



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8742nd meeting
 Tuesday, 10 March 2020, 4 p.m.
 New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Zhang Jun (China)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia	Mr. Auväärt
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Ms. Norman-Chalet
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, fifth Secretary-General of the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): As Security Council Members will be aware, former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar passed away on 4 March. I am sure that Council Members will join me in expressing our deepest sympathy and in sending condolences to his family and loved ones. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar was a member of the Peruvian delegation to the first session of the General Assembly in 1946; he was twice President of this very Council, and he served with great distinction as the fifth United Nations Secretary-General, during a time of great transformation for our Organization and the world. I would ask that the Council now observe a minute of silence in his honour.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2020/191, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft

resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2513 (2020).

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

Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America): On 29 February, the United States took a decisive step towards a negotiated peace in Afghanistan with the announcement of a joint declaration with the Afghan Government and an agreement with the Taliban. We were pleased to introduce resolution 2513 (2020), endorsing the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban and the Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan. We appreciate the Security Council's support for this resolution and the constructive engagement of all of our colleagues during the negotiations.

The support and engagement of the international community will continue to be critical in the next steps of the peace process. We are especially grateful to His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani for Qatar's support and the critical role his country played in hosting the talks that led to this momentous occasion. We are eagerly looking forward to the next steps of the peace process, although unfortunately the presidential electoral process and the unacceptably high levels of violence by the Taliban in Afghanistan have not permitted intra-Afghan negotiations to start on time.

Prioritizing an inclusive Government and a unified Afghanistan is paramount for the future of the country and especially for the cause of peace. To that end, we welcome President Ghani's statement at his inauguration on 9 March that discussions and negotiations will continue for the next two weeks so as to reach an agreement on an inclusive Government — one that unifies the country and prioritizes peace. We also appreciate Mr. Abdullah's 9 March statement underscoring similar commitments to peace and inclusiveness. We hope that all parties will resolve their political differences without resorting to violence and come together to focus on peace.

Similarly, President Ghani's 10 March decree on a Taliban prisoner release in exchange for prisoners held by the Taliban is a significant measure that brings Afghans one step closer to intra-Afghan negotiations. Significantly, the decree means that technical talks

between the Taliban and the Afghan Government representatives in Doha, as well as actual releases, can start immediately. All of this brings Afghans closer to the opportunity to chart a political road map for their country's future.

For Afghanistan to enjoy international standing, support and investment, fundamental rights must be safeguarded and championed. We hope the people of Afghanistan seize the opportunity to achieve a historic peace settlement that ends the conflict in their country, preserves the gains of the last two decades in human rights, basic freedoms and the meaningful participation of women in political and civil institutions, and ensures that the territory of the Afghan people will never again be used by international terrorists to threaten the world.

As part of the agreement endorsed by today's Security Council resolution, the Taliban has made strong commitments to ending its relationships with international terrorists and to preventing any group or individual, including Al-Qaida, from using Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies. We will carefully monitor and track the progress of the Taliban and we will continually assess whether the Taliban is living up to its side of the bargain.

Other challenges remain. The current high level of violence by the Taliban is not conducive to advancing the peace process. We acknowledge that the Taliban have taken steps to stop attacks in cities and against major bases. But more needs to be done, and we urge them to also reduce violence against Afghan forces in the countryside so as to give intra-Afghan negotiations and peace the opportunity to succeed. Such levels of violence risk drawing both sides into a vicious cycle, serves no one and undermines peace. As Secretary Pompeo has said, we expect the Taliban and all Afghans to embrace the progress that has been made for women and girls and to build on it. A brighter future for Afghanistan needs to honour the dignity and potential of all Afghans, ensuring respect for the rights of women and those on the margins of society. With that in mind, the text of today's resolution makes clear that the Security Council does not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate and, most especially, its oppressive policies against women, girls and minorities. We urge the Taliban to learn the negative lessons of the past and be prepared to respect the contributions of all Afghan citizens to the country's development.

As illustrated by our Joint Declaration with the Government of Afghanistan, the United States will continue to steadfastly support Afghanistan. This occasion does not mark the end of the close United States partnership with the Government and people of Afghanistan but a new beginning. After almost two decades and more than \$1 trillion in investment in Afghanistan's security and development, the United States is not walking away. We will continue to invest in a durable relationship with the Afghan Government, including through development and security assistance. We will maintain our engagement with the Afghans to help them achieve a sovereign, unified Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbours.

