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Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Geng Shuang	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
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	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mrs. Kamboj
	Ireland	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya	Mr. Ndung'u
	Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. Markus Potzel, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) for Afghanistan; and Ms. Lucy Morgan Edwards, independent researcher and author.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: People in Afghanistan continue to face extreme hardship and uncertainty. Let me share some numbers with the Security Council. Close to 19 million people are facing acute levels of food insecurity, including 6 million at risk of famine. More than half of the population, some 24 million people, need humanitarian assistance. An estimated 3 million children are acutely malnourished, including more than 1 million estimated to be suffering from the most severe, life-threatening level of malnutrition. Without specialized treatment, those children could die. The malnutrition crisis has been fuelled by recurrent droughts, including in 2021 the worst drought seen in three decades, whose effects are still lingering. Eight out of ten Afghans drink contaminated water, making them susceptible to repeated bouts of acute watery diarrhoea. Some 25 million people are now living in poverty and three quarters of people's income is spent on food. There has been a 50 per cent decline in households receiving remittances, unemployment could reach 40 per cent and inflation is rising owing to increased global prices, import constraints and currency depreciation.

Those relentless layers of crisis persist at a time when communities are already struggling. In June, a

5.9 magnitude earthquake affected more than 360,000 people living in high-intensity impact areas. Since July, heavy rains have led to massive flash floods across the country and indeed the region, killing and injuring hundreds of people and destroying thousands of homes and thousands of acres of crops. Afghanistan has also witnessed unprecedented levels of internal displacement and population movement. Some 5.8 million people remain in protracted internal displacement, requiring long-term solutions. Those are the figures. They are devastating and frankly difficult to comprehend. We worry that they will soon become worse. Once the cold weather sets in, food and fuel prices, which are already high, will skyrocket. Families will have to choose between feeding their children, sending them to school, taking them to a doctor when they fall sick or keeping them warm.

Afghanistan's problems are unfortunately neither new nor unique. Conflict, poverty, climate shocks and food insecurity have long been a sad reality for both Afghanistan and many other countries around the world. But let me outline what makes Afghanistan's current situation so critical.

First, large-scale development assistance has been halted for a year. Before the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan was already facing severe levels of food insecurity and malnutrition — levels that have, of course, further deteriorated since development aid was halted — affecting families everywhere, from rural communities to urban centres.

Secondly, the operating environment is extremely challenging. Engaging with the de facto authorities at national and subnational levels is labour intensive. There is no confidence in the domestic banking sector, which means that Afghanistan is heading into a severe liquidity crisis. International financial transactions are extremely hard owing to de-risking and the overcompliance of global banks. Humanitarians have brought in more than \$1 billion in cash to sustain programme delivery, but the liquidity and banking crisis continues to affect the delivery of assistance and the daily lives of Afghans. The humanitarian-exchange facility that we have discussed before, intended to temporarily and partially alleviate the liquidity issue, is still under negotiation and review by the de facto authorities.

Women and girls have been pushed to the sidelines, as we have also observed here in this Chamber. The meagre gains that the country had made to protect

women's rights have been quickly reversed. It has been more than a year since adolescent girls in Afghanistan last set foot inside a classroom. We should not need to explain in the twenty-first century why girls' education and women's empowerment are important — to girls and women, their communities, their countries and indeed all of us. Afghanistan is not just a humanitarian crisis. It is an economic crisis. It is a climate crisis. It is a hunger crisis. It is a financial crisis. But it is not a hopeless crisis.

Humanitarian organizations have done their utmost to provide the population in Afghanistan with a lifeline. Despite the many challenges that we have just been reviewing, United Nations agencies and non-governmental-organization partners have mounted an unprecedented response over the past year, reaching almost 23 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. We all expanded our humanitarian operations to reach affected communities in all 401 districts of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. That was possible because of a reduction in conflict, the introduction of cash shipments — the \$1 billion that I referred to — and the adoption of resolution 2615 (2021).

But of course humanitarian aid will never be able to replace the provision of system-wide services to 40 million people across the country and the need to support those services on a sustainable basis. Preserving basic service delivery alongside humanitarian assistance remains the only way to prevent a catastrophe even greater than what we have seen over the past many months. Poverty is deepening, the population is still growing and the de facto authorities have no budget to invest in their own future. I am sure it is clear to all of us that some development support has to be restarted. Humanitarian programming must and will continue, but the United Nations country team in Afghanistan, under the exceptional leadership of Ramiz Alakbarov, the resident and humanitarian coordinator, is developing its strategic framework for 2023 to address those broader basic human needs.

