



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8862nd meeting

Friday, 17 September 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Byrne Nason	(Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Sliman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

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

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/2021/804, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Estonia and Norway.

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

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:

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

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2596 (2021).

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): On behalf of the co-penholders — Estonia and Norway — allow me to thank all Security Council members for constructively engaging in the process leading to today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2596 (2021), which extends the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). With this, the Council sends a unified message that we stand behind the United Nations efforts in Afghanistan going forward.

The resolution ensures that UNAMA's broad and flexible mandate can continue, including its mandate

to monitor and report on human rights, the protection of civilians and violations and abuses against children, facilitate and improve humanitarian access and support the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all levels of decision-making.

The situation on the ground is fluid, and these tasks may now face additional challenges. But if anything, that makes them more important than ever.

We are encouraged by the Council's united decision to extend the UNAMA mandate. This is a vital step for the United Nations to stay and deliver at this critical time. We, the international community, must be there for the people of Afghanistan in every way that we can, not only in words but also in actions. With more than 18 million people in need, we must scale up and ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We must insist on safe and unimpeded access for both female and male humanitarian staff to carry out impartial humanitarian activities for all affected communities across Afghanistan.

Going forward, we will do our utmost to secure continued, united support from the Security Council for the work of UNAMA and the people of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan both need and deserve the full support of the international community.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): The Security Council has taken an important step to underscore the importance of the United Nations work in Afghanistan during this critical moment for the country. The United Nations has worked in Afghanistan since 1948. By extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today, we demonstrate this body's commitment to the United Nations vital role in supporting the Afghan people.

By extending UNAMA's work as assigned in resolution 2543 (2020), we are emphasizing the importance of the United Nations continued commitment to human rights, civilian and child protection, humanitarian assistance coordination and countless other functions, which will be fundamental to the future of Afghanistan. This text also underscores the United Nations role in advancing the human rights of Afghan women, children and members of minority groups.

Resolution 2596 (2021) recognizes that United Nations staff are working in deteriorating security

conditions throughout the country. We remain deeply concerned about the safety and security of UNAMA's national staff. The United Nations must protect them and their families.

As the single-largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, the United States is committed to UNAMA's coordination function with partners on the ground providing food, protection, shelter and essential healthcare, water, sanitation, hygiene services and so much more vital humanitarian aid to Afghans.

Over the course of this six-month extension, we look forward to receiving reports from the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, particularly for its vulnerable groups, and the United Nations own recommendations about what their role and future in Afghanistan will look like.

We recognize that the current situation in Afghanistan is fluid and dynamic. But the United Nations role must always work to serve Afghans and advance their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will stand by them in that goal.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in support of this technical resolution 2596 (2021) extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for six months, until 17 March 2022.

We support the activities of UNAMA to coordinate international assistance in Afghanistan. We expect that the evacuated Mission staff will be able to return to Kabul in the near future. We view positively the signals from the Afghan authorities about their readiness to continue to interact with the United Nations and ensure the safety of United Nations and the inviolability of its premises.

We note the work carried out by the co-penholders on the Afghanistan file, which they conducted in a very short time, as well as their desire to seek compromise in order to achieve consensus. That collaborative effort resulted in the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, which will enable the mission to carry out its activities on the ground in a timely manner.

At the same time, we regret that, due to the positions taken by some members of the Security Council, the final version of this resolution does not take into account an objective assessment of the threats in Afghanistan

from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or the long-standing drug problem, which continue to be lingering challenges not only for the country but for the region as a whole and beyond.

We emphasize that neutralizing those threats is key to maintaining stability and security in the region; ignoring or downplaying them is unacceptable. We expect that those issues will be objectively reflected in the Secretary-General's report to be presented to the Security Council in January next year in accordance with today's resolution.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the authors of resolution 2596 (2021) — Norway and Estonia. Mexico supports and recognizes the fundamental work carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). For that reason, it is important that the Security Council has renewed its mandate for six months.

As we have reiterated, the circumstances facing the civilian population in Afghanistan today make the determined support of the United Nations in facing humanitarian needs perhaps more necessary than ever before. We recognize the critical work carried out by UNAMA's staff in Afghanistan, in a particularly complex context.

Unrestricted respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians, is essential and inescapable given the serious security situation that has taken shape in Afghanistan. That is why Mexico insisted on an explicit mention of that subject. We are surprised that one was not included.

Regarding the request to the Secretary-General to present a report with strategic and operational recommendations based on political, social and security developments, Mexico understands and assumes that it must inevitably include an analysis of the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Today the Security Council has sent a strong signal of support for the United Nations ongoing work in Afghanistan. The role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the work of the wider United Nations is needed now more than ever, as we enter an uncertain period that requires the international community to speak with a clear and unified voice.