The developments endorsed by the resolution are the product of more than a year of unprecedented United States diplomatic engagement with the Taliban, in coordination with our partners in Afghanistan, in the region and around the world. They were made possible by 19 years of military, diplomatic and economic engagement by NATO and our other coalition partners. We are proud of our achievements. The Afghanistan of today is not the Afghanistan of 2001 and that is because of the sincere efforts of Afghans working hand in hand with their friends in the international community. This is a hopeful moment but it is only the beginning. The United States is conscious of the long-held desire of the Afghan people for peace. As we have in the past, we will continue to support the goal of a lasting peace in Afghanistan. We hope that Council members will join us in doing so as well.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): First of all, I would like to express our condolences for the victims of the most recent attacks, most notably in Kabul on 6 March. It is sad to see violence flare up again after some days of calm. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

Let me affirm once again Germany's commitment to Afghanistan. Together with Indonesia, we are the co-penholders on Afghanistan in the Security Council but, in addition to that, we will continue to be engaged in Afghanistan as the second-largest donor and troop-contributing country, which is also working hard to support the capacity-building of the Afghan National Police. We will continue to stand by Afghanistan's side. Our goal remains to maintain the main achievements of the past 18 years, in particular regarding the rule of law and the constitutional and human rights of women, children and marginalized groups.

We would like to congratulate President Ghani on the occasion of his inauguration yesterday. His commitment to national cohesion and the formation of an inclusive Government acceptable to all remain key. At the same time, we call on Afghan stakeholders to act responsibly in the interest of the country's unity and to continue working towards democratic and inclusive governance based on the Afghan Constitution. In particular, we will not accept any parallel Government or the use of force to solve any political conflict.

We believe that the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban as well as the Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, of 29 February, can be important stepping stones to peace in Afghanistan, which the country so urgently needs after 40 years of war. On this occasion, I would also like to pay tribute to the Government and the people of Qatar, who over the years have worked very hard to make it possible for that Agreement to be concluded. We also appreciate the very close cooperation with the Government of Qatar in organizing the intra-Afghan dialogue, which is so important in the future, since, for this process to now begin, we call for a rapid start of the intra-Afghan negotiations. We welcome the announcement of the negotiating team by the Government of Afghanistan and we hope that outstanding issues on the prisoner exchange can be resolved without delay. With regard to the negotiating teams, and I expressly mean both negotiating teams, it is key that what we always urge in general happens in practice, namely, that women are not a marginal but a substantive part of the negotiating teams.

Regarding resolution 2513 (2020), we welcome that it calls for the start without delay of the inclusive intra-Afghan negotiations. It points out that the Security Council does not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. It contains references to the rights of women, youth and minorities. Lastly, it underlines the importance role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Those points are significant and must be implemented.

We would have welcomed in the resolution clear references to the Afghan Constitution as well as to human rights and the importance of respecting such rights in general. For us, references to the Constitution and to human rights remain the indispensable basis for the future development of the country.

We also stress the significance of the United Nations in the Afghan peace process. We hope in particular that, in this crucial period for the country's future, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA can soon commence her work. The UNAMA mandate will come up for renewal later this year. It is vital that the Security Council and the entire United Nations remain by the side of the Afghan people, especially Afghan women. We therefore ask for a strong mandate this year.

As the two co-penholders, Indonesia and Germany are united in their determination to ensure that the Security Council continues to closely follow and support the peace process in Afghanistan as an expression of their responsibility as co-penholders.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom was pleased to vote in favour of resolution 2513 (2020) and that it was unanimously adopted. Today Afghanistan stands at a critical juncture. The Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, of 29 February, and the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban together mark a significant moment in the pursuit of peace. Now is the time for all parties to seize this opportunity for peace by entering into direct and fully inclusive intra-Afghan negotiations. Through the resolution adopted today, the Security Council has set out the way for all parties to get to that point, and we expect further confidence-building measures, including further reductions in violence. We expect President Ghani, who was inaugurated yesterday, to unify the country and form a truly inclusive and diverse national negotiating team that includes women. We welcome the opportunity to work with him and his Government.

We call upon all Afghan leaders to uphold their commitments to prioritizing inclusivity, unity and peace. Like the United States, we appreciate Mr. Abdullah's statement on his commitments. We are strongly against the establishment of any parallel administrations or Government structures, and we call on all concerned to come together and resolve differences constructively.

