



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

**9354**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 21 June 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

*President:* Mrs. Nusseibeh . . . . . (United Arab Emirates)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Moretti
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Bongo
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Osei-Mensah
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland . . . . .	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0601 ([verbatimrecords@un.org](mailto:verbatimrecords@un.org)). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 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 representatives of Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan 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. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh, co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Otunbayeva.

**Ms. Otunbayeva:** We as the United Nations continue to face a complicated situation in Afghanistan. The restrictions imposed on 5 April against Afghan women working for the United Nations place a question mark over our activities across the country. We have been given no explanations by the de facto authorities for that ban, and no assurances that it will be lifted. We will not put our national female staff in danger, and we are therefore asking them not to report to the office. At the same time, we have asked all our male national staff performing non-essential tasks to stay home to respect the principle of non-discrimination. Finally, we are steadfast: female national staff will not be replaced by male national staff, as some de facto authorities have suggested.

We welcome resolution 2681 (2023), which both condemned the ban and stressed the critical importance of a continued presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes across Afghanistan.

We must all remind the de facto authorities of their continuing responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. Afghanistan, as a State, committed

to those obligations as one of the earliest members of the Organization in 1946. They include the obligation to respect the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its officials, including Afghan women who work for us. The April ban specifically targets the United Nations. The Taliban ask to be recognized by the United Nations and its Members, but at the same time they act against the key values expressed in the United Nations Charter.

The ban against Afghan women working for the United Nations adds to earlier restrictions placed on Afghan women and girls by the de facto authorities — including a ban against women working for non-governmental organizations or for other diplomatic entities; a ban preventing girls from attending non-religious secondary and tertiary educational institutions; and a ban against girls and women visiting public parks, baths and gyms. Those and other edicts limit the physical movement of women and girls and their participation in economic, social and public life.

The de facto Taliban authorities must rescind those bans to enable the United Nations to continue its full support to the people of Afghanistan. My colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will provide additional details in a separate briefing today on how the bans affect the humanitarian sector, as well as on the overall humanitarian situation. But I would also like to emphasize the human effects of those bans.

UNAMA, in collaboration with UN-Women and the International Organization for Migration, has just released report on the situation of Afghan women. The report, which is available on the UNAMA website, documents the distressing toll the bans are taking on women's physical and mental health and on their sense of security.

Another unfortunate effect of the bans is that they obscure some of the other more positive achievements that have taken place under the de facto authorities. One of those is the growing evidence that the Taliban's ban on opium cultivation, announced in April last year, has been effectively enforced in many parts of the country. According to initial media reports, the cultivation of opium has decreased significantly. At the same time, the opium economy has helped sustain parts of the rural economy in Afghanistan. Donors should consider allocating funding to alternative livelihood

programmes that address the specific needs of farmers affected by the ban.

The Afghan economy remains stable, albeit at a low equilibrium. The World Bank reports that inflation is declining and that the exchange rate remains steady. In part, that is due to the welcome reduction in high-level corruption. The de facto authorities continue to report the collection of sufficient revenues to finance Government operations, including paying civil service salaries. According to the de facto authorities, that includes approximately 500,000 civil servants who had been working under the Republic. That macroeconomic stability, however, coexists alongside severe household poverty. According to the World Bank, 58 per cent of households struggle to satisfy basic needs. United Nations humanitarian efforts continue to address the needs of the nearly 20 million people who need some form of assistance. Afghanistan, I would remind members, remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

United Nations cash shipments, required for humanitarian operations, are expected to decrease as donor funding declines. That could begin to have a negative effect on monetary stability. I would like to draw the Council's attention to the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, which we will issue next week and will update and replace the Transitional Engagement Framework from last year. It outlines the range of activities the United Nations could carry out in Afghanistan between now and 2025 if the necessary enabling environment were to be provided by the de facto authorities.

Such an enabling environment requires greater transparency and accountability. Politically, the Taliban regime remains insular and autocratic. The composition of the de facto Government is entirely male, and almost totally derived from the Taliban's Pashtun and rural political base. We have noted efforts and mechanisms towards consultation by the de facto authorities at the local level that acknowledge the pluralism of the country and that at times have had a moderating effect on some Taliban policies. But the general trend is one of a centralization of power by an unaccountable central authority. One of the key issues raised at the meeting of Special Envoys convened by the Secretary-General in Doha in May was the need for inclusive governance. There is widespread concern that a lack of inclusivity and participatory governance will lead to instability.

On counter-terrorism the picture is mixed. The de facto authorities are making concerted efforts to counter the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Despite that, attacks targeting both the de facto authorities and the civilian population have taken place. Most recently, in Badakhshan on 6 and 8 June, two attacks targeting the de facto authorities killed or wounded at least 63 people, including 14 killed and 49 wounded, the majority of whom were civilians. ISIL-KP claimed both attacks. Indiscriminate attacks by ISIL-KP, such as the use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas and attacks deliberately targeting civilians, constitute serious violations of international law and must cease.

We have taken note of the recent annual report (see S/2023/370) by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. The report contains information on other terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and their relationships with the de facto authorities. We note the report's observation that the existing sanctions procedures are obsolete and should be updated to reflect the realities in Afghanistan today.

While the end of the armed conflict has greatly reduced the number of civilian casualties since the Taliban came to power, the United Nations Mine Action Service in Afghanistan estimates there to be approximately 100 casualties per month from unexploded ordnance. Unfortunately, the de facto Directorate of Mine Action Coordination has suspended its cooperation with the United Nations for technical reasons, which we are trying to resolve. Without United Nations support, the sector operates with limited technical capacity and monitoring. Discussions continue with the de facto authorities to lift the suspension as soon as possible and enable us to provide full support within our mandate to that vital sector.

Finally, we are greatly concerned by Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change. Years of drought have compounded the effects of conflict and poverty. Climate change is fostering population displacements inside Afghanistan that could be destabilizing. In order to address Afghanistan's lack of water and consequent food insecurity, the de facto authorities have begun to dig a canal that will divert water from the northern Amu Darya River, raising concerns among neighbouring countries. Overall, the need to mitigate the effects of climate change requires a more specific dialogue between the de facto authorities and the international community.

In my regular discussions with the de facto authorities, I am blunt about the obstacles they have created for themselves by the decrees and restrictions they have enacted, in particular against women and girls. We have conveyed to them that, as long as those decrees are in place, it is nearly impossible that their Government will be recognized by members of the international community. Based on our discussions with many interlocutors across the country, it is also clear that the decrees are highly unpopular among the Afghan population. They cost the Taliban both domestic and international legitimacy, while inflicting suffering on half of their population and damaging their economy.

Despite the bans, I believe that the international community can do more to ensure the future stability of the Afghan economy in a way that directly improves the lives of Afghans. That is particularly important in the light of a likely significant decline in funding for the humanitarian response this year.

I welcome the visit now being undertaken by the Special Coordinator, Mr. Feridun Sinirlioglu, who is currently in Afghanistan. We look forward to his recommendations. I would also like to highlight the importance of continuing the momentum established at Doha in May by holding a subsequent meeting in the same format before the end of the year. We have begun consultations on the timing and content of that meeting.

Despite the problems I mentioned, we have established reliable and effective working channels of communication with the de facto authorities, and we have identified, as I described, greater opportunities for cooperation that could build mutual understanding and improve the lives of the Afghan people. We have a mandate to engage on the Security Council's behalf, and we will continue to do so. We could do much more, however, if the Taliban were to rescind its punishing restrictions on its female population.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Otunbayeva for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Basij-Rasikh.

**Ms. Basij-Rasikh:** I am glad to have this opportunity to speak to the members of the Security Council today. My name is Shabana Basij-Rasikh. I am the Head of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA). We were based in Kabul from 2008 through 2021, and we have been operating SOLA in Rwanda since August 2021

and the return of the Taliban. We educate Afghan girls at the secondary level, up through high school. To my knowledge, we are the only legally operating school that is doing that anywhere on the planet.

I did not ever think that I would have to make a statement like that during my lifetime. I did not ever think that the Taliban would be in the position to bring back the darkness I lived in as a child in the 1990s — a child attending secret schools run by brave women in Kabul, a child living in fear because I was an Afghan girl, one of many, who wanted an education. Nothing more than that; we just wanted to go to school. And for that our families and our teachers risked everything — I mean everything — so that we could learn. What I say to the Council today I say because I stand on the shoulders of those giants of my childhood. I am the inheritor of the bravery of Afghan women, and men too, who kindled fires in the darkness of our nation as the world's attention drifted away.

Those fires are burning even now. Secret schools have reopened in Kabul and in the provinces. My school, SOLA, forced into exile, is thriving in Rwanda, a nation that has been such an extraordinary host. We have just concluded our admissions season for the new school year, which will begin this fall. Historically, we have never received more than 300 applications in any given year. But not this year; this year we received nearly 2,000 applications from students in Afghan communities spread across the world. Two thousand Afghan girls. Two thousand Afghan families. Two thousand fires in the darkness. And each one represents the unquenchable and unconquerable desire for access to the basic human right of education. It is our task, the world's task, to ensure that those flames never go out.

I say to all of us assembled here today — nations that share borders with Afghanistan, that have fought wars within Afghanistan and that work in public and private to find a path forward for Afghanistan — that their histories and approaches are different, but ultimately their interests are the same. They want what I want. I feel safe in saying that it is what every Afghan woman and man wants. What we want is summed up in a single word. That word is “stability.” And what makes that word possible is education.

Everything spirals up from the schoolroom. Everything. Economic prosperity. Improved public health. A replanting of the soil in which extremism grows, replacing the seeds of hate with the hope

and possibility that comes when girls are given the opportunity to learn, when girls are given the certainty that they matter. The secret to a stable Afghanistan, a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, is no secret at all; it is educated girls. Educated girls who become educated women who raise more educated girls and boys. Educated girls who become educated women, independent women, women who chart their own course, a course that elevates their families and their nation and the world.

All of us know that international borders do not contain the threat of extremism. But neither do they contain the benefits brought by those women and girls. Those are benefits that the whole world can share. And it begins with education and the girls who fight for it. The rising spiral starts in the classroom. The virtuous circle carries a society to its absolute potential. What can we do, all of us here today, to ensure that it will always spin? I have two recommendations.

