



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

## 8997<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 17 March 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon . . . . .	Ms. Bongo
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
India . . . . .	Mr. Ravindran
Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Flynn
Kenya . . . . .	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. DeLaurentis

## Agenda

### The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2022/64)

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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/2022/64)

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2022/237, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Norway.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/64, 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:*

Albania, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

#### *Against:*

None

#### *Abstaining:*

Russian Federation

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The draft resolution received 14 in favour, no votes against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2626 (2022).

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

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): As penholder on Afghanistan and the mandate renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), allow me to thank all Council members for constructively engaging in the process leading to today's adoption of resolution 2626 (2022), renewing the mandate of the

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for one year.

The resolution sends a clear message that the Council stands firmly behind the continued support of the United Nations for the Afghan people as they face unprecedented challenges and uncertainty. The resolution ensures that UNAMA has a strong and robust mandate to promote inclusive political dialogue, monitor and report on human rights and continue to facilitate humanitarian and basic human needs assistance, as well as to engage with all Afghan actors — that includes the Taliban — on all those issues.

The resolution expresses particular concern about the situation for Afghan women and girls. It provides UNAMA with a strengthened mandate to monitor and report on violations, abuses and reprisals committed against women. As well as a strengthened mandate to support Afghan women's participation in dialogue and decision-making about their future and that of their country, the resolution also recognizes that children are disproportionately affected by the complex crisis in Afghanistan. It therefore tasks UNAMA to continue its crucial work to monitor and report on the protection of children.

Moreover, Afghanistan has experienced its worst drought in 27 years. While we are glad to have included an important reference to drought in the text, we are disappointed that we could not agree on the need for climate-related security risks to be included in UNAMA's analysis and reporting.

All the components in this renewed mandate for UNAMA will be crucial not only to responding to the immediate humanitarian and economic crisis, but also to supporting the Security Council's overarching goal of peace and stability in Afghanistan. We once again thank Council members for their valuable efforts to renew that mandate and extend our sincere thanks to the entire UNAMA team for their tireless work every day for the people of Afghanistan.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Norway for its hard work as penholder on resolution 2626 (2022).

Today the Council spoke with one voice in support of a robust United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) — to lead and coordinate urgent humanitarian efforts; to support the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls; and to

hold the Taliban to account on its commitments. It is disappointing that one Council member decided to abstain, just when UNAMA's work is more important than ever.

More than 20 million Afghan people need urgent assistance. For our part, the United Kingdom has doubled aid for Afghanistan this financial year to \$370 million. And on 31 March, the United Kingdom, Qatar, Germany and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will co-host a pledging conference to raise funds for the United Nations humanitarian response plan. We encourage Member States to respond generously. Today's adoption ensures that UNAMA will continue to play a key role in coordinating the United Nations response as it scales up across the board.

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, we are particularly concerned about reports of reprisals against former Government officials and attacks and intimidation against minority groups and civil society. We are also concerned about detentions and enforced disappearances, in breach of international norms. And although there has been a reduction in civilian casualties, the Taliban needs to demonstrate that extremist groups are no longer able to flourish in the country.

Let me be clear — the Taliban has a choice. The international community has made its expectations clear. We will base our approach on the actions the Taliban now takes.

UNAMA will play a key role in supporting the rights of all Afghans, promoting an inclusive society in which women and girls participate fully. We are watching closely to see if the Taliban meets its commitments that girls return to secondary school at the end of March.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to Special Representative Lyons and her team and reaffirm the United Kingdom's solidarity with the Afghan people.

**Mr. DeLaurentis** (United States of America): At the outset, the United States would like to commend Norway for the cooperative and constructive spirit with which it led the Security Council's negotiations on this text.

The Council's adoption of a new and robust mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) demonstrates the international community's enduring commitment to the people of Afghanistan and to the Organization's work in support

of them. This mandate empowers UNAMA to execute a variety of critical functions and serves as an advocate for Afghans throughout the country as they face a variety of urgent and mutually reinforcing challenges.

Through the adoption of resolution 2626 (2022), the Security Council has tasked UNAMA with facilitating dialogue among Afghan and international stakeholders that focuses on the promotion of inclusive, representative, participatory and responsive governance that serves the needs of all Afghans — regardless of their gender, ethnicity or identity.

UNAMA continues to have a robust human-rights mandate to monitor and report on the situation of women, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable or marginalized populations, as well as to advocate for those suffering from violence. We are also pleased the United Nations can continue its important child protection work, which aligns with the Council's efforts on children and armed conflict.