We reiterate our thanks for the continued efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and her team and other United Nations actors on the ground in what are extremely challenging circumstances. They are playing a key role in coordinating desperately needed humanitarian aid and providing life-saving assistance to Afghans in need. We welcome the Taliban's recent assurances on humanitarian access and hope they will live up to the commitments they made in Doha.

Today's resolution 2596 (2021) reiterates the calls of resolution 2593 (2021) on ensuring that Afghanistan is never again safe haven for terrorism. The resolution also makes clear the Council's expectations on the establishment of an inclusive Government that upholds human rights and represents the country's diversity and all of its communities, including women. As we have said, we will calibrate our approach to the Taliban according to the actions they take. As we have said, we will calibrate our approach to the Taliban according to the actions it takes.

In conclusion, I would like to underline our concern about the safety and security of UNAMA staff. We are very concerned by reports that members of the Taliban have engaged in reprisals against United Nations staff throughout the country. We call on the Taliban to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law and respect the neutrality of all United Nations staff. We look forward to the Secretary-General's strategic and operational recommendations on the UNAMA mandate in January and to further detailed discussion with Council members then.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China supports the Security Council's unanimous adoption of the resolution on the technical extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and commends the determination of Special Representative Lyons and all the staff of UNAMA to continue their work in a challenging environment.

At the same time, we wish to reiterate that Afghanistan is currently at a critical stage of transitioning from a situation of turmoil to one of stability. The war in Afghanistan has come to an end, but its problems persist. Power politics, military interference and so-called democratic transformation are the root causes of those problems. The hasty exit of the United States and its allies has created new problems, generating further uncertainty in the country. We call on those countries

to learn profound lessons and effectively honour their responsibilities to rebuild Afghanistan, providing economic, livelihood and humanitarian assistance, instead of just shifting the blame and walking away.

Afghanistan has already established an interim Government, but its internal and external policies have not yet been finalized. The international community should respect Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, uphold the principle of an Afghan-owned and Afghan-owned process, and support the Afghan people in choosing independently their path of development. It should push Afghanistan to eventually form a broad-based, inclusive political architecture that will implement moderate and steady internal and external policies, ensuring friendly relations with its neighbours and respecting the basic rights and interests of its minorities, women and children.

There is a real risk that the forces of international terrorism can gather and grow in Afghanistan. The international community must continue to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation and fight all the forces of terrorism, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Al-Qaida. The Taliban has promised many times that it will not allow any forces to use the Afghan territory to undermine the security interests of its neighbours. We hope that the new authorities in Afghanistan will honour their promise, sever their ties with all terrorist groups, address both the root causes and the symptoms of this problem, and prevent the terrorist forces in Afghanistan from harming other parts of the world.

Currently, almost half the population of Afghanistan lives below the poverty line and 14 million people are facing a food crisis. The situation concerning the coronavirus disease is severe. China will provide emergency humanitarian assistance and vaccines to the people of Afghanistan. We call on the international community to extend a helping hand in assisting the people of Afghanistan to overcome these difficulties and to support the United Nations in playing a greater role in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Unilateral sanctions and the freezing of overseas assets have exacerbated Afghanistan's economic difficulties. We urge the relevant countries to lift their freezing of Afghan assets.

The President: I shall now make a statement as the representative of Ireland.

We welcome the adoption this morning of resolution 2596 (2021), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I want to express my appreciation to Estonia and Norway, as penholders, for their efforts to secure agreement on this text.

Today's resolution demonstrates the unanimous support of the Council for the vital work of UNAMA in supporting the people of Afghanistan. We welcome the recognition in the text that a sustainable future for Afghanistan can come only through the establishment of an inclusive and representative Government. The Council has also reaffirmed the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in any future political settlement.

I also welcome the emphasis we have placed on the responsibility of any future Government to uphold human rights, including for women, children and minorities.

In welcoming the adoption of today's resolution, we know that this text does not capture all of the issues facing Afghanistan at this time of upheaval. I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate the central importance of the upholding of Afghanistan's obligations under international, humanitarian, refugee and human rights laws. We also reiterate our call on all actors to ensure

full, safe and unhindered access to all humanitarian workers delivering vital aid in Afghanistan. This is particularly important for women humanitarian workers, who are facing challenges as they seek to undertake their life-saving and life-sustaining work. Ireland also reaffirms its strong commitment to the protection of civilians.

The resolution provides a clear and structured basis for the engagement of the Council and that of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan for the next six months. I will not tire of saying that we will judge the Taliban during this period by its actions, not by its words. During the period ahead, we will consider our next steps, including the parameters for future United Nations engagement.

Today's resolution is an important step, but it is but one step. Ireland will continue to place the rights and needs of the Afghan people, in particular women and girls, at the forefront of our engagement in the period ahead.

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 10.25 a.m.