First, the international community must ensure that the Internet always remains open and accessible within Afghanistan. When girls cannot go to school, we as educators can bring school to them. And our classes are only a smartphone and an online connection away. Our classrooms exist in the palm of a girl's hand, and the world opens up before her eyes. The Taliban say that women and girls should remain hidden behind the walls of the home. I say we beat them at their own game. Behind those household walls, we create online classrooms. In those closed physical spaces, we unfold endless digital opportunities. I am not here to make commercial pitches or product recommendations. But it should be no secret to anyone that there exist cost-effective means of ensuring reliable Internet access anywhere on Earth, including inside Afghanistan, and those means must be pursued. Afghan educators, innovators and our allies will do the rest.

My second recommendation is this: the international community must ensure that Afghan refugees, particularly female refugees, have access to quality education in their nations of residence. Afghans have found refuge in our neighbouring nations and in nations across oceans. Some of those here have been hosting us for a long time, for the 40 years of war that wracked my country and for even longer. Some have been hosting us only since the fall of Kabul, not quite two years ago. Some who neighbour Afghanistan — and I speak with great frankness — are hosting families of prospective SOLA students, families who have voluntarily gone

into exile so that their daughters might have a chance to learn.

What unites everyone here is the reality that the members of the Afghan diaspora are not, and must not be seen as, a burden. What we are are human beings with great human talents. Space must be allowed for opportunities to flow into diaspora communities, and those opportunities should be driven by qualified educational institutions allowed by host nations to operate within those communities. SOLA has done that in Rwanda, and our model can be one for others to follow, all of us reaching Afghan girls in exile so that each girl not only contributes to the benefit of her host nation, but also becomes an educated Afghan woman, ready to return home to Afghanistan, ready to take up the challenge of rebuilding our beautiful country.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: borders do not contain the threat of extremism. And borders do not contain the benefits brought by educated girls. The decisions made here decide the path of the spiral in which my homeland spins —down deeper into darkness, or up, rising, into tomorrow's hope.

I would like to end with this. I am a proud Muslim woman. I know very well that Prophet Mohammed spoke openly and clearly about the importance of education. All Muslims know that, and all of us must be familiar with the Prophet Mohammed's Hadith that tells us "seek knowledge, even as far as China". With all respect to the members from China who are here with us today, the Prophet was not speaking literally; he was urging us as Muslims to pursue education even if we had to go to what was, at that time, the ends of the Earth to find it. I myself have gone as far as Rwanda, and so have my students. Other Afghans have gone to other nations. All of us are seekers. And with the eyes of the world watching, all of us will find what we seek.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Basij-Rasikh for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Ms. Basij-Rasikh for their very insightful and moving remarks.

Throughout the past six months, the Security Council unanimously adopted three resolutions on Afghanistan. Maintaining that unity remains crucial going forward. The United Arab Emirates, alongside



Japan as co-penholders, will continue to strive for the consensus that we have seen on Afghanistan, because it is through our unity that we can make a difference on the ground.

Today I will focus on the four areas where the United Arab Emirates believes that we can solidify our efforts.

First, we must continue to insist on the inclusion of women and girls in Afghan society. That starts with education. We must see progress on the provision of education at all levels and up to internationally expected standards and benchmarks. That is non-negotiable, as we heard from our civil society briefer today. On a practical level, there are real concerns that the latest decision by the Taliban requiring the handover of educational programming will result in subsequent donor funding withdrawal and the eventual collapse of the educational system. That would be a tragedy, not only for women and girls but the entire country, whose prosperity relies on a well-educated workforce. Online interim efforts and interim support measures by neighbouring countries should be encouraged and funded. We must safeguard women and girls' access to the Internet across the country, as it is the only space where they currently move freely. And today it is providing life-changing support for the education of girls in the country.

Secondly, the impending humanitarian crisis in the country must remain a joint concern for Council members. By removing women as actors in the delivery of humanitarian aid, the Taliban are not only limiting equal access to life-saving aid, but they are also weakening the ability to prevent, address and respond to sexual abuse and the exploitation of aid beneficiaries. That is inexcusable. Last week the Council adopted landmark resolution 2686 (2023), which recognizes that gender discrimination and acts of extremism can contribute to driving conflict. The resolution urges all of us to speak up against such extremist ideologies. The work by and for women is crucial at a time when humanitarian needs are at their highest.

Meanwhile, the Taliban are making it increasingly difficult for humanitarian organizations to carry out their functions. As we have said before, our recommendation is that the humanitarian aid space must remain fully depoliticized. Humanitarians cannot become a political bargaining chip. We need to confirm our commitment that humanitarian actors are compartmentalized from

the political dynamics of the situation in Afghanistan. That is why it is more important than ever that the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity continue to drive those efforts.

Thirdly, security, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics is another issue where we share a collective interest. All of us agree that there cannot be a security vacuum. The latest report (see S/2023/370) of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team provides a sobering assessment. The assertion that Afghanistan's soil will not serve as a safe haven for threats against other nations has been one of the most fundamental demands by the Council and must remain so. That message needs to be part of every dialogue that the United Nations has, and part of the Security Council's strategy for Afghanistan. It must also be part and parcel of the discussions between international actors with the de facto authorities.

Fourthly, none of those actions can be realized unless the Afghan economy is revived. The economy cannot be sustained on humanitarian aid alone. Revitalizing the Afghan economy is the only sustainable pathway forward. That demands the creation of favourable conditions for foreign investment and trade, as well as an educated and skilled workforce. There are some promising signals in the Secretary General's latest report — on the management of the economy, curbing corruption and limiting narcotics production. It is in our joint interests that revenues from the narcotics trade not be channelled to fund organized crime and terrorism. As such, the progress that we see in that regard needs to be encouraged and seized upon to make further gains.

Climate change is intrinsically linked to each of those four challenges. By uniting on the push towards mitigating and adapting to its impacts in Afghanistan, we will reinforce our joint efforts to make progress in each of those areas.

Those opportunities for unity among Council members demand an integrated and coordinated approach to address them. We welcome the appointment of Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu as United Nations Special Coordinator for Afghanistan. The independent assessment that we collectively mandated in March provides an opportunity for all Afghan and international stakeholders to participate in the much-needed, inclusive conversation about Afghanistan's future. We strongly encourage all actors to engage with the Special Coordinator in good faith, in pursuit of a more coherent

and integrated strategy on Afghanistan. I would also reiterate that the mandate calls for consultations with Afghan stakeholders, particularly women and civil society. We look forward to the findings of the independent assessment in November.

The United Arab Emirates firmly believes that practical engagement must remain the core focus of the international community and the work of the Security Council. We welcome the engagement of international actors who are using their contacts and leverage with the de facto authorities to influence their decision-making, as well as the Secretary-General's continued leadership, initiated by the formation of a Special Envoy group that held its first meeting in Doha in May. As we said before, disengaging now will result only in even more severe consequences for the Afghan people.

The United Arab Emirates will continue its engagement in a clear-eyed manner and continue our work towards setting Afghanistan on a positive trajectory.

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. Ishikane** (Japan): I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Otunbayeva for providing the Council with an update on the situation. I also thank Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh for her valuable and brave remarks. We need to keep in mind the fire in the darkness, and we need to work together to stoke that flame for the future of Afghanistan.

It is regrettable that we have seen so few positive signs for the future of Afghanistan despite the repeated calls by the Security Council and the international community. The humanitarian needs are desperate, and poverty is nearly universal. Humanitarian access has been further constrained by a series of restrictions on the ability of women to work.

We take note of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team's report (see S/2023/370) on the security situation in Afghanistan. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the attack at a mosque in Badakhshan province earlier this month, and we call on the Taliban to take thorough anti-terrorism measures.

Hope is diminishing, particularly for women and girls in Afghanistan. We re-emphasize the indispensable role of women in Afghanistan's future and long-term development. We call on the Taliban to heed the unified call of the Security Council, as demonstrated in resolution 2681 (2023), swiftly reverse the restrictions on women and girls and allow their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in society. This will not only secure the welfare and dignity of women and girls, but will also allow Afghanistan to fulfil its potential and achieve long-term stability and prosperity for itself and the region.

The international community should unite around an integrated and coherent approach in addressing the challenges faced by the Afghan people. We highlight the important role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in coordinating humanitarian assistance, monitoring the human rights situation and promoting inclusive political dialogue. We also commend the meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, held at the beginning of May in Doha. We need to build on the takeaways from that meeting in pursuing patient, pragmatic and principled engagement with the Taliban in order to encourage them to change the course of their policies in the direction desired by the Afghan people and to widen spaces for the benefit of the people. At the same time, we need to keep discussing our strategic approaches in order to benefit the Afghan people and contribute to the stability of the region.

We also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu as Special Coordinator to lead the independent assessment requested in resolution 2679 (2023). We await the opportunity to consider the forward-looking recommendations on how best to assist Afghanistan in this time of distress.

In conclusion, Japan will continue to support the building of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, and we will continuously contribute to the work of the Security Council for a better future for the people of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva and Ms. Basij-Rasikh for their briefings.

Afghanistan is at a critical phase of transitioning from chaos to order and needs the continued input and attention from the international community and the United Nations.

In the light of the current situation, I wish to stress four points.

First, dialogue and engagement must be maintained. Engaging the Afghan interim Government with a practical attitude is the fundamental way to enhance understanding and mutual trust and address relevant concerns. We are pleased to see that Afghanistan's neighbours and countries in the surrounding area have always been at the forefront in that regard. Since September 2021, Afghanistan's neighbouring countries have already held four meetings of Foreign Ministers, the latest of which was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 13 April. On 6 May China, Afghanistan and Pakistan relaunched the Foreign Ministers dialogue in Islamabad. Presided over by Secretary-General Guterres, the meeting of special envoys on the Afghan issue was held in Doha on 2 May.

On the basis of those activities, the international community, generally speaking, does have consensus on building an Afghanistan that is peaceful, stable and prosperous and hopes to resort to dialogue and engagement to help the Afghan interim Government, build political inclusivity, govern with moderation and build an open and inclusive political architecture. We hope that the Afghan interim Government will make positive efforts in the interest of the Afghan people, meeting the expectations of the international community, and realize independent and effective State governance, including effectively ensuring the rights of women to education and employment.

