



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8848th meeting
Monday, 30 August 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Shringla	(India)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Estonia	Mr. Lipand
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger	Mr. Ousman
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Miguel
	Tunisia	Mr. Laouani
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2021/762, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and 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:

Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

Against:

None

Abstaining:

China, Russian Federation

The President: The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2593 (2021).

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Today's resolution 2593 (2021) establishes three clear expectations regarding the future of Afghanistan. First, the Security Council expects the Taliban to live up to its commitment to facilitating safe passage for Afghans and foreign nationals who want to leave Afghanistan, whether it be today, tomorrow or after 31 August. Consistent with the right to leave any country, including one's own, everybody must be allowed to safely leave Afghanistan for whatever

reason, whenever they want, by air or by land. That is of the utmost importance to us.

Sadly, the United States is grieving the loss of 13 young service members who made the ultimate sacrifice while diligently working to help people depart the country in safety. We are also mourning the hundreds of Afghans who were killed or injured during the attack outside of the Kabul airport. They went to the airport in search of a better life. The international community and those in Afghanistan must honour their memory by doing everything they can to continue to help those who wish to leave.

As of this morning, the United States has facilitated the evacuation of more than 122,000 American citizens, foreign nationals and at-risk Afghans out of Afghanistan since the end of July. Many have made that possible — our courageous service members, our tireless diplomats and dozens of countries, including many on the Security Council. Our allies and partners around the world have contributed to the airlift, serving as transit countries and some resettling Afghan refugees permanently. We are grateful to all who have joined forces in this remarkable effort.

Secondly, the resolution makes crystal clear the Security Council's enduring commitment to assisting those who remain in Afghanistan. It underscores that all parties need to facilitate humanitarian assistance and that humanitarian actors must be given full, safe and unhindered access to continue service delivery to those in need. The Afghan people are suffering not just from conflict and massive internal displacement, but also from a nationwide drought and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

United Nations agencies warn that humanitarian needs in the coming months will be vast. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that nearly a half million Afghans have been internally displaced this year alone. The World Food Programme estimates that, without food assistance, 14 million people in Afghanistan are at risk of starving. UNICEF has reported that COVID-19 vaccinations have dropped off by 80 per cent in recent weeks. Vital humanitarian assistance must flow to people in desperate need.

Thirdly, the resolution reiterates in strong terms several of the Council's enduring calls regarding the situation in Afghanistan. Today we have spoken once again on the urgent need to tackle the serious threat of

terrorism in Afghanistan. Last week's horrific attack in Kabul demonstrated the very real threat posed by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham-Khorasan Province. President Biden has made clear that we will do what is necessary to defend our security and our people. The entire international community is committed to ensuring that Afghanistan is never again a safe haven for terrorism.

Through this resolution, the Security Council has also reiterated the vital importance of respect for the rights of Afghanistan's people, including its women, girls and minorities. We will not waver on that point. Respect for the rights of all the people of Afghanistan goes hand in hand with the need for parties to engage in an inclusive negotiated settlement to bring stability to Afghanistan, which the Council also emphasizes through today's resolution.

As Afghanistan enters the next chapter, it is imperative that the international community remain unified and resolute, including in holding the Taliban accountable for its commitments. One such commitment, which the Taliban has made publicly and privately, is that those who wish to leave Afghanistan will be able to do so. Today's resolution signals just how seriously the Security Council takes that commitment, along with the commitment to allowing humanitarian aid to flow and to preventing terrorism. Through today's resolution, the Security Council has issued a set of calls that are clear, necessary and in the interest of Afghanistan's people. Moving forward, we must address the most pressing security threats, stand up for the rights of the Afghan people and lay the groundwork for a stable and inclusive Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan deserve nothing less.

Ms. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I welcome today's adoption of resolution 2593 (2021). I regret the fact that the text could not garner the support of all of the members of the Security Council. The eyes of all Afghans are on the Council. They expected clear support from the international community. This lack of unity is a disappointment for us and for them. However, I have no doubt that Council members all share the same primary objective — that of enabling the Afghan people to regain stability and security.