More than 70 per cent of Afghans live in rural areas. If agriculture and livestock production are not protected, millions of lives will be at risk and the country's capacity to produce food for its population imperilled. Hospitals and clinics at the district and national levels must be kept running and their staff employed and paid. Nutrition centres and preventive care must be maintained. Those are all the basic services to which we refer. Outreach to financial institutions to

mitigate against bank de-risking must be stepped up, and we must continue to work to ensure that girls and women are educated and employed and free to do so. The consequences of inaction on both the humanitarian and development fronts will be catastrophic and difficult to reverse.

Currently, the humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan has a gap of \$3.14 billion, with more than \$600 million urgently required to support priority winter-preparation activities, such as upgrades and repairs to shelter, the provision of warm clothes and blankets and so forth. We are up against time. Those particular contributions are needed within the next three months. In addition, \$154 million is needed to pre-position supplies, including food and livelihood assistance, before the winter weather cuts off access to certain areas. The humanitarian community has stayed and delivered for the people of Afghanistan and continues to do so. It is imperative that the international community, as reflected in the Security Council, continue to do the same.

Afghanistan's de facto authorities must also do their part. Bureaucratic interferences and procedures slow down humanitarian assistance when it is needed most. Female humanitarian aid workers — both national and international — must be allowed to work unhindered and in safety. And girls must be allowed to continue their education. There are many musts, but there are many opportunities. The path is clear and the dangers equally so. The people of Afghanistan are still there. They have shown incredible resilience over the decades and in this past year. Our task is to help them to prosper, flourish and be safe.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Potzel.

Mr. Potzel: The focus of the request for this briefing has been on the humanitarian and economic situation, and I fully endorse the comments by my colleague Mr. Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Since the takeover by the Taliban one year ago, the United Nations has remained exceptionally focused on addressing the humanitarian and human needs in Afghanistan. And, as Mr. Griffiths stated, the needs in Afghanistan continue to be significant. In just a few weeks I am scheduled to brief the Security Council on the overall situation in Afghanistan. In addition, the Security

Council will soon receive a report from the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan. But given this opportunity, I would like to provide a few thoughts on the current situation.

First, the current regime in Afghanistan has not been recognized by any member of the international community. The reasons for that are clear. The international community has norms regarding human rights — especially those of women and girls — representative governance and international collective security. Afghanistan is part of the international system, and the Taliban needs to adhere to its international obligations, but instead it is requesting recognition based on the fact that it has secured territorial control.

Secondly, there is no question that the sanctions on the Taliban have affected the Afghan economy since the Taliban took control. That has been documented in previous reports of the Secretary-General, who has also called for measures to allow the Afghan economy to breathe. They include efforts to facilitate access to assets belonging to the Afghan Central Bank for the benefit of the Afghan people, in addition to international assistance that supports basic human needs — in other words, interventions that go beyond merely providing humanitarian assistance and also support the resilience of Afghan communities. Humanitarian aid is not a long-term solution. Poverty reduction, as well as the delivery of basic goods and services, must ultimately rely on sustained economic growth. Donors have repeatedly stated that a resumption of economic cooperation hinges primarily on Taliban action to reverse regressive policies.

Thirdly, the Taliban de facto authorities are faced with a growing number of governance challenges. Ignoring persistent rumours of internal differences, the Taliban continues to present itself as a unified, cohesive governing entity. The Kabul-based Cabinet meets regularly, with outcomes of meetings reported publicly by the de facto authorities. However, the relationship between the Cabinet in Kabul and the Kandahar-based Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhunzada remains unclear. Practices governing by decree and through policy decisions, which are declared to be in line with Islam and Afghan traditions, have further curtailed fundamental human rights and freedoms, especially for women and girls, such as the 23 March announcement of the continued closure of secondary education for

girls. Today Afghanistan is the only country in the world that denies girls a full right to education.

The past three weeks have seen the highest number of civilian casualties in a one-month period since 15 August 2021, in a series of improvised explosive device attacks in Kabul, most of them claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Such attacks often target specific ethnic and religious groups. We are encouraged to hear that the de facto authorities are looking into what can be done to ensure greater security for those communities.