In order to promote dialogue and engagement, it is necessary for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) to make a package of exemption arrangements for the international travel of the relevant personnel of the Afghan interim Government. The sanctions measures imposed on the relevant personnel by the Council, pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), should also be adjusted or lifted, in the light of the development of the situation, in a timely manner.

Secondly, security and stability must be upheld. Terrorist attacks still continue to take place in Afghanistan, reminding us that terrorism remains a major challenge facing the country. Terrorist forces, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known as the so-called Turkistan Islamic Party, are colluding with each

other and jeopardizing the security of the country, the region and the world, at large. We hope the Afghan authorities will take firm and strong measures to combat all terrorism and to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a centre of gravity for terrorism.

Drug transactions could be a major source of terrorist financing. We note with appreciation that Afghanistan's poppy-cultivation area has dropped significantly this year. The international community should support Afghanistan and help it develop alternative crops, improve the economic structure and curb the space for terrorist forces to exist.

Thirdly, socioeconomic development must be promoted. The Afghan authorities value economic development, and the national income has remained stable, with some increase. Yet easing the humanitarian crisis remains the most urgent priority.

As of now, this year's United Nations humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan is only 9 per cent funded, with the gap exceeding \$4 billion. We call upon traditional donors to continue providing Afghanistan with humanitarian assistance and keep United Nations humanitarian operations functioning normally in the country. It is unacceptable for developed donors to significantly cut their aid to Afghanistan and to link humanitarian aid to other issues. In the long run, the international community should go beyond humanitarian aid and offer more help for Afghanistan to integrate into regional, economic and trade cooperation and to embark on a path of economic independence and sustainable development.

Fourthly, external constraints must be removed. Due to the impact of unilateral sanctions — on items ranging from food, drinking water, medicines and other necessities, to cement, reinforcing steel bars and other construction materials — Afghanistan is facing serious shortages in supplies, and even more difficulties in its economic reconstruction. We urge relevant countries to lift unilateral sanctions on Afghanistan.

Particularly concerning is the fact that, since 2021, \$7 billion of Afghanistan's overseas assets were frozen by the United States. Until this day, not a cent has been returned to the hands of the Afghan people. We urge the United States to promptly return the assets concerned. The United States must not delay doing so under various pretexts and aggravate the suffering of the Afghan people. We request that the Secretary-General attend to this issue and request his Special Representative to



step up efforts and report to the Council on relevant developments in a timely manner.

As Afghanistan's neighbour, China has always followed and cared about the situation in Afghanistan and, not long ago, we issued our position on the Afghan issue. To the best of its abilities, China will continue to help Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. China looks forward to the early achievement of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Moretti** (Brazil): At the outset, my delegation expresses its condolences to the families of victims of terrorist attacks perpetrated in northern Afghanistan earlier this month. Brazil reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva and Ms. Basij-Rasikh, President of the School of Leadership, for their insightful — and as the President of the Security Council said, touching — remarks.

The latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan sheds light on critical areas of our political, humanitarian and human rights efforts, and offers valuable recommendations. We reaffirm Brazil's support for the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for the efforts of the international community aimed at bringing peace, stability and development to the Afghan people.

Brazil has consistently advocated the strengthening of Afghanistan's institutions and the promotion of socioeconomic development, with the full inclusion of Afghan women and minorities. We consider engagement with the de facto authorities in favour of the Afghan people to be an important aspect of this process.

At the same time, Brazil joins the international community in calling on the Taliban to reverse their exclusionary and discriminatory policies against women and girls, in particular the ban on women's employment by the United Nations. Such policies stand in stark contrast to the United Nations Charter and the multilateral framework of human rights. They are also profoundly detrimental to the future of Afghanistan.

We remain deeply concerned about the extremely serious humanitarian situation in the country. It is quite alarming that the number of people requiring assistance rose by half a million in the first half of this

year alone, reaching a staggering 28.8 million by the end of May. The revised humanitarian response plan for 2023 is to be welcomed; its proper funding is vital. In the face of such adversity, promoting food security in Afghanistan becomes paramount, especially if we consider that the country is grappling with its third consecutive year of drought and the looming threat of a devastating locust infestation that could severely undermine wheat harvests.

On the economic landscape, we believe that stable and appropriate regulatory frameworks and policies as well as a robust private sector are key to Afghanistan's future. This is crucial to bringing in investment in infrastructure and in addressing challenges in the banking system to facilitate credit, as outlined in the United Nations Development Programme's Afghanistan Socio-Economic Outlook for 2023. In this context, I reiterate the importance of returning the Afghan assets held abroad. We commend initiatives such as a recent workshop spearheaded by the World Bank and aimed at identifying avenues for bolstering both international and domestic payment systems in Afghanistan.

In concluding, I reaffirm Brazil's readiness to continue working closely with other Council members and others in favour of a future of peace, stability and sustainable development for all Afghans, without discrimination or exclusion of any individual or any group. Our solidarity with the people of Afghanistan remains resolute.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva and Ms. Basij-Rasikh for their briefings. Let me also thank the entire team comprising the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its work in advancing the Security Council's goal of a stable, prosperous, inclusive and secure Afghanistan.

The United States again condemns the Taliban's restrictions on women's and girls' ability to exercise their human rights. These restrictions are indefensible. They are not seen anywhere else in the world. We call for the immediate reversal of these restrictions. Today we do so on the heels of the Security Council's unanimous call for the same: in April, the Security Council adopted resolution 2681 (2023), the third resolution on Afghanistan adopted unanimously this year. Over 90 States Members of the United Nations co-sponsored the resolution, which sent a clear message to the Taliban, to

the Afghan people and to the world: we will not stand for the Taliban's repression of women and girls.

The Taliban continue to prevent women from working for non-governmental organizations. National female staff members remain unable to gain access to United Nations offices, including those of humanitarian organizations. The Taliban are choosing to jeopardize the lives of millions of innocent Afghans who depend on critical aid, and they are increasing the burden on women-headed households that are already among the most vulnerable. We support the United Nations decision to continue operating in Afghanistan while prioritizing the safety and security of all staff members.

The people of Afghanistan do not deserve to suffer further as a result of the Taliban's abhorrent decisions. That is why we support a flexible and principled approach that prioritizes non-discrimination, the inclusion, safety and security of female staff members, as well as the inclusion of women and girls as recipients of assistance efforts. The Taliban's grave restrictions demand a strong response from Afghanistan's neighbours and the rest of the international community.

The continued deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan, in large part due to Taliban interference in humanitarian operations, will lead to more Afghans being internally displaced. This displacement will increase the number of Afghan migrant and refugee flows to neighbouring countries. Addressing this issue will require creativity, attention and energy from everyone. Thanks to generous donor support and bold action, such as the humanitarian exemption enshrined in resolution 2615 (2021), the international community averted relief actors' worst predictions of widespread famine in 2021. However, this year, we can already see the impact of reduced international support for Afghanistan with the closure of women-led non-governmental organizations, ration cuts and reductions in the number of beneficiaries of food assistance.

Despite obstacles and competing global priorities, we cannot turn our backs on the Afghan people's growing humanitarian needs. As the world's largest humanitarian donor, the United States will continue to do its part to support the people of Afghanistan.

We will also carefully watch the Taliban's actions on the commitments they have stated they will uphold. We continue to expect the Taliban to allow unhindered humanitarian access, safe conditions for aid workers of

all genders and independent and impartial provision of assistance. The Taliban must respect the human rights of all Afghans. We look to the Taliban to codify those principles in their policies and to demonstrate them with their actions. As the meeting of Afghan special envoys showed, so too does the rest of the world. We thank the Secretary-General for hosting that meeting.

The United States underscores its strong support for UNAMA's comprehensive mandate, including its vital reporting on human rights, particularly women's rights and empowerment work. UNAMA remains critical to advancing the inclusion, peace and stability we all agree is so important for Afghanistan and the region.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and my own country, Mozambique.

The A3 thanks Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh, co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan, for their important informative briefings.

The report of the Secretary-General under consideration on the situation in Afghanistan and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provide us with an opportunity to discuss the political, security, economic and humanitarian situations in Afghanistan.

At the political level, we note that the restructuring of the State apparatus continues, as evidenced by the decision of the Taliban authorities to impose severe restrictions on female national staff working for the United Nations, as well as the new appointments and recent reshuffles of senior civil servants, mainly men affiliated with the Taliban.

The A3 wishes to state that the inclusion of women in governance structures has not changed. In that connection, we hold the view that the participation of women in governance is critical for the development and success of any nation. The A3 underlines the need for greater efforts to be made to guarantee that all Afghans, regardless of their ethnicity, social class or gender, have the opportunity to fully engage in the political process in the country.

We are advised of the payment of salaries to civil servants, including women civil servants, most

of whom were asked not to report to work after the Taliban took power. We urge the authorities to allow civil servants, especially women, to resume their duties and to contribute to the development of their country.

On the issue of the access of women and girls to education, it is important to note that education is not just a fundamental human right with strong roots in Islam. Education is also a major factor for development. Denying access to education for half of the population will have a significant negative effect on the country's development and its capability to engage fully in the global economy. Girls and women should be allowed to reach their full potential. They should participate fully in the social, economic and political life of their communities. We therefore call on the Afghan authorities to heed the numerous calls by the United Nations and other organizations to allow women and girls to resume their education.

On the security front, the situation on the ground remains fragile. As a result, there has been an increase in security incidents during the period under review. We note that UNAMA continued to receive credible allegations of human rights abuses and violations, including against former Government officials and members of the security forces, in violation of the general amnesty announced in August 2021. We call on the Taliban authorities to fully respect the general amnesty announced in August 2021.

Illicit drug trafficking coupled with frequent clashes between the opposition and security forces, the presence of foreign forces on the Afghan territory, as well as continuing border tensions, increase the volatility of the situation on the ground. We commend UNAMA's work in combating the illicit trade, the accumulation and the diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, as well as explosive materials, in Afghanistan and in the region.

At the subregional level, we note that tensions between Iran and Afghanistan over water supply resulted in an exchange of fire on the border at the end of May. It is important for regional actors to engage in a constructive dialogue and take steps to de-escalate tensions between Iran and Afghanistan over water supply.