Nevertheless, we have adopted an important text that now needs to be implemented on the ground. As the security and humanitarian situations continue to deteriorate, the resolution that the Council just adopted

clearly sets out a series of expectations for the Taliban, the first of which concerns all Afghans who feel threatened and wish to leave the country. The Taliban has undertaken certain commitments in that regard, and we ask that it adhere to them.

The resolution calls for no effort to be spared in order to secure the airport and surrounding areas. Creating that safe and protected passage is a sine qua non so as to ensure that threatened Afghans who wish to leave can do so in total security, as well as to ensure that humanitarian assistance can reach all those who need it via both the airport and land borders. Indeed, that is the second requirement set in the resolution, namely, to guarantee the continuation of humanitarian operations. Every minute counts for the thousands of Afghans who are waiting for food and care. All parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The third requirement set out in resolution 2593 (2021) concerns the fight against terrorism. In that regard, I reiterate our firmest condemnation of the recent attacks. As we have said before in the Chamber, we will continue to fight tirelessly against that scourge. The Taliban have also undertaken commitments in that regard, which it must uphold. It must also contribute effectively to the fight against terrorism, in particular the financing of terrorism, in addition to severing all ties with Al-Qaida.

Finally, the resolution we just adopted serves to remind us all of our obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law, especially when it comes to the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and the rights of women. For women, the horizon is now considerably darker. It is our duty to restore their hope. The gains made in the past 20 years must be preserved. Afghan women have been on the front lines in recent years calling for their rights. Their full participation is essential for any political solution.

I would like to underscore that France reaffirms its expectations for the establishment, through negotiations, of a transitional Government that meets the aspirations of the Afghan people. Over the next few days, we look forward to seeing greater coordination of all efforts on the ground, in particular with the United Nations, to ensure that the resolution is put into practice.

I would like to applaud the essential role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I commend the courage of its teams, as well as those of all United Nations agencies, particularly

those in the humanitarian sphere. We will continue to support UNAMA's work and pay close attention to making sure that the Mission continues to benefit from a sufficiently robust mandate to pursue its fundamental role on the ground.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Today the Security Council has spoken clearly on the situation in Afghanistan and has set out its minimum expectations of the Taliban.

First, the immediate priority is to ensure that all those who wish to leave Afghanistan can do so safely. We have been clear that the Taliban must adhere to its own stated commitments to ensure safe passage beyond 31 August.

Secondly, Afghanistan can never again become a safe haven for terrorists. We have unequivocally condemned the attack on Kabul airport last week, and we reiterate our condolences and sympathy to the bereaved and injured. A coordinated approach will be vital to counter any extremist threat emanating from Afghanistan, and we call on the Taliban to uphold its commitments set out in the Doha agreement.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation requires urgent attention. We are coordinating closely with partners to strengthen efforts to support humanitarian assistance and ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian workers and organizations.

Finally, the gains of the past 20 years must be protected, and human rights, including those of women, children and minorities, must be safeguarded. Resolution 2593 (2021) lays down a marker that the international community will be watching closely.

Today's resolution is an important step towards a unified, international response to the situation in Afghanistan. We will continue to build on it to ensure that the Council holds the Taliban accountable as regards its commitments. The Taliban will be judged by the international community on the basis of its actions on the ground, not its words.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): We welcome the adoption today of the resolution on Afghanistan (resolution 2593 (2021)). I want to express our appreciation to France, the United Kingdom and the United States for their efforts in bringing it forward.

Ireland voted in favour of the resolution because we believe in the importance of the Security Council's voice

at this critical juncture for Afghanistan. We would, of course, have preferred to send a united message.

Our thoughts today are with those Afghans who are desperately trying to reach safety outside their homeland; with the women and children who know their fundamental rights are now at risk; and with all Afghans suffering from humanitarian need, including those who are hungry and without safe access to water. That is where our collective attention needs to be focused. We cannot look the other way. That is why the focus in the resolution on ensuring full, safe and unhindered access to the United Nations and all humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving and life-sustaining humanitarian aid is so important.

We also welcome the emphasis on upholding human rights and the clear and unequivocal reaffirmation of the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in any negotiated political settlement. We would of course have preferred stronger language on respect for human rights, particularly given the situation now faced by the women and girls of Afghanistan. On 19 August, Ireland and Mexico jointly urged the Council to place the utmost priority on women and girls. Ireland calls on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law.