In July, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released its report entitled *Human Rights in Afghanistan*, covering the 10-month period between the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021 and 15 June of this year. It reflects the human rights priorities set out in the UNAMA mandate given by the Council. UNAMA documented human rights violations targeting specific groups, such as former Government officials and members of the Afghan national defence and security forces; individuals accused of affiliation with ISIL-KP and the National Resistance Front; civil society, media and women, including those accused of so-called moral crimes. UNAMA is particularly concerned about reports of action taken by de facto officials of the committee for the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice that has resulted in the verbal harassment, ill-treatment and arbitrary arrest of people as they go about their daily lives. Attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and media workers, combined with the impact of broader policy measures taken by the de facto authorities, have had a chilling effect on freedom of the media and civic activism. Last week's inaugural meeting of the Media Violation Commission is a welcome development, if indeed it works to prevent further restrictions on the free media space.

Lastly, I would like to commend the region's response to the current situation. Afghanistan's neighbours are the most immediately affected and sometimes feel threatened by events in Afghanistan. They have responded by convening meetings at the foreign minister level, first in Islamabad and then in Tehran and Beijing. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation has also mobilized, holding a special meeting at the Foreign Minister level in Islamabad last year. Last month, an International Conference on Afghanistan took place in Tashkent, with the participation of a high-level Taliban delegation. Discussions focused on the importance of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotic

efforts, economic and infrastructure development, inclusive governance and respect for human and civil rights, especially the rights of women, including the education of girls. It is especially important for the Taliban to understand that their neighbours, regional partners and the wider Islamic world want them to be part of the international community. Afghanistan is a landlocked country that depends on its neighbours for access to trade routes, but it is also a country with tremendous potential resources, which if properly harnessed could benefit Afghanistan, the region and the rest of the world.

As I have mentioned, I will have more to tell the Council a few weeks from now about the specific situation in the country. I believe that Afghanistan has not recovered from serious geopolitical shocks and interventions by foreign Powers. None of those interventions have achieved their designs. All of them have altered Afghanistan in ways that were unexpected and often unhelpful. Despite immense resources expended over the past few decades, Afghanistan remains significantly underdeveloped, vulnerable and in need of international assistance. United Nations officials and UNAMA, including through the Mission's 11 field offices across the country, continue to engage with the de facto authorities. They facilitate engagement between the de facto authorities, community leaders, religious groups, women and civil society, aimed at promoting inclusive and participatory governance and rights and freedoms.

The Taliban has been ambiguous about to the extent to which it wants to engage, which it predicates on alignment with its interpretation of sharia law. It is vital to move beyond an exchange of hardened positions towards sustained dialogue among the Taliban, other Afghan stakeholders, the wider region and the international community, dialogue that should place the interests of all Afghans at its centre. The future stability of Afghanistan rests on meeting the needs of the Afghan people, preserving their rights and reflecting the country's diversity in all governance structures. Let us all look ahead and together improve the situation rather than dwell on the past.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Potzel for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Morgan Edwards.

Ms. Morgan Edwards: A year after the United States withdrawal from Kabul, Afghanistan is verging

on complete economic collapse, with severe food insecurity, the rise of extremism and fragmentation of the social order evident. An informed insider who recently left Kabul told me last week that the situation was reverting to that of 1992 and 1993, when fighting among factions turned Kabul into a battle zone, with civilians caught in the middle.

The rapid disintegration of Afghanistan following the departure of the international community last year is no surprise. To those paying attention, the signs of how it would all end were already visible in 2001. Incredibly, the same Western media sirens, led by the BBC, which in September 2001 cheered on the military invasion of Afghanistan — telling a gullible Western public that it would lead to a liberal-style democracy — by August 2021 were feigning surprise that the Taliban had taken Kabul so quickly. But Taliban political influence in rural areas grew exponentially from 2003 in proportion to the broken promises, corruption, brutal militarized response and extrajudicial killing overseen by the West. The fact that the Taliban initially regained influence in rural areas by providing shadow governors to assist with the resolution of disputes and other services is testament to the carelessness of the West in Afghan matters. To know why that catastrophic failure occurred, it is necessary to understand what the main characteristics of the post-2001 Western intervention of Afghanistan encompassed. I list them as follows.