The continuing violence in Afghanistan is having an impact on the economic and humanitarian situation, which has continued to deteriorate. Thus, on the economic front, we are aware of increased revenue

collection, positive trade performance, reduced corruption and increased eradication of opium poppy fields. However, we note that projections indicate that prospects for growth and poverty reduction are limited, as investment in development is limited and millions of Afghans depend on inflows of international humanitarian assistance. In addition, the humanitarian situation remains dire with unprecedented levels of need in all 34 provinces. To date, there has been a critical shortfall in humanitarian funding for 2023. A lack of supplies and medicines, and of salaries for health workers, is making life difficult for humanitarian personnel. At the same time, drought, food insecurity and malnutrition persist. More urgent support from the international community is needed. Besides that, landmines and other explosive devices continue to wreak havoc on the civilian population, especially children and women. The A3 welcomes the fact that more than 9.2 square kilometres of contaminated land has been cleared, as well as the campaign that has sensitized 39,000 people, including 14,000 women and girls, to the risks of explosive ordnance in communities and areas of return.

In conclusion, Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique commend the work being done by United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of Special Representative Otunbayeva and by non-governmental-organization partners under extremely difficult conditions. We look forward to receiving the report of the Special Coordinator pursuant to resolution 2679 (2023).

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, for her briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. The Russian Federation supports the activities of UNAMA under her leadership within the framework of the Mission's mandated tasks. It is encouraging to see that the United Nations remains committed to maintaining its presence in Afghanistan and providing the assistance that its people need. We listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh and welcome the fact that regional stakeholders are also being given the floor today. We have taken note of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, which was issued yesterday, and would like to note the following.

For almost two years now, since the hasty retreat of United States and NATO troops and the Taliban's rise to power, Afghanistan and its people have been living in a new reality, left to cope practically single-handedly with old problems and new challenges. The grand promises to build a long-awaited peace have in practice turned out to be empty words. Against that backdrop, it has become increasingly evident that the United States and other Western countries, which essentially ruined the country over the course of the past 20 years and left its people to their fate at the most crucial moment, have no interest whatever in a genuine settlement or in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. How else can one explain their unwillingness to provide real assistance in resolving the unprecedented humanitarian and economic crisis, under various manufactured and hypocritical pretexts? We understand that our Western colleagues simply no longer have time for Afghanistan, because all of their attention is now focused on fighting Russia on the Ukrainian battlefield. There is nothing more American than invading a country under the noble pretext of combating terrorism and then making a total mess of it before abandoning its former wards to the mercy of fate as soon as the priorities change.

Meanwhile, the United States and its NATO allies, including by using the threat of sanctions, are trying to erase the evidence from the history books of the numerous war crimes committed by their militaries, just as they are silent about the real reasons for their lengthy stay in Afghanistan. In that context, our Western colleagues' loud protestations about the country's currently deteriorating situation and the suffering of the Afghan people, including women and girls, appear immoral, as do their calls for wielding the cudgel of sanctions and upping the political and economic pressure on the de facto authorities. They lack the courage to admit that their preferred methods long ago lost their effectiveness. The consequences of such actions will only hurt ordinary Afghans and do nothing to fundamentally change the situation on the ground. However, we long ago ceased to be surprised by that approach, and that is also well understood in Kabul, which is seeking its own path of independent development for Afghanistan without relying on Western assistance.

We share the Secretary-General's assessment of the difficult internal political situation in Afghanistan. We remain particularly concerned about the security risks posed by the terrorist activities of the Islamic State in

Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-Khorasan Province. We can see that after 20 years of a foreign presence, the terrorists have entrenched their influence in the country and are deliberately destabilizing the situation by carrying out more attacks and creating an atmosphere of fear and despair. Their goal is clearly to present themselves as an alternative force. Their victims are members of religious and ethnic minorities, including women and children, and more than 20 people lost their lives in a wave of high-profile attacks at the beginning of June. They also seek to undermine stability in Afghanistan's neighbouring States. Meanwhile, it is no secret that ISIL is supported by external forces. The militants themselves have confirmed that the group receives funding from foreign intelligence agencies, and that foreign terrorist fighters are present in their ranks. The safety and security of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and humanitarian personnel on the ground may also be threatened. While we note the efforts of the de facto authorities, it is clear that they are not enough to eradicate the threat completely. Meanwhile, the prospect of terrorist activities spilling over the country's borders into other parts of Central Asia remains very real.

The drug problem is also closely linked to terrorism. It is obvious that in conditions of widespread hunger and poverty and without comprehensive international and regional assistance, Afghanistan will find it difficult to cope with the challenges alone. Support for Afghan farmers is more important than ever. However, the United States Institute of Peace has published an article with the telling title "The Taliban's Successful Opium Ban Is Bad for Afghans and the World". How do you like that?

We are maintaining our focus on the socioeconomic situation in the country. We note the efforts by the United Nations and regional organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, especially the selfless work of the humanitarian agencies and their staff, who are ready to remain on the ground and help Afghans in any circumstances. At the same time, we see that those efforts are not enough. Western donors continue to block United Nations efforts to extend aid beyond the most basic needs with their total refusal to support development and the reconstruction of schools, hospitals, and roads between provinces and cities and rural areas. We also continue to monitor developments concerning the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls, and the formation of a truly inclusive



Government with the participation of all ethnic and political groups in the country.

Building a long-term and sustainable peace in Afghanistan is impossible without continued patient and pragmatic engagement with the new authorities on a wide range of pressing issues. The effectiveness of UNAMA's work depends on a comprehensive approach. Russia has consistently advocated for increasing cooperation with Afghanistan towards achieving a comprehensive settlement. We are working with our regional partners to develop a common approach to the situation in the country, and the Moscow format also serves that goal. We note the potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Contact Group in that regard. Also, we regularly coordinate our positions on the matter within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States. We participated in the meeting organized by the Secretary-General with the Special Envoys on Afghanistan in Doha on 1 and 2 May. In our bilateral contacts with the de facto authorities we are encouraging them to expedite the implementation of all the objectives that have been announced to the world and to deliver on the corresponding promises.

We continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and to develop cooperation along the socioeconomic track. We are interested in developing pragmatic relations with Kabul, including with a view to restoring the infrastructure of the enterprises that we have built in the country.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva for her clear briefing and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh for her extraordinary update shining a spotlight on the importance and potential of girls' education, and for giving us hope in the possibility of seeing Afghanistan spiral upwards towards hope.

But as we all know, since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021 the situation for the Afghan people has been defined by humanitarian suffering, economic hardship and a relentless assault on human rights. The statistics speak for themselves. Two thirds of the Afghan population are in need of humanitarian aid in 2023. Economic output has fallen by more than 20 per cent since 2021. More than 2 million girls between the age of 7 and 11 are unable formally to access secondary-school education. The Taliban have issued more than 50 decrees restricting the rights of women and girls

and have impeded the ability of the United Nations to deliver humanitarian assistance in a time of dire need. The trajectory is negative, and our options are limited. The Afghan people remain our priority. So how can we collectively navigate the months ahead?

First, our commitment to providing support for Afghans remains resolute. We support United Nations efforts to provide assistance despite the challenging context, while holding firm on the principle that there should be no delivery of aid without the inclusion of women. The United Kingdom has contributed well over half a billion dollars to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan since April 2021. We call on other Member States to step up their funding, noting that the United Nations revised humanitarian appeal for \$3.2 billion for Afghanistan for 2023 is currently only 14 per cent funded, according to tracking by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Secondly, the international community should remain united in its message to the Taliban. We have set out our expectations in consecutive Security Council resolutions on humanitarian access, cutting ties with terrorists, respect for human rights and inclusive governance. And in April we unanimously adopted resolution 2681 (2023), condemning restrictions on the rights of women and girls.

Lastly, those clear expectations should be matched by clear consequences. While the Taliban continue on their current path, progress towards international recognition will not be on the table. Sanctions relief will not come. We recognize that continued engagement predicated on those fundamentals is the only way forward. The Secretary-General's meeting of special envoys in Doha was a good first step. And we too look forward to the independent review led by Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu. Afghanistan cannot be self-reliant when 50 per cent of its population is excluded from society, and history has shown that there can be no stable or durable peace when large swathes of society and ethnic groups are excluded.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the information provided by Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh.

We have taken note of the information in the Special Representative's briefing. We commend the commitment of the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to taking on the growing challenges



on the ground and the clear and firm position of the United Nations that no female staff will be replaced by male personnel. In resolution 2681 (2023), adopted in April, Ecuador and the other members of the Security Council condemned the restrictions and discriminatory measures against women in Afghanistan. But the situation has deteriorated and the possibility of reaching an understanding in the short term seems impossible.

Concerning the security challenges, we believe that the terrorist acts attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have an indiscriminate impact on the civilian population. The violence continues to spread, with growing numbers of people killed and maimed by improvised explosive devices and clashes between military personnel on the border between Iran and Afghanistan. In the absence of an institutional presence, the only way out lies in strengthening the coordination of efforts between the relevant bodies within the United Nations system, regional organizations and neighbouring countries, with a view to preventing the escalation of violence on the border, supporting the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and drug trafficking and preventing the area from becoming a threat to peace and security in the region.

With regard to the diminishing respect for human rights, our delegation condemns the extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, persecution and torture of members of the political opposition and officials of the previous Government. We also condemn the continuation of institutionalized policies of discrimination against women and girls that restrict their right to education and to work and seek to eliminate their inclusion and participation in every area of public life. Turning to the precarious humanitarian situation, the most recent update by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns that 28.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and 15 million are at risk of food insecurity, with the rates of undernutrition and malnutrition on the rise. In the current situation, the insistence on restricting humanitarian operations is incomprehensible and inadmissible, as it increases the vulnerability of children, widowed women heads of household and the displaced, disabled and sick.

The coordinated efforts of the international community must continue. We commend the measures taken by the Secretary-General, such as the meeting that brought together special envoys to explore initiatives to resolve the multidimensional crisis in Afghanistan.

We also applaud the implementation of the alternative development programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which supports small farmers in replacing illicit crops with food crops and grazing for small animals to strengthen the small-scale economy. We encourage donors to continue their efforts to secure funding for life-saving humanitarian assistance. In a situation in which women's ability to contribute to economic growth is restricted, one alternative would be to identify areas in which they can continue to contribute to stimulate growth and their empowerment.