I should like to emphasize points about the role of women. This morning Afghanistan and the United Kingdom co-hosted a high-level event of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan. Many members who are in the Chamber today were there to attend and to

speak, and we heard from leading Afghan women in politics and civil society.

The Security Council has sent a clear message in this regard. We expect to see the effective and meaningful participation in the peace process of women as well as young people and other minorities. While any peace deal is ultimately for Afghans to decide upon, we affirm that it should protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all.

Like Germany and others, we have a strong role in Afghanistan, both in military terms and in our development, political and economic work, and we are ready to support a peace deal and to stand by the Afghan people.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in favour of resolution 2513 (2020), on Afghanistan. The resolution opens up a window of opportunity for the achievement of national reconciliation in that country.

We stand in solidarity with the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in their aspiration to end this protracted war, restore peace and promote sustainable development. The Afghan people, more than ever before, need collective support from the entire international community.

The prompt launch of intra-Afghan talks is a priority. We trust that the agreement between the United States and the Taliban movement signed on 29 February in Doha will be a step towards a comprehensive peace process with the participation of all sociopolitical strata, with the aim of achieving a settlement. We understand that the path to that goal will be difficult and there will be need for consolidated efforts, not just on the part of the Afghan people themselves but also in terms of assistance from regional and international partners.

For its part, the Russian Federation has done a great deal to promote national reconciliation and a direct intra-Afghan dialogue. This has been the thrust of our efforts, including through the Moscow format, with the participation of regional players, and the focus on the launch of the intra-Afghan dialogue mechanism in Moscow.

A major contribution to the creation of favourable international conditions and to the resumption of talks between the United States and the Taliban movement was introduced through consultations of the troika of the special representatives of the Russian Federation,

the People's Republic of China and the United States, with the timely inclusion of Pakistan. This format would have been all the more beneficial had Iran, which has repeatedly demonstrated its constructive potential in this regard, been granted an opportunity to participate.

The people of Afghanistan are at a crossroads in their history. We believe that the overriding and paramount imperative at the present moment is progress towards peace. All efforts must be geared towards the prompt launch of inclusive inter-Afghan talks with the participation of all the country's sociopolitical groups. We trust that the parties will be represented by delegations authorized to negotiate and to take decisions on a broad array of issues.

We urge all Afghan political forces to set aside their differences, parochial interests and political ambitions and to jointly move towards a unifying platform so as to achieve the overriding goal of the peace so long awaited by ordinary Afghans. The first key step towards that end must be the abandonment of violence by all stakeholders. Efforts must be pooled to ensure that a concerted fight can be waged against terrorism.

One of the prerequisites for the long-term stabilization of the country is the review of the sanctions decisions taken by the Security Council vis-à-vis the Taliban movement and their synchronization with the relevant national measures. There is no doubt that Afghanistan will require support from the States of the region, including, above all, its neighbours. We deem of great significance the full-fledged leveraging to that end of the potential of regional structures, especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its updated SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Dominican Republic welcomes the stated intent of all Afghan parties to work towards the success of an inclusive intra-Afghan political agreement and a definitive and comprehensive ceasefire within the framework of the signed Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan and the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban. This historic agreement, signed by the United States of America and the Taliban, seeks to put an end to this protracted conflict.

We therefore voted in favour of resolution 2513 (2020), which we have just adopted, because we believe that the text is balanced and marks the historic moment of the signing of the peace agreement. We also recognize the great deal of hard work done by the co-drafters on the resolution.

The Dominican Republic deems crucial the effective and meaningful participation of women, young people and minorities. We urge the parties to ensure that any political agreement reached protects the rights of those groups.

To conclude, we would like to commend the support shown by the delegations that are members of the Security Council with respect to the adoption of the resolution. By the same token, we believe that the cooperation of the United Nations will remain vital in the context of the various peace talks to help make the most of existing dialogues and to address issues relating to a reduction in violence and the promotion of a ceasefire.

The Dominican Republic believes that the resolution contains the tools necessary for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Government and the international community to be able to continue to work to bring about lasting peace and stability in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Afghanistan's President, Ashraf Ghani, on assuming office for his second term. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, and applaud her country's role in the recent agreement that was signed in Doha on 29 February.

I would like to express my gratitude to the United States for its leadership in creating the important and timely resolution 2513 (2020). Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voted in favour of the resolution with the hope that it will promote inclusive intra-Afghan negotiations that will achieve a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. It will also promote the efforts of all regional and international partners of Afghanistan in informing and mobilizing support for the peace process.