The first is impunity. The return and support of unindicted warlords by Western intelligence in October 2001 proved fatal to the State-building project. It led to knock-on effects on security, human rights and the rule of law. I witnessed the political rehabilitation of those allies of the West, newly empowered financially, at the 2002 emergency Loya Jirga, where I was an observer. CNN and the BBC trumpeted the Loya Jirga as a rebirth of Afghan democracy and obsessed over images of Afghan women putting ballots in boxes. Behind the scenes, the emergency Loya Jirga was overseen by the Central Intelligence Agency and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, with United States Ambassador Khalilzad publicly humiliating and preventing the participation of the beloved former king and enabling the participation of warlords and the intimidation of democratically elected candidates by armed groups and Northern Alliance internal security.

The corrosive issue of impunity and its effect on the rule of law and therefore legitimacy and the ability to build a State is an issue I focused on in my

doctoral research. The West failed to engage in such concepts, preferring instead to impose its own version of a so-called liberal democracy on Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the result was a corrupt network State. At a supranational level, the International Criminal Court has also failed to indict any parties for grave human rights abuses in Afghanistan, whether State or non-State actors.

The second factor was the failure to support human rights. Despite promises about a new era of human rights and women's rights, the West failed to adequately fund or support the newly created Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. It also failed to support work on transitional justice or even truth and reconciliation, South African-style. One example was the site of the Dasht-i-Leili killings of members of the Taliban who were captured by Commander Dostum in late 2001. Mass burial sites were left unprotected and the perpetrators unindicted because the crimes had been committed by a Western ally. That climate of impunity further emboldened warlords to return to their fiefdoms to engage in illicit activities such as the expropriation of property and children or drug trafficking, intimidation and murder.

By 2005, when I visited NATO countries' provincial reconstruction teams, I found that NATO commanders thought it appropriate to use local warlords to guard the perimeter fences of their bases. Meanwhile, local Afghans complained to me of the abuses committed by the same NATO allies and felt that their concerns were of no consequence to the West. People therefore turned to the Taliban.

Thirdly, there were military operations characterized by the killing of civilians, failed intelligence and war crimes. They included, for example, accusations that British special forces had committed extrajudicial killings of detainees in 2011, and that Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO had bombed civilian gatherings, including weddings. The United States' 22,000-pound mother of all bombs dropped on civilians in the Shinwar region of eastern Afghanistan in 2017 exemplified the inhumanity of the entire operation.

Fourthly, there was a failure to understand the legitimate local leadership and to work with the tribal system in rural areas. In that regard, I would add that starting with the Bonn Agreement, many important Pashtun tribal leaders who should have been invited to the state-building project at the very beginning were

excluded. I would also add that the peace plan, already prepared by Commander Abdul Haq, which had buy-in from all sides by 9/11, was well known in Washington and London before the events of 9/11. Abdul Haq, who was known as a brilliant commander during the 1980s war against the Soviet Union, warned that a bombing campaign by the West after 9/11 would change the political landscape overnight, disrupting the elaborate framework of cells that he had built up within the Taliban to topple the regime internally. I document that extensively in my book. Abdul Haq had also warned of the extremism being fostered in training camps and madrasas in the early 1990s.

Fifthly, with regard to corruption, as we were warned by former President Eisenhower, General Smedley Butler and, more recently, Julian Assange, the money-making nexus for the military-industrial complex that extorts the United States and European taxpayer has been catastrophic in Afghanistan. The human and financial costs of the war have been extensively documented by scholars at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University. They estimate financial spending of approximately \$8 trillion on the post-9/11 wars through fiscal year 2022, or \$300 million a day, paid by United States taxpayers to fund the war in Afghanistan. The human costs have included indiscriminate bombings of innocent civilians. They have also been documented by the Watson Institute, and, of course, the women and children whom we were supposed to be going into Afghanistan to assist have borne the brunt of those illegitimate bombing campaigns. The United States spent approximately \$148 billion on supposedly rebuilding Afghanistan. Yet the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has reported many instances in which money was spent on useless white-elephant projects that were simply unable to be used.

Such failures lead to the suspicion that the projects were more about recycling United States taxpayer money back to military-supply contractors or arms companies with links to the United States political class, from Unical to Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Halliburton and others. There was also the failure to involve Afghans in the design and implementation of projects generally, which of course has been disastrous for longer-term viability. Huge amounts were spent on training the Afghan National Army and police force, and a great deal focused on supplying them with United States military equipment, much of which, as

we know, was left behind in Afghanistan a year ago. Yet salaries were often embezzled by Government officials, and soldiers were poorly trained and unable to function without United States air power. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has documented the waste and failure of those schemes.