Lastly, Ecuador notes the initiatives of the regime's neighbouring countries and other countries of the region, which have attempted to modify the restrictions. We call for cooperating in every possible way in order to continue prioritizing unconditional respect for human rights and the inclusive and meaningful participation of all segments of society, especially women. We reaffirm our readiness to support all initiatives aimed at restoring Afghans' ability to live in dignity, security and peace.

**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): I thank Special Representative Otunbayeva for her briefing. I also thank Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh, co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, for the courageous and poignant briefing she delivered. Let me begin by underlining our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all United Nations and humanitarian staff who continue to assist the people of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan remains home to one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. The multidimensional emergency throughout the country continues, with two thirds of the country's population in need of humanitarian assistance. While 6 million Afghans are on the brink of starvation, no strategic pathway exists to address those desperate needs. Humanitarian aid workers now find themselves working within an increasingly restrictive and shrinking humanitarian space, balancing principled humanitarian action with the dilemmas of engaging with the Taliban and adhering to policies set by the humanitarian donor community. They require the greatest level of support and flexibility when it comes to undertaking their vital work in such a dire context.

Malta deplores the continued efforts by the Taliban to codify gender segregation within Afghan society and within the United Nations and humanitarian system in

the country. The de facto authorities have signed more than 520 restrictive decrees since July 2022, to the detriment of millions of Afghan women and children.

In recent visits to the country, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls found that the Taliban are continuing to perpetuate the most extreme forms of systematic gender-based discrimination and generalized censorship through restrictive edicts targeting women and girls and by abolishing legal protections and accountability mechanisms for gender-based violence. That must end, as called for by the unanimously adopted resolution 2681 (2023). All the restrictive edicts must be reversed. The fundamental rights of women in Afghanistan must be realized. Women must be allowed back into the workforce. Women and girls belong in the workforce, including those employed by international aid agencies and the United Nations, in line with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Women and girls must be allowed back in the classroom. Women and girls belong in the classroom. Women and girls must also have their right to education secured and respected. The reports from UNICEF noting that international education organizations are being pushed out of the country are beyond troubling and will leave millions of Afghanistan's young people — not just girls — without education.

The adoption of resolution 2681 (2023) was an important step. We call on the Taliban to respect that resolution and to be accountable to the international community. In addition, we welcome the efforts by regional organizations and the United Nations, including the Secretary-General, to achieve positive results in the realms of human rights and counter-terrorism, as the regional terrorist threat has increased since the Taliban returned to power, according to recent reports.

Malta reaffirms its full support for UNAMA and its mandate. The Mission works towards an inclusive Afghanistan, and its provision of support to its citizens plays a vital role in the country. The protection of United Nations personnel is paramount, and we welcome the leadership's assurances that the Mission constantly assesses the scope and consequences of the imposed bans and reviews their status. As the country's future remains alarmingly uncertain, we urge the Taliban to adhere to the principles of the Charter and

international law and to respect the human rights of Afghanistan's citizens.

The Security Council must be steadfast in demanding an immediate and unconditional revocation of the Taliban's regressive dictates and undertake actions that will benefit the Afghan population through this time of major humanitarian need.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva for her briefing. I also thank Ms. Basij-Rasikh for her powerful account. We could not agree more with her about the fundamental role of education as the foundation and the start of everything in a normal and successful life.

It has been almost two years since the Taliban took over Afghanistan. It is now in a humanitarian calamity and is the only country in the world that walks backwards. There is hardly any other example of a country sliding back centuries in time in a matter of months. The economy is deemed stable, but we wonder what that means in real terms amid massive poverty, suffering and destitution and, when as we speak, close to two thirds of the population rely on life-saving aid to survive. The sense of security the regime claims to have imposed, including with their brutal and medieval methods, cannot hide the fact that terrorist networks are very much present, raising fears of the Taliban's rule might become again a harbour of terrorism. After all, they have clearly shown that they are not bound by their promises. In particular, the rulers have been methodical in wiping away the achievements of the past two decades by repressing or threatening the media and critics of Taliban rule, forcing the closure of civil society organizations and dismantling Government offices meant to promote or uphold human rights. The Taliban are again on the track of making Afghanistan the medieval manifesto of human rights violations. It is nowadays a black hole in the world — by the design and choice of the Taliban. That is outrageous, and it will not help the country to join the community of nations. It only predicts more self-isolation and exclusion.

When we mention Afghanistan today, it resonates with Afghan girls and women crying out for their rights. It echoes their desperate call for help. Because if we ever had any doubts, the Taliban have not changed over the past two decades, but Afghanistan has changed — and the women in the country have changed. Most of them knew and enjoyed freedom and were educated. Many

had university degrees and were part of social life. Now the ancestral women-haters have taken away everything from them: their right to obtain education, as well as their freedom to speak, work, travel and, recently, even to help each other.

No other issue has received more attention than the de facto authorities' brutal assault against women. Their misogyny and bigotry are second to none, and the depth of their depravity is unparalleled. No one in the world is more fearful of women's rights and emancipation than the Taliban. That seems to be their greatest fear and threat — their nightmare. And as if that were not enough, as we heard from the Special Representative, now the Taliban wants to play the human resources department for the United Nations. It would be risible if it were not tragic.

We reiterate our condemnation in the strongest terms of the Taliban's repressive policies and call on them to immediately reverse all despotic measures against women and girls, not only because they are wrong and run counter to the international commitments of Afghanistan, but also because the development advancement of any country depends on the involvement and the role of women.

We deplore the de facto authorities' failure to comply with the repeated calls of the Security Council and other international actors to reverse the measures and policies that restrict the universal rights of women and girls. Albania stands by the Afghans, who are entitled the right to a normal life, including the right to freely express their thoughts and to have their voice heard in a representative and inclusive Government. We look forward to the independent assessment mandated by the Council and welcome the appointment of the Special Coordinator.

Let me conclude by reiterating our support for the work of UNAMA in fulfilling its important but difficult mandate under extremely difficult circumstances. We will continue to stand with the Afghan people and their aspirations for equal rights and prosperity.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Otunbayeva for her briefing and, above all, for her invaluable work under very difficult circumstances. I also thank Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh for her briefing, which cannot leave anyone here indifferent. As she said, she lived as

(*spoke in English*)

“a child attending secret schools”.

(*spoke in French*)

And now, once again, a similar situation is unfolding. As the Secretary-General concluded at the end of the recent meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, “it is difficult to overestimate the gravity of the situation in Afghanistan”.

Today's briefing affirms the extent of the multidimensional crisis. The oppression of women and girls, while certainly not the only aspect of the crisis, is the most glaring one. We have been able to assess the scope of that during Switzerland's regular missions on the ground. The increasingly severe restrictions imposed by the Taliban lead to the effective exclusion of women and girls from public, political, economic, cultural and social life. That in turn exacerbates the suffering of the entire population of Afghanistan. The Council has repeatedly condemned and called for reversing these illegal, morally reprehensible and above all economically disastrous measures. To date, although resolution 2681 (2023) clearly calls for it, none of those restrictions have been officially revoked. Switzerland congratulates all the actors and non-governmental organizations that have been able to retain a space to continue their work. We encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to continue its commitment to the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in public life. In that regard, I would like to highlight three points in particular.

First, with regard to respect for human rights and international law, the Taliban's blatant disregard for human rights has tragic consequences not only for women but for entire families and communities. That lack of respect for rights also affects children. All children, girls and boys alike, should be able to benefit from access to a safe, quality education. We heard that again today. Not only is that their right, but schooling helps to reduce their vulnerability and is essential to Afghanistan's future stability and prosperity. And we are dismayed by the Taliban-controlled Supreme Court's recent decision to impose the death penalty, which is incompatible with respect for human rights and human dignity. UNAMA has also reported numerous cases of corporal punishment, whose prohibition is a fundamental principle of international law. We therefore encourage UNAMA to continue its engagement with

the Taliban to put an end to all such practices and thank the Mission for that commitment.

Secondly, with regard to the economic situation, while we note that it has stabilized at a low level, the vulnerabilities of the population remain a cause for concern. The Afghan economy's capacity to cope with those shocks is weak. We heard from the Special Representative that she believes that the humanitarian crisis is the worst such crisis in the world. Humanitarian support and basic needs will therefore continue to be essential. Switzerland would like to point out that the Taliban are responsible for meeting the needs of the Afghan population without discrimination of any kind, and that they have to ensure that humanitarian aid and basic services reach all in need. Switzerland welcomes UNAMA's close cooperation with all stakeholders to find lasting solutions.

Thirdly, Switzerland is concerned about the negative effects of climate change on Afghanistan and the region and of environmental degradation. Recurring droughts, desertification, floods and shortages of drinking water are extremely damaging. The struggle for limited natural resources can potentially create serious conflict, both among communities and between Afghanistan and its neighbours. And with almost half the Afghan population suffering from acute food insecurity, there is also an urgent need to mitigate the negative effects of climate change in order to improve food security in the long term. In that context, we welcome UNAMA's work with local communities to strengthen their resilience and their management of climate-change-related risks.

Every society must include women and men without discrimination, with the welfare of its entire population as the measure of its common strength. There is an urgent need to ensure greater respect for international law and human rights for all Afghans. That includes ensuring the active participation of civil society and women's organizations in every area, including the independent assessment provided for in resolution 2679 (2023). I want to take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of our former colleague and to wish him good luck and success in a very difficult job. Only a political solution will enable a resolution of the crisis. Switzerland continues to support the Afghan people — and we have taken the recommendations on board — the United Nations and UNAMA in particular, in those efforts.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh for their briefings.

The situation in Afghanistan remains very worrisome. The Taliban continue to flout the demands of the international community and the resolutions of the Council, including resolution 2593 (2021), and to maintain their policy of the systematic oppression of women. France condemns in the strongest terms the decision taken in April to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations. The continuing increase in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Afghanistan is unacceptable. We are also concerned about reports of new restrictions imposed on international non-governmental organizations in the area of education.

The security situation remains worrisome. Terrorist groups such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida have found safe haven in Afghanistan. We are also closely monitoring developments in the situation regarding drugs. All of those challenges are interlinked. The exclusion of Afghan women — half the population — is undermining the country's economic recovery and long-term stability and creating a breeding ground for radicalization and terrorism. France continues to call for a united response from the international community. I would like to emphasize four points in that regard.