I repeat what I said in the Chamber on 16 August: telling the international community what it wants to hear will fool no one (see S/PV.8834). We have noted the public statement by the Taliban. We will judge the Taliban by its actions, and not by its words.

Right now, the international community must continue to demand that all those who need to leave Afghanistan — whether they be Afghans or foreign nationals — be free to do so in a safe, secure and orderly way. We reiterate our firm view that such access at any air or land crossing must be without preconditions.

Ireland will not be found wanting in our determination to work alongside fellow Security Council members to ensure that we maintain laser focus on the situation in Afghanistan, including as Ireland assumes the Council presidency for the month of September.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation firmly condemns the terrorist attacks that took place on 26 August near Kabul airport, killing hundreds of people. We express

our condolences to the friends and families of the victims, and we wish those injured a swift recovery.

Meanwhile, we had to abstain in the voting on the resolution on Afghanistan (resolution 2593 (2021)). We did so because the authors of the text ignored our principled concerns.

First, despite the fact that the resolution was proposed against the backdrop of a terrible terrorist attack, the authors categorically refused to mention internationally recognized terrorist organizations — the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement — in the paragraph on counter-terrorism. We see this as a reluctance to acknowledge the obvious and a desire to divide terrorists into “ours and theirs”, that is, to downplay the terrorist threat coming from those groups.

Secondly, during the negotiations we underscored the unacceptability of the negative impacts on the Afghan economy of the evacuation of qualified Afghan specialists. Given that brain drain, the country will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Those elements, which are important to the Afghan people, were not reflected in the text.

Thirdly, the authors ignored our proposals to include in the document references to the harmful influence of the freezing of Afghan financial assets on the economic and humanitarian situation in the country, as well as the vital need to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan strictly in accordance with the guiding principles of the United Nations as enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

We understand the reasons that motivated the authors to try to use the authority of the Security Council to adopt the resolution in this form and within such a tight time frame, but perhaps, if we had had more time, the result of the voting would have been different.

At the same time, we see here an attempt to shift the blame for the collapse of the 20-year presence of the United States and their allies in the region onto the Taliban and the countries in the region that will have to deal with the consequences of this long-term campaign. That irresponsible action on the part of the Western coalition and its attitude vis-à-vis the events in Afghanistan is not surprising given, among other things, the purely formal way in which NATO's International Security Assistance Force, which subsequently was

replaced by the Resolute Support training mission, reported to the Council.

For our part, the Russian Federation has consistently called for a peaceful, safe and prosperous Afghanistan on whose territory there would be no terrorist or drug threat. We will continue our support for the Afghan people with a view to achieving that goal.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): In the light of the uncertain developments in Afghanistan and the urgent and precarious security situation at Kabul airport, Estonia gave its support to resolution 2593 (2021) today.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating. Humanitarian organizations and the United Nations have committed to staying and to delivering relief and assistance, but they need unimpeded access and assurances that their staff and aid providers can work and deliver assistance without interference or threats to their safety. That includes the need for a functioning and secure airport in Kabul that enables people and goods to move as necessary.

Furthermore, although a lot about the situation in Afghanistan is currently unclear, the past two weeks have shown that there are many aspects on which there is agreement. I would highlight four: we all have called for strengthened efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan; we have all acknowledged that for peace to be sustainable and inclusive, a negotiated political settlement must be reached, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women; we have together underscored the importance of adherence to international norms and standards on human rights, in particular for women, children and minorities; and we all have reaffirmed the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan.

With that in mind, I want to simply conclude that we look forward to building upon those aspects, in the interest of all the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The domestic situation in Afghanistan has undergone fundamental changes. In the light of the developments on the ground, the Security Council has held intensive consultations with the aim of finding an effective solution that would help Afghanistan restore peace, stability and order, in line with the general expectations of the international community.

At the same time, given the fragile and sensitive situation in the country as well as the many looming

uncertainties, any action taken by the Security Council should help ease rather than intensify tensions and conflict, so that Afghanistan can make a smooth transition rather than relapse into turmoil.