Lastly, there was the failure to support Afghan agriculture, which had always been the heart of the economy, with 80 per cent of the population previously involved, directly or indirectly. With land, water, labour and experience, the focus on agriculture would have been the easiest way to develop the economy, enable people to participate and become self-reliant and food-secure. One of my interlocutors says that today Afghanistan is 50 years behind what it used to be in the area of agriculture. It is importing citrus fruit from Pakistan, although citrus had previously been exported from Nangarhar, for example. With more than 90 per cent of Afghans today not having sufficient food, it is obvious that agriculture should have been a major focus. Indeed, when I worked for the World Food Programme (WFP) in the spring of 2002, I was shocked to see that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had just a handful of international staff on site. It was perhaps two people, compared to the hundreds that the WFP was employing at the time. The focus of the WFP on bringing United States wheat into Afghanistan has consequently also enabled farmers to grow more opium, since their markets for wheat have been very distorted.

These factors indicate extreme deception about what was really at the heart of the 20-year Western occupation of Afghanistan and what prompted the sudden withdrawal. Far from building a stable State that could never again be host to terrorism, it appears that the entire project was more about recycling United States and NATO countries' taxpayer money into the coffers of private business interests. When I published my book in 2011, I naively asked an American former intelligence officer based in Geneva how the United States had managed to fail so miserably in Afghanistan. His response was, "Just follow the money. To some people, the whole project has been a staggering success". He urged me to look at the writings of Frida Berrigan on the military-industrial complex. Ten years later, with the 20 August 2021 withdrawal and Afghanistan left as a hulking shell of itself in economic collapse, with the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and renewed insecurity, his words ring very true today.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Morgan Edwards for her briefing.

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

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. We listened closely to Deputy Special Representative Markus Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards, who worked in the country for many years in various areas and saw first-hand the years of intervention by the United States and NATO.

Tomorrow will mark exactly one year since the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. On 30 August 2021, the whole world saw the images of a United States Boeing aircraft leaving Kabul with panicked ordinary Afghans clinging to its landing gear. We all remember well that that was preceded by a major internal political change that ushered in a new phase. After 20 years of bloody war, the former President Ashraf Ghani shamefully fled Kabul, followed by many other Afghan actors. The Taliban's return to power in the country was totally unexpected, including by those who had recently been talking up the level of combat effectiveness of the highly trained Afghan forces.

Today's meeting could provide a good opportunity to discuss the outcome and consequences of the ignominious 20-year campaign in Afghanistan, which cost the lives of the many thousands of ordinary Afghans and American soldiers, resulted in hundreds of thousands of injuries and cost \$2 trillion that could have been spent on good causes. However, we harbour no illusions in that regard. Over the past 12 months, we have all seen Washington hypocritically try to shift the responsibility for the failure of its 20-year war and the current deteriorating situation onto the current authorities. At the same time, as we recall, in trying to cast the United States in a positive light, President Joe Biden announced that it had achieved all its goals in Afghanistan.

I should remind the Council that the Americans went into Afghanistan on a specific mission, to counter terrorism. In fact, their arrival only strengthened its status as a centre of terrorism and drug production and distribution. Together with the presence of Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) emerged and firmly strengthened

its influence in Afghanistan, which for all practical purposes was controlled by Americans and Western allies. We have been talking about this since 2017, but our Western partners have acknowledged it only recently. And yet the potential of ISIS fighters has been steadily increasing all this time, including thanks to financial support from abroad and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters with combat experience from fighting in other crises around the world.

The increase in drug production over these years has also reached an unprecedented level. The country literally turned into a breeding ground for terrorism and drugs before our very eyes, and the effective fight against those threats — as our Western colleagues claimed — is the reason that the United States and NATO retained their presence there for many years.

All our calls to highlight the growing threat from ISIS and Afghanistan came up against the clear desire of Western colleagues to downplay its scope, or even sweep the topic under the rug. At the same time, the United States had many opportunities and time, including the material, military and technical means, to eliminate terrorists in Afghanistan. The foreign military contingents that were in the country, however, hypocritically continued to pretend that the drug problem did not exist, even though the flow of Afghan heroin at that time had already reached many Western European countries. Over these years, there has been no answer to the repeated questions in the Chamber about unidentified helicopters transporting ISIS fighters and their weapons to various parts of the country, including the north, under conditions of full control over the situation by coalition forces, as we were assured.