First, the unanimous adoption of resolution 2681 (2023) and the broad support it received show that the international community has not forgotten Afghan women. We have made it a priority to continue to demand that the Taliban reverse the decisions that are hindering women's daily lives, violating their rights and restricting their fundamental freedoms.

Secondly, we continue to support the Afghan people. Humanitarian aid for them is unconditional and should remain so. France has contributed more than €140 million since August 2021. In particular, we are also providing medical aid, including through the Kabul Mother and Child Medical Institute. The European Union and its member States have responded to the basic needs of Afghans in the country and in the region with almost €2 billion since 2011. That aid must also be delivered to all who need it, in accordance with humanitarian principles and international law, something that France will not compromise on.



Thirdly, we must collectively continue to underscore that we expect concrete action from the Taliban, based on the five demands we made in resolution 2593 (2021).

Lastly, we will continue to support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and all United Nations agencies and their partners working on the ground for the benefit of the Afghan people.

**The President:** Recalling the Security Council's commitment under note S/2017/507 to making more effective use of its meetings, I encourage all the remaining speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Faiq (Afghanistan):** I thank you, Madam President, for convening us today and for your able leadership. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva for her briefing and Ms. Shabana Basij-Rasikh for her touching and very inspiring remarks. She is an icon and a symbol of inspiration, resilience and valour for the millions of Afghan women who are facing dark forces in Afghanistan.

We appreciate the remarks of Council members reaffirming their commitment to continuing to support the fundamental human rights of the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, and we thank them for their efforts to ensure peace, stability and security in Afghanistan. We also thank Member States, donors, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and all actors for their continued life-saving support, especially in response to the humanitarian crisis.

We are nearing the two-year mark since the Taliban came to power, and there is not the slightest ray of hope for a positive future for the people of Afghanistan, including the 28 million who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Among them are millions of Afghan refugees, internally displaced persons, disabled people, young people and women and girls, who comprise half of Afghanistan's population.

In the past two years, the international community has collectively engaged with the Taliban in dialogue and discussion, hoping for a positive response to the shared demands of the people of Afghanistan and the international community. However, not only have the

Taliban not met those demands, but they are in complete denial, trying to justify their actions under the guise of a distorted and self-interpreted version of religion and culture.

On the international stage, they have resorted to a policy of blackmail and extortion with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Nationally, they have returned to the draconian policies of the 1990s, consolidating their power and authority through acts of intimidation and repression, as well as imposing restrictions and isolating the people of Afghanistan. Two years on, the situation in Afghanistan has not improved by any measure. What we are seeing is a worsening of the situation from a humanitarian, human rights, security and political standpoint.

The economic and humanitarian situation has worsened, with the majority of the population deprived of their basic needs and humanitarian assistance. Ninety-seven per cent of the population lives in poverty, with two thirds needing humanitarian assistance just to survive. Twenty million people face acute hunger. Unemployment is rising and the influx of migration continues despite numerous ongoing challenges, hardships and risks, such as drowning, being persecuted, arrested or deported. Despite the Taliban's claims of increased national revenue collection from taxation, customs and fees, there is no change in the lives of ordinary people and no accountability and transparency on the utilization and expenditure of the national budget and domestic revenue.

The people of Afghanistan and the international community share a common anguish. Nearly two decades after women regained their rights, women and girls in Afghanistan have again been banned from receiving a quality education and from entering amusement parks, gyms and sports clubs. Women have been banned from working in NGO offices. They quite literally have been wholly excluded from public office and the judiciary.

Today Afghanistan's women and girls face a gender apartheid and gender persecution. They are required to adhere to a strict dress code and are not permitted to travel more than 75 kilometres without a male guardian. The Taliban are systemically violating the rights of women and young girls. Their practices are regressing with time, and they are resorting to using draconian, cruel and inhumane practices.



The people of Afghanistan look to the international community to adopt a united and coherent approach to respond to the increasing erosion of human rights, ongoing arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and the torture of former Government officials and security forces, human rights activists, journalists and protesters, as well as civilians, with the pretext of them having links to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — constituting violations of the Taliban's amnesty decree and crimes against humanity. Further, corporal punishments were carried out, often in public, constituting torture and ill-treatment under international law, in concert with a broader stifling of media and civil society.

As per a recently released Amnesty International report, the Taliban have directed collective punishment, particularly upon communities where they have established and deployed their forces. They have retaliated against captured fighters and targeted the civilian population to force submission and compliance, especially those suspected of being associated with the former Government.

The list of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed by the Taliban is long — torture, extrajudicial executions, hostage-taking, the intentional burning of civilian homes, forced evictions and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. However, beyond each individual act designed to instil fear, this conduct, in sum, constitutes collective punishment, which in itself is a war crime.

Many of those concerns were validated once again at the meeting two days ago of the Human Rights Council, on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. The Special Rapporteur, Afghan women activists, member States and other participants spoke in detail about the grave, systematic and ongoing human rights violations in the country. We thank Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett for highlighting what he rightfully referred to as the suffocating plight of Afghan women and girls resulting from the Taliban's actions and policies, as well as other human rights violations against broader segments of society. At the same time, we hope to see new and decisive measures by the international community in order to ensure accountability for the grave human rights violations.

The Taliban have broken their promises of trying to be more inclusive, break ties with terrorist groups, respect universal human rights and take measures that

prevent Afghanistan from posing a security threat to other countries. As confirmed in the recent Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team report (see S/2023/370), the Taliban continue to maintain links to Al-Qaida, in addition to nearly 20 other terrorist entities. The presence of foreign terrorist fighters and the harbouring and relocation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan to northern provinces of Afghanistan are extremely alarming. Any forced evictions or attempts to effect demographic changes based on ethnicity or religion will trigger deep hostility and conflict in the country.

The Taliban's association with terror groups is not a concern for Afghanistan's neighbouring countries only, but for the international community as well. It is vital to ensure — at the regional and international levels — a comprehensive, unified and coherent counter-terrorism strategy, with zero tolerance for all terrorist groups, without distinction or preferential short-term approaches. There are no good or bad terrorists. The people of Afghanistan have always been the prime victim of terrorism, which is the antithesis of human rights, independence and development.

Politically, the Taliban shut the doors for inclusivity, engagement or dialogue with the people of Afghanistan. The Monitoring Team report states how the Taliban reverted to the exclusionary and autocratic policies of the 1990s. The Taliban are not representative of any particular ethnic group in Afghanistan, nor are they representative of the true Islamic values and cultural traditions of Afghanistan. However, their discriminatory policies based on their extremist ideology will result in increased societal and internal tensions and further complicate and deepen the crisis in the country.

The Taliban claims of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics are a paradox and a self-contradiction. The Taliban's senior leaders are involved in narcotics and the production and smuggling of drugs, including opium, heroin and methamphetamines, which have become a significant part of Afghanistan's illicit export under the Taliban. Despite some speculation about discord or disagreement within the Taliban, the majority of the Taliban share the same extremist ideology on human rights and women's rights. In fact, there is no plan to break the current national and international impasse and take Afghanistan out of isolation. The Taliban are content with taking advantage of the status quo and continuing to utilize the funds and national

resources for their personal benefit, without taking into account the interests of the people. The reality is that all dissent and disagreement is over the division of power and resources. The people of Afghanistan are paying a heavy price for the imposed and forced rule by an autocratic and extremist group.

Despite the difficult situation, the people of Afghanistan are determined to overcome the crisis and achieve a point of stability. We know that bringing peace to our country is a responsibility that primarily belongs to us, the people of Afghanistan. Over the past two years, Afghans from all walks of life and age groups inside and outside Afghanistan are tirelessly working and raising their voices in defence of their rights, hard-earned achievements of the past two decades and national values.

In the past year, civil society, women and youth groups and political movements and parties have mobilized and begun organized political activity. While various groups present diverse views on a solution, the main objective is to come together with a national agenda based on national unity. This effort will not only continue, but it will also grow stronger in time. However, I cannot stress how important it is for the international community to play a larger role in helping us overcome this crisis. A legitimate Government based on the will of people is the need of the hour.

In the light of the current situation, we are of the belief that the international community should adopt a new, coherent and united approach towards Afghanistan and principled engagement. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the Security Council to conduct an independent assessment aimed at ensuring greater coordination and a more integrated international approach and effort towards stability in Afghanistan. We look forward to the outcome of the assessment, which will be presented in November.

The decision to undertake an assessment and the recent United Nations meeting on Afghanistan, hosted by the Secretary-General and with the participation of a broad group of special representatives from many countries, including from within the region, have raised hopes about a growing international consensus on Afghanistan. We hope to see this momentum build and grow stronger as we move forward. We believe that ensuring participation by representatives of the people of Afghanistan in the follow-up to the Doha meeting and the adoption of a related road map aimed at achieving

a comprehensive political settlement through national dialogue are both vital for progress towards peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Moreover, time and experience has proven that dialogue and engagement — primarily with the Taliban alone — has not yielded results. It is therefore now time for the international community to begin structured engagement with democratic political forces and help find a concrete solution to the crisis. The democratic political forces should be given the platform and opportunity needed to help improve and eventually stabilize the situation, based on the will of the people.

Additionally, and most importantly, international efforts from now on should prioritize the start of a political process towards a political settlement through national dialogue. The crisis in Afghanistan is primarily political in nature, and that requires a political solution. So far, much of the international community's attention has been centred on human rights issues and the humanitarian situation. While focusing on those and other issues is important, the political component of the dilemma should not be neglected. It would be most preferable if the international community could unite in creating an environment that is conducive to the start of negotiations.

Yesterday we marked World Refugee Day, which was an occasion to reflect on the plight of millions of refugees around the world and to honour their strength and resilience to overcome challenges and difficulties. We wish to take the opportunity to call on the international community, especially host countries, to provide Afghan refugees with the support they need and to ensure their protection, safety and well-being, especially now, at a time where they are seeking refuge abroad from difficulty and persecution in their country.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the current situation in Afghanistan and its security challenges and threats are of great concern for the people of Afghanistan and the international community. Failing to address them will have grave implications for the country, the region and the international community at large. We therefore hope to see the international community, and the Security Council in particular, act with unity and consensus to prevent Afghanistan from turning into a terrorist hub and to ensure a comprehensive settlement that leads to the formation of a broad-based legitimate political structure and system that reflects the people's aspirations and enjoys their support, so

that we can achieve long-term and sustainable peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

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

**Mr. Hikmat (Tajikistan):** We thank the delegation of the United Arab Emirates for organizing today's important briefing. We also thank our briefers.