Critically, this mandate ensures that UNAMA can continue its vital work in support of women's and girls' empowerment, their ability to fully enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms and their full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels and stages of decision-making. In doing so, the Security Council has instructed UNAMA not just to advocate for Afghanistan's women, but to engage with them as vital partners in its work.

As the Security Council notes through the resolution we adopted today, enhancing respect for the rights of all Afghans is not only of critical importance in itself, but also contributes to the conditions essential to Afghanistan's development. Afghanistan cannot prosper if half the population is denied access to education or is not permitted to work. The United States is closely watching the Taliban's actions in order to ensure it meets its commitments to respecting the rights of women throughout the country.

This mandate also ensures that UNAMA will continue to contribute to efforts to address the widespread humanitarian emergency and ongoing economic crisis in Afghanistan. As the single-largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, the United States remains firmly committed to UNAMA's work to facilitate the efforts of partners on the ground that are providing vital humanitarian aid to Afghans.

In addition to our humanitarian contributions, we continue to support measures to help address the enormous challenges facing Afghanistan's economy, as shown by the steps we have taken recently to protect certain property of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, held in the United States for the benefit of the Afghan people. We welcome the opportunity to continue to engage closely with the United Nations to advocate for an Afghan Central Bank that is free from interference and meets global technical standards.

The Security Council took an important step today to underscore the importance of the Organization's continued work in Afghanistan as the country navigates a pivotal moment in its history.

**Mr. Flynn** (Ireland): Ireland welcomes the adoption this morning of resolution 2626 (2022), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Norway as penholder for its untiring efforts to secure an agreement on a new mandate for UNAMA. Today's vote demonstrates the resounding support of the Security Council for the vital work of UNAMA at this extremely difficult time for the people of Afghanistan.

Following the takeover in August by the Taliban, the Afghan people have seen their rights systematically eroded and their need for urgent humanitarian assistance increase exponentially. Ireland welcomes the clear mandate given to UNAMA to work in support of the Afghan people in order to help address these vital issues.

This resolution provides a clear and unambiguous foundation upon which UNAMA can engage with all relevant Afghan stakeholders in support of a better future for Afghanistan and its people — to coordinate urgent humanitarian aid and a response to basic human needs; to facilitate dialogue across Afghan society, with a focus on promoting inclusive, representative and participatory governance; to engage on the protection and promotion of human rights for all Afghans; to support and promote gender equality, women's empowerment and their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all dialogue and political processes; to support girls' empowerment and their right to education; to monitor and report on violations and abuses against children; and to promote stability and peace in Afghanistan for all its citizens.

At the same time, we regret that the Council could not agree to include a reference to climate insecurity at a time when, in Afghanistan, the link is becoming clearer.

The voices of Afghan women have been heard clearly in the Chamber over the past seven months — voices that carried the messages of millions of women and girls whose lives were upended by the Taliban takeover. I want to acknowledge the courageous activism of Afghan women in the face of intimidation, reprisals, disappearances and killings. They have strongly advocated for themselves and for their fellow citizens. Their efforts and their sacrifices have had an impact.

The members of the Security Council have now given UNAMA a mandate informed by those brave testimonies — one that will uphold their rights and the rights of all Afghan people. Now the hard work in this changed reality truly begins for UNAMA, but with the welcome surety of the support of the international community and the full support of the Council.

**Ms. Dautllari** (Albania): Albania, too, welcomes the adoption of resolution 2626 (2022), commends the efforts of Norway as a penholder for having prepared a strong and balanced text and congratulates the members of the Council on that achievement.

We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which we believe will bring sizable and tangible results to the people of Afghanistan. As previously expressed, Albania supports a robust mandate for UNAMA, which is playing a crucial role as a concrete bridge between the international community and all relevant stakeholders in Afghanistan. That clear and strong Mission with extended duties will focus on human rights, the rights of women and youth, assistance in the area of humanitarian aid delivery and other tasks. That gives us hope in terms of making the lives of all Afghans, especially women and girls, better and brighter.

Albania is of the opinion that this adopted text constitutes a positive initial step towards assisting Afghan society in returning to normality. Albania looks forward to the implementation of the resolution and strongly supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I thank Norway for having facilitated the negotiation of the text that

we have just adopted — resolution 2626 (2022). Brazil understands that the resolution reflects the concerns of most Council members and gives the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) a robust mandate that matches the responsibilities of the United Nations towards Afghanistan. I also thank the other Council members for their willingness to compromise in the name of a greater purpose.