On the contrary, during all these years we have constantly heard from Western colleagues about efforts to strengthen the combat-ready capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces, the effectiveness of their training and control over the security situation.

Against that backdrop, the country's socioeconomic situation has remained dire. Incidentally, during the Soviet years more than 140 enterprises were built in the country, including industrial ones. They became the backbone of the economy and laid a solid foundation for the independent sustainable development of the country. In addition, schools were built, student exchanges were carried out and refresher courses were held. How many enterprises were built or restored during the 20 years of NATO's presence in country? The answer is zero.

On the contrary, billions in investments have lined the pockets of corrupt American puppets. Ultimately, the country has become dependent on external assistance without any prospects for independent development. Particular attention should be given to the protection of the civilian population. To our Western colleagues, who prefer, of late, to reduce any discussion about Afghanistan to the subject of human rights violations, we would like to recall the irresponsible actions of the American and NATO forces, which regularly carried out indiscriminate air strikes against ordinary Afghans — not to mention the night raids and extrajudicial killings of civilians, including women and children.

Unfortunately, despite the reports of various independent non-governmental organizations about those monstrous military crimes to try to achieve justice and to hold accountable the guilty parties, investigations were never carried out due to the gross blackmail by Washington. Any efforts to that end by the International Criminal Court were roundly quashed by the United States under threat of sanctions. Incidentally, no one was surprised by that level of cynicism because our American colleagues acted in the same way when it came to war crimes committed by the United States in Iraq.

While sponsoring the corrupt Ghani regime, the United States held separate negotiations with the Taliban behind the back of the Afghan people. That led to the signing of a deal for the withdrawal of forces from the country. Ultimately, the people of Afghanistan, who our American colleagues have repeatedly told us they were there to protect, were abandoned to their fate and left alone to face devastation, poverty, terrorism, hunger and other challenges.

The widespread humanitarian and economic crisis in the country is one of the most horrendous consequences of that military intervention. Many experts estimate that the current humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan might result in more deaths than resulted in 20 years of war. However, instead of acknowledging their mistakes, supporting the reconstruction of the country and paying reparations, the United States and its allies plan to solve the Afghan problem in the usual way. Using politically correct language, they simply blocked Afghan national financial resources and disconnected the banking system from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, pushing poor Afghans to the brink of survival and forcing many of

them to sell their organs and their children to somehow make ends meet.

Despite appeals from United Nations humanitarian agencies, human rights organizations and Afghans themselves, the United States continues to illegally retain the country's foreign assets under various pretexts of human rights violations and the need to pay for the 9/11 attacks, which the Afghan people had nothing to do with. That irresponsible behaviour by the Western coalition and its attitude towards what is happening in Afghanistan are not surprising, considering how the former NATO military mission, the International Security Assistance Force, was formally reported to the Security Council and later replaced by the Resolute Support Mission.

Against that backdrop, it is hypocritical for our Western colleagues to try to continue to conduct dialogue with the de facto authorities using the language of ultimatums and the sanctions mallet and threatening to use various other means of pressure, including limiting opportunities to effectively address pressing issues of peace and stability with the participation of those in the region. We also see attempts to manipulate humanitarian assistance and support by demanding that the new Afghan authorities first rectify the internal political situation and address the challenges. Fiery statements about the importance of resolving the question of human rights as a precondition for everything else do not hold water. I would like to ask my colleagues — is it not a human rights violation that women and children are dying because of the situation resulting from their inaction?

We have repeatedly said that stability in Afghanistan is key to peace and stability in the region and beyond. Russia has consistently pursued a swift political settlement and national reconciliation in the country. We continue to believe that the Afghans themselves must resolve those issues. For us, what is essential is the restoration, development and prosperity of an independent Afghanistan that is free from the threats of terrorism and drugs. We pay particular attention to the issue of political inclusivity and respect for human rights, including those of women and girls. Our efforts are aimed at achieving all those objectives, both through bilateral contacts with the de facto authorities and with other Afghans, as well as through the Moscow format, meetings of regional neighbours and the regional organizations — the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization. We are also providing active humanitarian assistance to the brotherly Afghan people.