On 15 August 2023, we will mark the second anniversary of the Taliban coming to power as the de facto authorities in Afghanistan. The situation in the country today remains complicated and unpredictable and is likely to deteriorate further. Moreover, a complex of socioeconomic problems, widespread violations of human rights, in particular of the rights of women and girls, the continuing policy of ethnic discrimination against the non-Pashtun population, and the lack of an inclusive Government and human resources have led the country into a severe political and humanitarian crisis.

According to United Nations estimates, overall humanitarian needs in Afghanistan continue to rise, with 28.3 million people estimated to require humanitarian assistance in 2023. In this dire situation, a travel ban on female aid workers was introduced, forcing many organizations to pause operations and severely affecting populations in need, especially women and girls.

Indeed, of particular concern is the worsening situation of women in Afghanistan. The announcement in December 2022 of decisions to suspend women's access to higher education and employment in national and international non-governmental organizations further curtailed women's and girls' fundamental rights. Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment of other ethnic groups, in particular individuals accused of affiliation with the National Resistance Front in Panjshir province, as well as against former Government officials, in violation of the general amnesty announced in August 2021, continue to be of great concern for us.

While the Taliban publicly insist there are no foreign terrorist groups other than ISIL-Khorasan in Afghanistan, according to our information, such terrorist groups as Al-Qaida, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat Ansarullah, are currently present in Afghanistan and pose a serious threat to neighbouring countries.

We are also very concerned that the unprecedented concentration of different terrorist groups next to our borders is increasing day by day. Unfortunately, the country's ongoing political instability, inter-ethnic conflicts, lack of effective governance and internal power struggles provide an environment conducive to these groups thriving and winning local support. The relocation to the northern part of Afghanistan, an area mainly dominated by non-Pashtun ethnic groups, of terrorist-group members of the Pashtun ethnic group and other foreign nationals further contributes to the existing division and mistrust between ethnic groups and worsens the already fragile security situation on the border with Afghanistan.

In addition, despite the narcotics ban by the de facto authorities in April 2022, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has indicated that, to date, enforcement levels in the country have not been uniform. For instance, Tajikistan law-enforcement agencies seized 4.2 tons of narcotics at the border with Afghanistan in 2022, up from 2.4 tons in 2020. In this context, we recall the proposal of the President of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmon, to establish a security belt around Afghanistan, which would adopt a comprehensive set of measures to counter security challenges and threats emanating from the country and to foster the development of socioeconomic conditions in border areas.

Tajikistan reaffirms its commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and support to the Afghan people during this challenging time. We will continue to collaborate with international partners, including regional organizations, to address the urgent humanitarian needs arising from the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Taking that into account, we have offered our infrastructure to international organizations to deliver humanitarian aid. Our six bridges on the Tajik-Afghan border are available for that purpose. We have successfully facilitated aid delivery through those checkpoints in collaboration with the United Nations.

Moreover, we have been exporting a range of essential commodities to Afghanistan, such as building materials, agricultural products and food. We have never stopped supplying electricity to the people of Afghanistan. Our electricity goes to northern provinces of Afghanistan and Kabul. The Panji Poyon-Sherkhon Bandar crossing point continues to facilitate the transportation of vital goods and supplies into Afghanistan.

In conclusion, Tajikistan stands ready to support any constructive efforts that contribute to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the broader Central Asian region.

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

**Mr. Irvani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the United Arab Emirates for convening this meeting. I also thank Ms. Otunbayeva, the Special Representative, for her briefing.

We note the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan. The report indicates that de-facto authorities have maintained internal stability and managed the Afghan economy. However, the magnitude of humanitarian needs in Afghanistan remains substantial and pervasive.

The seizure of Afghanistan's foreign assets and unilateral sanctions have significantly exacerbated the current situation, posing substantial external obstacles to effectively addressing the humanitarian situation in the country.

Humanitarian aid must remain impartial and unconditional, ensuring that it reaches those in need without any interference from political or external factors. It is crucial that the international community fulfil its humanitarian commitments and pledges, demonstrating solidarity and sympathy for the Afghan people and offering them hope and a path to a more stable and prosperous future. Similarly, releasing frozen assets and lifting unilateral sanctions are vital to support Afghanistan's economy and help it recover.

As a neighbouring country with a long-shared border and a host of millions of Afghans, we are gravely concerned about the potential repercussions of the current situation on the security and stability of the entire region, especially for our neighbouring countries. Despite some relative improvements in security, the persistent presence of Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates in Afghanistan, along with drug trafficking, continue to pose a significant and immediate threat not only to Afghanistan but also to neighbouring countries and the entire region, as well as the international community at large.

According to a United Nations report, the ban on drug trafficking in Afghanistan has not been fully implemented, allowing the illicit trade in opium to continue across the country. Moreover, there is growing

concern regarding the spread of covert laboratories and locations involved in the production and trafficking of industrial substances such as methamphetamine. The fact that some of those illicit activities spill across borders further exacerbates our concerns. We support the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its ongoing efforts to monitor opium cultivation in Afghanistan.

Despite repeated international calls for an inclusive government, the de facto authorities have made no progress towards genuine ethnic and political inclusion. Instead, they have imposed ever more severe restrictions and limitations on Afghan women and girls, severely limiting their access to education. There are also concerns that de facto authorities are deliberately attempting to erode Afghans' cultural, linguistic and historical ties to the Farsi language, while also attempting to exert Pashtun cultural dominance over other ethnic groups and alter the demographic structure of Hazara and Tajik provinces. Those measures have negative consequences for Afghanistan's stability and security and should be reversed to protect the basic human rights of all Afghan people.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for the United Nations ongoing efforts, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which are critical for ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan, especially given the current situation. In that context, Iran commends the Secretary-General's initiative held in Doha on 1 and 2 of May, which brought together Afghanistan's special envoys from concerned countries. We extend our support for the upcoming second meeting on that initiative, and we remain hopeful that, under the United Nations leadership, the international community will continue to provide crucial humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Feridun Sinirlioğlu as the Special Coordinator entrusted with the crucial task of conducting an independent assessment on Afghanistan. We are ready to collaborate closely with him in fulfilling his mandate.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that we need to cooperate collectively to aid Afghanistan in rebuilding its economy and establishing favourable conditions for its people, as well as for the safe return of Afghan refugees.



While acknowledging the Taliban's failure to fully meet their commitments, we must maintain our constructive engagement with the de facto authorities through UNAMA to pursue the best possible outcomes for the people of Afghanistan and the broader international community. That approach benefits everyone: the Afghan people, its neighbours, the entire region and the international community. Considering the lessons learned from past experiences of Taliban isolation, it is vital that Afghanistan does not suffer a similar fate.

Iran remains committed to close collaboration with other neighbours, relevant partners and the United Nations to help bring durable peace, security and stability to Afghanistan.

Lastly, regarding the recent border incident that happened between Iranian border forces and Taliban security forces, which was referred to in the statements of the Permanent Representatives of Mozambique and Ecuador, I wish to say that, unfortunately, that sad incident occurred as a result of the inadequate capacity and training of the Taliban security forces. We continue our constructive engagement with the de facto authorities to manage and prevent repeating such unnecessary incidents. We hope that the de facto authorities fulfil their international obligations especially in upholding Afghanistan's obligations with regard to the border activities with its neighbours.

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

**Mrs. Kasymalieva (Kyrgyzstan):** We would like to express our gratitude to the presidency of the United Arab Emirates for organizing today's debate on Afghanistan. I welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, and thank her for the comprehensive briefing. I also thank other speakers for their meaningful statements. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations, including humanitarian organizations, in addressing the humanitarian needs of the people of Afghan.

We thank Qatar, the United Nations and others for hosting the high-level special envoys meeting for Afghanistan in early May in Doha. We believe it is important to hold constant consultations with the countries of the region and broadly in order to maintain the peace and security of Afghanistan.

Kurdistan expresses its solidarity with the international community to overcome the humanitarian crisis and stabilize the situation in Afghanistan by exclusively peaceful means at the negotiating table.

For Kyrgyzstan, peace and stability in Afghanistan is one of the priority areas in the system of regional security. Therefore, my country is deeply interested in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan and is ready to develop good neighbourly relations with the country. At the same time, noting its commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan respects the right of the Afghan people to determine the future of their country.

Since the Taliban came to the power in Afghanistan in August 2021, our diplomatic mission continues its work. Currently, with the support of international donors, about 500 Afghan students are studying in Kyrgyz universities.

I echo the comments of other speakers that respecting human rights is fundamental and essential. In that connection, it is vital to take steps to ensure the real participation of women in all spheres, including access to education. We share the concerns of the international community with regard to the infringement of women's rights to education and work in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan remains a friendly State for Afghanistan because we are good neighbours and we share a common religion and culture. Kyrgyzstan considers it necessary to extend a helping hand to the Afghan people in order to prevent the further escalation of tensions in Afghanistan.

In that context, it is important that the Afghan economy has been reintegrated into regional processes. Kyrgyzstan, which has significant hydropower resources, is interested in the successful implementation of CASA-1000 energy project to export electricity through Afghanistan to South Asia. We are ready to actively interact and constructively cooperate with the international community and the de facto Government of Afghanistan in order to stabilize the situation as soon as possible, establish peace in Afghanistan. We express the hope that the wise people of Afghanistan will be able to adequately overcome the consequences of many years of war and build a prosperous State that takes into account their rights and interests and establish long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and in the region.



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

**Mr. Prakash Gupta** (India): I thank Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva and Ms. Basij-Rasikh for their briefings.

As a contiguous neighbour and long-standing partner of Afghanistan and given our strong historical and civilizational linkages to the Afghan people, India has direct stakes in ensuring the return of peace and stability to the country, and we continue to closely monitor the developments in Afghanistan.