We need to focus on the elements of sustaining peace: supporting Afghanistan's unity, promoting reconciliation and restoring confidence in the political process. We therefore call on the international

community to support the peace process and the upcoming intra-Afghan talks.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stresses the importance of an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process that leads to an inclusive, negotiated political settlement. Indeed, only through a whole-of-society approach can we make inclusive peace agreements that actually hold and bear fruit of prosperity for all of society. This means, in practical terms, having all Afghans, including minorities, young people and women, integrally involved from the making to the implementation of the peace agreement.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as a member of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan and a delegation comprised mostly of women, welcomes that the resolution recognizes the critical role of women in the peace process. However, we can and must go further than the words written on paper. We cannot emphasize enough that women are agents of change and architects of peace. This undeniable fact needs to be reflected in all peace processes. Let us do our utmost to ensure that women are crafters of, participants in and beneficiaries of peace processes.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2513 (2020). This text welcomes the recent progress made on the path towards peace in Afghanistan. The priority going forward will be implementation of the commitments undertaken by the various parties. Intra-Afghan negotiations must now get under way as soon as possible. France will continue support Afghanistan as it seeks lasting peace, which must translate into the full implementation of the commitments made by the Taliban to reducing violence and fighting terrorism. Moreover, it will also mean — and this is indispensable — safeguarding and building on all the gains achieved since 2001 in terms of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, in particular women's and minority rights, as the resolution we have just adopted recalls.

In that regard, it is crucial to ensure inclusive representation in the intra-Afghan talks that guarantees the participation of women. There can be no lasting peace if half the population is not represented at the negotiating table. I would like, in that regard, to welcome the initiative of the Permanent Representatives of Afghanistan of the United Kingdom, Mrs. Adela Raz and Ms. Karen Pierce, to establish a Group of Friends

of Women in Afghanistan, which met this morning to underscore the essential role of women in the peace process, in keeping with the women and peace and security agenda, whose twentieth anniversary we mark this year. The participation of women must be effective, duly seated at negotiating table on all matters under discussion.

The concept of an Afghan-led peace process is more relevant than ever, and the international community must stand ready to support Afghan efforts in that regard. France will play its role and calls on all countries in the region to actively and unambiguously support the stabilization of Afghanistan and help achieve lasting peace in the country.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the essential role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Mr. Auväärt (Estonia): I echo the condolences expressed by the representative of Germany.

We thank the United States and the co-facilitators for all their hard work.

With regard to the current situation in Afghanistan, we believe that resolution 2513 (2020) is well-balanced overall and highlights the main views of the Security Council. It is now more essential than ever for the Council to voice its full support to Afghanistan so that President Ghani may form an inclusive Government acceptable to all.

Like previous speakers, we also oppose any action to establish a parallel Government and any illegal use of force to resolve political differences. We call for a sustained reduction of violence in order to create an environment conducive to intra-Afghan negotiations. In that regard, the elements of conditionality to the Taliban reflected in the resolution just adopted are very important.

We consider the events in Doha and Kabul on 29 February as important first steps towards beginning the intra-Afghan negotiations and ending the conflict. The only way towards a political settlement and a permanent ceasefire is through inclusive negotiations. We stress that the achievements guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution in ensuring fundamental freedoms and human rights, particularly those of women and children, are inalienable and should be underscored in the future intra-Afghan negotiations. Today's meeting

of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan was a useful.

Finally, considering the important time ahead in Afghanistan, Estonia recognizes the active role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in supporting Afghanistan on the path towards peace and security is of the utmost importance.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium voted in favour of resolution 2513 (2020), on the situation in Afghanistan, and welcomes its unanimous adoption. We commend the United States of America and all members of the Security Council for their close cooperation, which led us to this result. Today's resolution sends an important and strong signal of the Security Council's commitment to all the parties in Afghanistan.

We welcome the recent peace and reconciliation efforts. What we expect now is a prompt start to the intra-Afghan dialogue through negotiating teams that are diverse and inclusive, and the conclusion of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire agreement to reduce the number of civilian casualties. The civilian toll of this conflict, including on children, is tragic. We further remind all parties that any agreement must protect the rights of women as of the entire Afghan people.

I shall conclude by reiterating Belgium's support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Afghan people. At this vital juncture for Afghanistan, it is crucial that the United Nations play a strong role.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam welcomes the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban and the Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan. We thank the United States, the Government of Afghanistan and other parties for their efforts. We commend the Government of Qatar for having hosted the diplomatic talks, and thank the co-penholders, Germany and Indonesia, for their engagement and contributions to preparing the text of resolution 2513 (2020).