We are fully aware of the new realities that have emerged in Afghanistan. We wish to stress that we continue to advocate the need for the international community to engage constructively with the Taliban. We believe that it is through such dialogue that we will be able to effectively meet the challenges of political inclusiveness, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics and to uphold human rights, including those of women and girls. However, we are not willing to accept the attempts of our Western colleagues to simply turn the page of history in Afghanistan, shifting all the blame onto the Taliban and starting with a clean slate, as though the past 20 years had never occurred.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

Since the Taliban took power by force in Afghanistan, Norway's message has been clear — the Taliban will be judged not by their words, but by their actions. So far, we have been deeply disappointed. The immediate worsening of the humanitarian and economic situation has disproportionately affected women and girls. And the decision by the Taliban to ban girls from secondary education; restrict women's autonomy, access to employment and freedom of movement; and dissolve the institutions dedicated to promoting their rights, have had further detrimental impact on Afghanistan's ability to stabilize and recover.

We reiterate the united demand from the Security Council — the Taliban must swiftly lift those restrictions on Afghan women and girls. We commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for its thorough report entitled *Human Rights in Afghanistan — 15 August 2021 to 15 June 2022*, published in July, and the substantial engagement with the de facto authorities in that work. The report documents an alarming number of human rights abuses attributed to the de facto authorities, including against journalists, other media workers and human rights defenders.

When taking power, the Taliban became responsible for the security and welfare of the Afghan people, and it has not delivered. Millions of Afghans need humanitarian assistance. Earthquakes, drought, flooding, food insecurity and lack of access to basic services are adding to the Afghan people's plight, and

winter is quickly approaching. The restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women's autonomy, employment and movement impede the ability of women to both deliver and receive life-saving assistance or generate income with which to pay for food and basic services. The knock-on effect on the population as a whole is dramatic.

Norway is concerned by continued reports of interference, discrimination and corruption hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, in particular internally displaced persons, minorities and households headed by women. Children continue to be the most vulnerable. As documented in the recent report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict (S/2022/493), Afghanistan is among the countries with the highest numbers of grave violations against children.

There is also an increasing risk of terrorist groups strengthening their foothold in Afghanistan. Frequent terrorist attacks continue to target and kill civilians. The expectations of the Security Council are clear: Afghan territory must not be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter or train terrorists.

The people of Afghanistan deserve sustainable peace. They deserve a legitimate Government that represents all Afghans. Sustainable peace means not just the end of violence or war. It also requires an end to human rights abuses and discrimination.

Norway remains committed to the people of Afghanistan. We will continue to provide support for the basic human needs of Afghans, and we will do our utmost to help address the economic crisis. To do so we must continue to engage and meet with the de facto authorities. We must hold them to their commitments. They bear the main responsibility of protecting the civilian population and responding to the humanitarian and economic crisis in Afghanistan.

Ms. Bongo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths and the Deputy Special Representative Markus Potzel for their briefings. We followed with interest the briefing by Ms. Morgan Edwards.

The situation in Afghanistan is of concern to my country out of solidarity with the Afghan people, but also because of its ramifications and impact on peace and security throughout the region and beyond. As you know, Mr. President, one year after the Taliban took

power, the lack of political inclusiveness continues to be a serious issue. The diversity of the Afghan people is poorly represented, and ethnic, geographic, political and social minorities, including women, are kept at the periphery of the political process. The recurrence of violations of fundamental freedoms, the intensification of attacks by armed groups opposed to the Taliban, the multiplication of terrorist acts, notably by Al-Qaida and Da'esh, and the expansion of drug trafficking, present a terrifying backdrop that calls for a concerted response by the international community commensurate with the distress of the Afghan people.

We take this opportunity to express our deep concern over the series of explosions that have killed and injured 250 people this month and strongly condemn the 17 August attack on the Abu Bakar Mosque in Kabul. We call on the de facto authorities to intensify their efforts aimed at combating terrorism and protecting the population, which is their responsibility.

Stabilizing Afghanistan requires confidence-building, the promotion of transparent and participatory governance, and the establishment of a structured political dialogue between the Taliban and all Afghan stakeholders. As the impact and positive role of women in society is well documented, we urge the de facto authorities to reverse their restrictions on this important segment of the population.

For the past year, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has been exacerbated by the paralysis of banking institutions, the weight of international sanctions, the coronavirus pandemic and the effects of climate change, notably through severe drought and flooding. Nearly 5 million people have been displaced within the country. Women and children are, once again, the first victims of this triple economic, environmental and humanitarian crisis, owing to their exclusion, their being kept out of school, forced marriages and even their being sold.