In view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the urgent appeals by United Nations agencies, India has delivered 40,000 metric tons of wheat and 150 tons of medical aid — consisting of medicines, vaccines and other medical items. Recently, we also supplied 500 units of winter clothing and more than 5,000 units of stationary items for the students of Habibia High School, in Kabul. India has also partnered with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its humanitarian efforts and has supplied 1,100 units of female hygiene kits and blankets for the UNODC female rehabilitation centres across Afghanistan. I am happy to announce that this month we started the shipment of 20,000 metric tons of wheat assistance, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), through the Chabahar port. As we speak, the first tranche, consisting of 2,500 metric tons of wheat, has already been handed over to the WFP warehouse at Herat for further internal distribution, and the next tranche of another 2,500 metric tons is en route via the Chabahar port.

We believe that it is important to have international consensus on issues related to Afghanistan. Our collective approach is articulated in Security Council's resolution 2593 (2021). Broadly speaking, our common and immediate priorities include providing humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people, the formation of inclusive and representative Government structures, combating terrorism and drug trafficking and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities. India appreciates and supports the work being done by the United Nations in Afghanistan. We have already partnered with several United Nations agencies on ground and continue to do so for the welfare of the people of Afghanistan. We are ready to work with the Secretary-General in his efforts to find progress in that situation.

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

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): I apologize for the length of my statement.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on a very successful presidency of the Council this month and on convening this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Special Representative Otunbayeva for her excellent briefing to us this morning, and I also thank Ms. Basij-Rasikh for her moving intervention.

While we await the independent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan from Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu, we find that at present there are reasons for both optimism and pessimism regarding Afghanistan.

On the positive side, we see security has vastly improved in Afghanistan, allowing commerce and trade, among other benefits. The interim Government is stable and secure. There is no credible internal threat, and no one should encourage anyone to pose such a threat. The Afghan interim Government has managed the Afghan economy, especially trade, commerce and revenue collection, reasonably well. The opium economy has been reduced, and the Afghan interim Government is engaged with all immediate neighbours — that is, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan — and with the countries of the region and is open to engaging with the rest of the international community.

On the negative side, the humanitarian situation remains dire, compounded by the impacts of climate change and sanctions. The unacceptable restrictions relating to women and girls have been broadened instead of reversed. Pakistan will continue to make every effort to find a durable and mutually agreed solution on this important issue. There has been limited progress towards enhancing political inclusion, and the threat from terrorist organizations within and from Afghanistan persists. While Al-Qaida is a shadow of its early self, Da'esh has yet to be contained, and the threat from the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is real and sizable — not only because of the external support it has received, but also because of other regional factors. Continued engagement with the Afghan interim Government is the best approach to reinforce the positive trends and address the continuing challenges in Afghanistan.

At our invitation, the acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Mr. Muttaqi, visited Islamabad on 5 May for bilateral and trilateral discussions with our Foreign Minister and the Foreign Minister of China. As Afghanistan's closest neighbour and friend, Pakistan is committed to doing everything possible to promote peace, harmony and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan. In turn, we have been reassured by the Afghan interim Government of its goodwill and support, including in addressing the threat posed by the TTP and other terrorist groups.

The fifth Pakistan, Afghanistan and China Foreign Ministers dialogue was held in Islamabad on 6 May and addressed the critical issues relating to Afghanistan and the region. The meeting underlined the importance of cooperation across the spectrum of issues. The three Foreign Ministers called on the international community to engage constructively with the Afghan interim Government.

Afghanistan's immediate neighbours are playing a major role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. The continuation of the deliberations of the region's Foreign Ministers in Samarkand was an important event. Pakistan also believes that other countries of the region, in particular the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, can and must play a larger role in promoting economic and political stability and development in Afghanistan. Pakistan welcomed and participated in the Doha Meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan. It was a useful and constructive exchange of assessments and recommendations to address the situation in Afghanistan. We hope the United Nations and the Secretary-General will continue his endeavour for normalization in Afghanistan. We believe that, to make this effort more effective, we should identify clear objectives to be promoted, promote direct engagement with the Afghan interim Government by having its representatives at the table and move away from utilizing only sticks and instead trying some carrots to advance the international community's objectives.

As we develop mutual trust and confidence with the Afghan interim Government to address the issues related to Afghanistan, we hope that the international community will, first, continue humanitarian assistance to the 28 million Afghans who need such assistance, which, in accordance with humanitarian norms, must remain unconditional. The Secretary-General's appeal for \$4.2 billion in humanitarian help, which has so far

received less than 10 per cent, should be fully funded. Secondly, we should take concrete steps to revive the Afghan economy, including releasing externally held Afghan reserve assets, reviving the Afghan banking system, including through technical assistance to the Central Bank, reviving international support for reconstruction and infrastructure projects and for the implementation of regional connectivity projects. Thirdly, we should open and sustain a process of engagement with the Afghan interim Government through various available platforms — bilateral, regional and international.

Pakistan believes that engagement and cooperation can lead to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, where the humanitarian crisis will be over, where the rights of women and girls will be respected in accordance with sharia, where the economy is thriving, where Afghan refugees have returned home, where terrorism has been effectively addressed and where Afghanistan provides the trade and transit link between Central, West and South Asia.

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

**Mr. Rakhmetullin** (Kazakhstan): I commend the United Arab Emirates presidency of the Security Council for convening today's meeting and focusing on the activities and the very important mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

I thank Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA for her continued efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the Mission and its place within the United Nations and international processes.

On the issue of international recognition of the Taliban, we are strictly guided by the Security Council's position. Meanwhile, the new leadership of Afghanistan continues to work on building Statehood, carrying out work to normalize the activities of State administrative institutions, collecting taxes, strengthening defence capabilities, and so on. Under these conditions, one should not overlook the fact that the new Government working in Afghanistan is in its second year now. The country needs to survive and build normal relations with its neighbours and other partners, including international organizations.

Afghanistan's integration into the regional economic system meets the interests of both the country itself and its neighbours. Diversification of trade relations is important for our landlocked region. For example, last year the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan amounted to almost \$1 billion, and this is not the limit. Afghanistan could play a central role in connecting Central and South Asia. In turn, regional economic cooperation could accelerate the achievement of stability and development in Afghanistan.

In order to establish constructive business contacts, Kazakhstan accredited representatives of the new Afghan Administration, without giving them diplomatic status. The May Doha meeting between Secretary-General António Guterres and the special representatives for Afghanistan of a number of countries confirmed the importance of further cooperation between the international community and the Taliban, primarily in the humanitarian assistance, trade and economic spheres.

We consider it important to maintain close interaction with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan so as to seek, in the interests of the Afghan people, remedies to the current crises, key among which are the acute humanitarian crisis and the remaining instability, terrorism and extremism. In addition, the security risks posed by the illegal circulation of weapons and drugs, and the steep escalation of illegal migration and the influx of refugees, need critical attention.

We hope that the de facto authorities of Afghanistan will take appropriate steps to establish an inclusive and representative Government, uphold human rights, including the rights of women, children and persons belonging to minorities, and promote the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in all aspects of Afghan society.

We are researching opportunities to strengthen the activities of the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KazAID) in providing official development assistance in Afghanistan. We are interested in establishing cooperation between KazAID, other development agencies and United Nations agencies in the implementation of relevant projects for the economic stabilization of Afghanistan.

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

**Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan):** First of all, let me commend the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates for convening today's open briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, and Ms. Basij-Rasikh, for their informative briefings.

The unfolding situation in Afghanistan is a cause for serious concern for both countries of the region and the international community as a whole. The current state of destruction of the economy, widespread chaos and poverty are becoming the defining factors for the overall internal political situation in the country.

As Afghanistan's immediate neighbour, Uzbekistan has always advocated not just bringing humanitarian assistance to the country, but also working out concrete steps conducive to the recovery of the national economy. From our perspective, at the current stage, it is important not to let Afghanistan be internationally isolated, as that would exacerbate the humanitarian situation. We are talking about the fates of millions of people. The Afghan problem should therefore not be neglected, as it was in the past.

We are convinced that the quick repeal of the ban on girls' education and women's employment should become a key factor in achieving national consensus, sustainable development and the integration of Afghanistan into the international community as a responsible member. Accordingly, the fundamental conditions for establishing long-term peace in Afghanistan remain linked to the formation of an inclusive Government and ensuring basic rights and freedoms for the people, especially women and national minorities. Uzbekistan strictly adheres to this position in its contacts with the Taliban.

We believe that the time has come to take concrete steps to enhance the roles of the United Nations, leading countries of the world and the States neighbouring Afghanistan in resolving the situation in the country. The initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, on the formation of a high-level international negotiating group under the auspices and with the support of the United Nations, to prepare and come to agreement with the Afghan authorities on the phased implementation of the obligations of the parties, serves this purpose. This initiative would not only allow a rapprochement of the positions of various States towards the new Afghan

authorities, but it would also facilitate the country's recovery from its current dire socioeconomic situation.

The composition of the proposed negotiating group could be discussed with Member States and the Security Council. Having broad powers, this group would conduct direct negotiations with the Afghan authorities to develop a detailed road map that the de facto authorities in Kabul would follow to implement international requirements and obligations. In other words, the implementation of each specific step outlined in this road map could lead to the gradual improvement of the Taliban's relations with international community, for example, removing the Taliban from the United Nations sanctions list, resuming financial assistance from donor countries and stepping up international efforts aimed at providing humanitarian and other types of aid to the Afghan people.

Additionally, preventing Afghanistan's territory from becoming a springboard for international terrorism and severing all ties with various terrorist groups, primarily Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, should also be among the key objectives of this negotiating group. Those aspects were specifically highlighted by the delegation of Uzbekistan during the recent meeting with the Secretary-General that took place in Qatar last month.

We believe that our efforts should be based primarily on the interests of the ordinary Afghan people. It is necessary to move away from patterns and stereotypes in considering the entire population of Afghanistan in the light of the current attitude of the international community towards the Taliban. It is important to shift the conceptual approach away from the tactics of pressure and threats in favour of a pragmatic dialogue with the new authorities in Kabul.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that today the international community should not abandon the Afghan people with their most challenging problems. We believe that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in mobilizing and coordinating international efforts to render assistance to Afghanistan. In that regard, we appeal to the Security Council to seriously consider the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan to establish the above-mentioned negotiating group as an effective mechanism to address the concerns of the international community with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan.

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

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*