The resolution sends a clear message to the Afghan people and the de facto authorities conveying the expectations of the international community for the future of their country. That includes respect for human rights, the protection of children and the dignified treatment of women and minorities.

By strengthening the Mission's political component, the new mandate consolidates UNAMA's role as a mediator. It also confirms the Mission's role as an agent for capacity-building and institution-strengthening in this transitional period.

We believe that cooperation with UNAMA offers an opportunity for Afghan stakeholders to better understand the concerns of the United Nations and its Member States. It is up to the relevant authorities to indicate which path they want to follow. We can only hope that their choice is for a stable, prosperous and dignified Afghanistan for all its citizens.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation was compelled to abstain in the voting on resolution 2626 (2022), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We did so for the following reasons.

From the beginning of the discussions on the draft, we tried to convey to colleagues on the Council the importance of achieving the agreement of the host country on the presence of the United Nations. That imperative was consistently taken into account in each extension of the mandate of the special political mission for many years. However, this time the reference to it met with opposition from those who for years have continued with their irresponsible politics in Afghanistan, not helping to resolve pressing issues and ultimately leaving the population to the whims of fate.

To our great regret, we continue to see stubborn ignorance of the new realities in the country and the promotion of irrelevant approaches. Ultimately, the entire responsibility for resolving the situation, as well

as the possible risks connected with it, falls wholly on UNAMA. Like in any other United Nations mission, there is a need to have a realistic objective. We wish the Mission every success, but we do not want to bear any responsibility if in the end it is not able to fulfil all the tasks that it faces. We would not want UNAMA to turn into a United Nations "mission impossible".

Support from the de facto authorities would allow the Mission to effectively fulfil its mandate and to achieve its objectives. Furthermore, those conditions would be a guarantee of the security of United Nations personnel, giving them the possibility of access to those regions that have been literally closed to them for seven months.

Finally, it is important to ensure more substantive cooperation between the special political mission and the Taliban authorities, which we regularly hear about during discussions of the situation in the Council. The fact that this is not mentioned in the resolution may jeopardize the effectiveness of the Mission in achieving its mandate and, on the whole, could undermine international efforts to stabilize the situation.

It is indeed UNAMA — as has repeatedly been mentioned by its Head, Deborah Lyons, in her statements — that can play a role in securing the potential of the new authorities to effectively resolve political and human rights issues, considering regional and cultural specifics and with an emphasis on best practice borrowed from regional neighbours, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The steps that have been taken towards cooperation with the Taliban leadership in that direction would enable us to lay the foundation for national reconciliation.

In our work on the text, we were guided first and foremost by the interests of the Afghan people. We thought that the primary objectives were to provide humanitarian assistance and prevent economic collapse. Where there is full paralysis of the banking system, a crisis in liquidity and restrictions, a quick resolution of those issues without any preconditions or provisos is extremely important.

We see UNAMA's objectives as effective cooperation in resolving that problem, facilitating the unfreezing of assets and working towards a sustainable post-conflict recovery in the country. We hope that the contacts between the Mission and donors will help to ensure significant progress on the issues of the future

self-reliance and independence of the Afghan economy from international financing.

On the whole, the key is maintaining stability, which would benefit everyone: Afghanistan itself, the region and the rest of the world. At the same time, we are grateful to the Norwegian penholders for their efforts to harmonize the position of Security Council members and for their rational approach to considering all the pressing issues I mentioned earlier. We also take note of the reflection in the resolution of the terrorist and drug threats.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since the withdrawal of foreign troops last August, Afghanistan has ushered in a critical phase of peaceful reconstruction. China supports the important role of the United Nations on the Afghan issue and welcomes the mandate renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to enable it to continue to provide assistance in achieving peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Helping Afghanistan emerge from its humanitarian and economic crisis is the most urgent task at present and should also be the most important work of UNAMA in the coming period. UNAMA should actively implement the mandate contained in resolution 2626 (2022), urge major donor countries to increase aid without political strings attached and help Afghanistan improve people's livelihoods. We expect UNAMA to assist Afghanistan in cooperating with international financial institutions to gradually activate Afghanistan's commercial and financial activities and promote economic and social development.