The countries concerned circulated the draft resolution last Friday evening, demanding that action be taken on Monday. China has serious doubts about the necessity and urgency of the adoption of resolution 2593 (2021) and about the balance of its content. Nonetheless, China still participated constructively in the consultations and put forward important and reasonable amendments together with Russia. Unfortunately, our amendments were not fully adopted.

China has always been opposed to a sponsor's imposing or forcibly pushing a draft resolution. Based on the aforementioned considerations, China abstained in the voting on the resolution.

The recent chaos in Afghanistan is directly related to the hasty and disorderly withdrawal of foreign troops. We hope that the countries concerned will realize that the withdrawal does not mean an end of their responsibility but the beginning of a process of reflection and correction.

The countries concerned should learn lessons from this; truly respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan; and genuinely respect the right of the Afghan people to determine their own future. It is hoped that the countries concerned will effectively change their wrong-minded practice of imposing their own will on others and put an end to the hegemonic practice of imposing pressures and sanctions or even using force at every turn.

Those countries should be responsible for what they have done in the past 20 years and fulfil their commitments to the peaceful rebuilding of Afghanistan. They cannot claim to care about the Afghan people's welfare while imposing unilateral sanctions or claim to support accelerated economic and social development in the country while seizing and freezing Afghans' overseas assets.

They have left an immense catastrophe in their wake in Afghanistan - one that they created - shifting the blame and responsibility to neighbouring countries and the Security Council. The actions of foreign troops in Afghanistan over the past 20 years, including the criminal activities carried out by the United States and Australian forces involving the indiscriminate killing

of civilians, must not be glossed over and must continue to be investigated.

The United States' recent retaliatory attack on the Islamic State resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. We call on the United States to refrain from indiscriminately attacking or bombing civilian-populated areas in Afghanistan.

In the face of the fundamental changes in the domestic situation in Afghanistan, the international community must engage with the Taliban and actively provide it with guidance. The international community should provide Afghanistan with urgently needed assistance with respect to the economy, livelihoods and humanitarian needs in order to help the new authorities preserve the normal functioning of Government institutions as well as public order and stability, address the issues of currency depreciation and price increases, and embark on the path of peaceful reconstruction as soon as possible.

China has always attached great importance to Afghanistan's fight against terrorism. We strongly condemn the recent terrorist attack in Kabul. That terrorist attack once again proved that the war in Afghanistan did not achieve the goal of eliminating terrorist forces in Afghanistan. The hasty withdrawal of foreign troops is likely to have provided opportunities for various terrorist organizations to make a comeback. We hope that the security of Kabul airport can be guaranteed, that the evacuation of the relevant personnel can proceed smoothly and that all parties concerned can strengthen their coordination so as to jointly prevent fresh terrorist attacks.

Afghanistan must never again become the source of or a hotbed of terrorism. That is the bottom line that the country must adhere to in any future political settlement. It is hoped that the Taliban will honestly fulfil its commitments and completely cut off ties with all terrorist organizations.

In resolutely cracking down on international terrorist forces such as the Islamic State, Al-Qaida and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, countries should follow international law and Security Council resolutions so as to prevent any chaos caused by terrorists gathering in Afghanistan. On counter-terrorism issues, there must be no double standards or selective approaches.

The mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will expire on 17 September. China looks forward to continuing to engage in constructive consultations with members of the Security Council and to conducting in-depth discussions with a view to achieving a broad consensus on such issues as the United Nations presence in Afghanistan in the next phase. Our objective is to help the country achieve peace and reconciliation and start its reconstruction process.

As a member of the Security Council and one of Afghanistan's important neighbours, China has all along followed the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and always pursued a friendly policy for all Afghan people. We are ready to continue to develop good-neighbourly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan and play a constructive role in the peaceful reconstruction of the country.

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

Before adjourning the meeting, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Security Council for the month of August, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of India to the members of the Council — and to the Council's secretariat — for all the support they have extended to us during the month.

It has indeed been a busy month — and one in which we have rallied to seek consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it without the hard work, support and cooperation of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, including the technical support personnel, conference service officers, interpreters, translators, verbatim reporters and security personnel.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Ireland good luck in the month of September.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.