Given the historic momentum created by the Agreement, but also the fragile situation on the ground, Viet Nam believes that the Security Council should seize the opportunity to act. We therefore voted in favour

of resolution 2513 (2020). We very much hope that momentum of today will contribute to long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and benefit its people. We are extremely pleased to see the unified position of the Security Council, which will send a very strong and positive message to all parties in Afghanistan and to its people. We stand ready to assist the Afghan people as they endeavour for peace, stability and development.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): At the outset, Indonesia would like to thank the United States for drafting resolution 2513 (2020), which we just adapted.

We also join our co-penholder, Germany, in paying tribute to our sisterly nation, Qatar, for its role in hosting last week's historic event, with the presence and participation of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Marsudi.

Indonesia voted in favour of the resolution because of our view that the signing of the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban, as well as last month's Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, are important initial steps towards ending the long-standing conflict in the country.

In our view, this is a defining moment for Afghanistan, as all the parties, through these agreements, commit to pursuing Afghan-led and -owned intra-Afghan negotiations to secure a durable peace settlement ending to the conflict. Nonetheless, we know this will not be a short journey. But, with good faith from all in pursuing the common quest to end the war and reach an inclusive negotiated political settlement, peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan are attainable. The reduction of violence will be a sign of good faith and trust-building among the parties. In that regard, the international community is on the side of the people of Afghanistan and will support the peace process and ensure that women have their role in it. Enduring peace and nation-building will be elusive without an increased role for Afghan women and youth. Indonesia will continue to actively support capacity-building for Afghan women and their active participation in the peace process, as we have done in the past, bringing together Afghan women from all walks of life and ulemas, and fostering more dialogue.

It is also crucial that all gains achieved since 2001, including the protection of human rights, be

maintained. Afghanistan must no longer be used by terrorist groups to threaten others or their territories. We urge once again a reduction in violence in order to nurture conditions conducive to the process. We again emphasize the importance of stability and security. Accordingly, it is important to ensure stability after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

In conclusion, Mr. President, you may rest assured of Indonesia's support of this journey, including through the intra-Afghan negotiations. We will never turn our back on the people of Afghanistan. Our support is genuinely only for the people of Afghanistan, and we expect the international community to do the same.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): South Africa would like to join colleagues in commending the United States of America and the Taliban for reaching this agreement. We would especially like to thank the State of Qatar for making its resources and time available for that meeting. I would like to make three points.

First, indeed, one should make friends with one's enemies and make peace with them. Secondly, there is no substitute for negotiations and peaceful discussion and resolution. Thirdly, it is through the process that Afghanistan is to embark on now — a process among the Afghan parties themselves — that a homegrown, long-lasting solution will ultimately be forged. The Security Council needs to accompany that process towards a home-grown, intra-Afghan negotiation. All parties — the United States, Europe, Russia, China and neighbouring countries — should support that process, because in it lies a lasting solution for Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of China.

The situation in Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. At present, Afghanistan's peace process, political dialogue, its security situation and its economic development face grave challenges, as well as precious opportunities. The international community should work in synergy to help all parties in Afghanistan seize those opportunities and address those challenges.

China welcomes the Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan and the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban. The Afghan parties and the United States should work together to actively implement the Agreement. As part

of implementation, efforts must be made to ensure that the foreign troops stationed in Afghanistan are withdrawn in an orderly and responsible manner and that the situation in Afghanistan transitions smoothly in order to avoid a security vacuum and, in particular, to prevent the rise of terrorist organizations that might take advantage of such a situation. To that end, the capacity-building of the Afghan National Security Forces should continue to be supported.

China firmly supports a broad, inclusive and peaceful reconciliation process led and owned by the Afghans. We respect the Afghan people's independent determination of their country's future. The Afghan parties should start the intra-Afghan negotiations promptly to discuss together future political and security arrangements for the country that are acceptable to all parties and they should work in unison for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. We hope that the international community will respect the will of the Afghan people, continue to support reconciliation

among them and help Afghanistan achieve peace at an early date.

The international community must continue its efforts to lay a solid foundation for lasting peace in Afghanistan. To that end, it should focus on a peaceful reconstruction process, increase investment in infrastructure construction, promote regional connectivity, pay attention to the crucial role of countries and organizations of the region and inject momentum into Afghanistan's sustained development. China stands ready to work with the international community and to continue to make its contribution to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.