Resolution 2626 (2022) specifies that Afghan assets belong to the Afghan people, which reflects the common view of the international community. In line with the clear mandate from the Security Council, UNAMA should further play a coordinating role in promoting the unfreezing of assets in the country concerned. We call on the country concerned to expedite efforts to unconditionally return those assets to the Afghan people. We look forward to substantive progress in that regard before the next UNAMA briefing to the Council.

We have seen that the interim Afghan Government is actively engaging in foreign exchange and taking measures to respond to the expectations of the international community. The general direction is correct. The international community should adhere to the "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned"

principle, strengthen contacts with the interim Afghan Government and all other parties, actively guide and promote the establishment of an open and inclusive political structure and gradually restore order, the rule of law and economic development.

We should support Afghanistan in increasing investment in education and health, protecting the basic rights of all people, including women and children, combating terrorism in all its forms and developing friendly cooperation with other countries. This time, the Security Council reprioritized UNAMA's mandate in the light of the changing situation on the ground. As the situation is unfolding too fast and is filled with many uncertainties, it is not an easy task to ensure that the new mandate fits the latest developments, meets the real needs of the Afghan people and is practical and feasible to implement.

As penholder, Norway engaged in in-depth communication with Council members and made unremitting efforts towards building consensus. I would like to take this opportunity to express my special thanks to the delegation of Norway. At the same time, we must admit that we still have many doubts about whether the priorities set out in resolution 2626 (2022) are appropriate, whether the mandated tasks are generally balanced and whether they can play the expected role.

In a prudent manner, we should take stock of UNAMA's future work in a timely fashion and be ready to make new adjustments at any time. We hope that UNAMA will make full use of its existing resources, implement its mandate in an orderly and balanced manner and divide the work and coordinate with other United Nations agencies to improve its performance. While always respecting the sovereignty and leadership of Afghanistan, it is important to pay attention to the legitimate concerns of the interim Afghan Government and carry out the various tasks on the basis of mutual understanding and active communication.

At present, terrorists remain active in Afghanistan. UNAMA should therefore maintain communication with the interim Afghan Government and take the measures needed to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel.

For a long time, the neighbours of Afghanistan and countries of the region have actively supported Afghanistan in its peace, reconciliation and reconstruction process and made great efforts to

promote its peaceful development. China is making preparations for the third meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Neighbouring Countries of Afghanistan and is ready to promote efforts by countries of the region aimed at strengthening communication and coordination so as to create a favourable environment for stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan. We call upon the international community to keep its attention focused on, and maintain its input into, Afghanistan and let the Afghan people know that they have not been forgotten.

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

At the outset, I thank Norway for leading the consultations. I also thank all the members of the Security Council for their positive contributions in the course of the consultations.

The adoption of a new resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is an important step that falls within the efforts of the Council to deal with the situation in Afghanistan. The tasks adopted for UNAMA reflect the commitment of the international community to responding to the needs of the Afghan people, especially women and girls.

We express our deep concern about the continued escalation of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, as Afghans lack the financial liquidity to provide the necessary services. We are also concerned about significantly limiting the freedoms and rights of women and girls as well as the escalation of the terrorist threat.

In the light of those realities, we understand the importance of the adopted mandate, which allows the Mission to pursue its vital role in Afghanistan and to face several urgent challenges that fall within its mandate. Resolution 2626 (2022) will allow the Mission to support the efforts needed to achieve stability in Afghanistan and to put the country on the right track to realize a more sustainable future.

We welcome maintaining the role of the Mission in protecting the rights of women and girls as an essential pillar of its tasks, especially because discrimination against them continues. In that regard, we stress that it is important for the international community to pursue its efforts to improve the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan through effective, regular and sustainable coordination with all stakeholders.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, despite the tireless efforts of the United Nations in previous months, the current humanitarian needs are increasing significantly. We are nevertheless confident that the renewed mandate will allow the Mission to continue its role in coordinating the humanitarian response in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders present in Afghanistan.

We also emphasize the importance of political access in UNAMA's mandate. Such access will allow the Mission to enter into dialogue with the Taliban and convey the international community's messages on the importance of comprehensive governance. We also reiterate the importance of the role played by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is an important partner for Afghanistan and UNAMA alike, including in the cultural, religious and humanitarian fields.

In conclusion, the renewed mandate is part of our commitment to responding to the challenges in Afghanistan. The international community, especially the Security Council, should continue to focus on addressing Afghanistan's situation. The United Arab Emirates looks forward to continuing its support aimed at improving the security situation and achieving stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region.

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 10.35 a.m.*