for the international community, in particular the Council, to act, ensure an immediate cessation of violence, contain any possible crisis and mitigate the consequences. As a neighbour of Afghanistan and a friend of its people, India is deeply concerned about the current situation prevailing in the country. Afghan men, women and children are living in a constant state of fear. They are uncertain about their future. Everyone is concerned about the increasing violations of the fundamental rights of Afghan citizens. Afghans are worried about whether or not their right to live with dignity will be respected. There are many unanswered questions.

We hope that the situation stabilizes soon and that the parties concerned will address the humanitarian and security issues. We also hope that there will be an inclusive dispensation that represents all segments of Afghan society. The voices of Afghan women, the aspirations of Afghan children and the rights of

minorities must be respected. Broader representation would help the arrangement gain more acceptability and legitimacy.

The current situation in Afghanistan has numerous challenges; however, there are a few opportunities. If there is zero tolerance for terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, and it is ensured that the territory of Afghanistan is not used by terrorist groups to threaten or attack any other country, then Afghanistan's neighbours and the region would feel safer. The Secretary-General underlined that unequivocally earlier.

Afghanistan has already seen enough bloodshed in the past. It is time for the international community to come together, rising above any partisan interests, to support the people of Afghanistan in their desire for peace, stability and security in the country and to enable all Afghans, including women, children and minorities, to live in peace and dignity.

India has contributed significantly in recent years to the development of the country. In that context, Indian development projects have been undertaken in critical areas, such as power, water, roads, health care, education, agriculture and capacity-building. India's emphasis has been on the welfare and well-being of the people of Afghanistan. Before the current crisis unfolded, India had ongoing development projects in every one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

As underscored by Council members, we need to continue to support the robust work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and ensure the safety of its personnel. We call upon the parties concerned to maintain law and order, ensure the safety and security of all involved, including United Nations, diplomatic and consular personnel, and observe human rights and international humanitarian law in all circumstances in Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*