Faced with the rigid posture of the Taliban regime, which prefers to impose an increasing number of restrictions rather than respect the commitments given to the international community to improve the living conditions of the population, we must not lose sight of the fact that the destiny of millions of people depends on the engagement of donors. We call on donors to continue their efforts in favour of humanitarian aid.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Gabon's full support for the United Nations Assistance Mission

in Afghanistan and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts on the ground.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Deputy Special Representative Potzel for their briefings. We have also taken note of the briefing by Ms. Morgan Edwards.

This afternoon I will address three points: the humanitarian situation, the conditions of women and girls, and the scourge of terrorism.

As we have heard, the tragic reality facing millions of Afghans is bleak. Humanitarian needs far outstrip the international community's ability to provide support to a country where 24 million people require humanitarian assistance. Some remote communities are even experiencing near-famine conditions. As mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, the effects of climate change have exacerbated this critical situation. Heavy rains this month have affected thousands of families, resulting in dozens of deaths.

Given this situation, it is imperative that unrestricted humanitarian access be guaranteed. We call for the prevention of any interference in the distribution of humanitarian assistance and for allowing women to participate in these tasks and for the lists of beneficiaries not to be modified. Furthermore, it is necessary to take the necessary measures inside and outside Afghanistan so that transfers of resources to finance humanitarian work can reach their intended recipients. Mexico reiterates the importance of ensuring that no coercive measures have a negative humanitarian impact.

With regard to the situation of women and girls, we regret the setback that has taken place in the last year. Contrary to its promises, the Taliban has issued more than 20 edicts limiting the rights of women and girls, including with regard to physical segregation by gender, restrictions on freedom of movement and dress, and such abysmal steps backwards as forced marriages, including child marriage, and honour killings.

Not allowing women to work erodes the purchasing power of families. These restrictions both reduce income-generating opportunities and feed the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger and discrimination. We call for an end to the exclusion of women from the labour market.

Equally regrettable is the decision to suspend secondary education for girls. An entire generation

of girls will not be able to complete their schooling. The Taliban is mortgaging Afghanistan's chances of overcoming the economic and humanitarian crisis with measures that limit the participation of women and girls.

In addition, we deplore the incidents of extrajudicial killings, violations of freedom of expression, association and other basic human rights, which are reflected in the report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. As an international community, we have a responsibility not to allow further deterioration of the human rights situation of all Afghans, including women, girls and minorities.

The terrorist attacks of recent months are clear evidence that the threat from terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan is real and latent. Most of the attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province target ethnic and religious minorities in places of worship or schools. Mexico unequivocally condemns those attacks.

In view of the critical humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, I want to conclude by calling on the international community, especially donor countries, to continue to contribute financially or to provide humanitarian protection to Afghan nationals, as my country has done for more than 600 people. We also call on the de facto authorities to immediately reverse all decisions that restrict the public life of women and girls, to respect human rights, including those of minorities, and to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a haven for terrorists.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

I would like to start by offering our condolences to Pakistan following the devastating flooding there this week. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families, and as my Minister, Lord Ahmad, has said, we are working with the Pakistani authorities to establish the support and assistance they need. The United Kingdom stands with the people of Pakistan at this time of need.

Russia has called for this meeting one year after the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. As we reflect on that anniversary, we should also recall the legacy of the Soviet Union's 10-year occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 until 1989, which created

the conditions for devastating civil war and the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s. Today it is clear that the situation in Afghanistan remains critical and the needs of the Afghan people are acute. As we have heard, more than 24 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian support and nearly 20 million are facing acute food insecurity. Economic stability and the delivery of basic services are essential to ending the cycle of suffering in Afghanistan. There remains a vital need to inject liquidity into the country in order to avoid economic collapse. While United Kingdom personnel have left Afghanistan, our commitment to the Afghan people remains resolute. Between April 2022 and March 2023, the United Kingdom committed \$676 million in aid to Afghanistan. Our Foreign Secretary co-hosted the United Nations humanitarian pledging conference earlier this year, raising \$2.4 billion. By contrast, Russia has contributed nothing to the United Nations humanitarian response plan, while China has pledged \$2 million.

On top of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the human rights situation is stark. There are credible allegations of extrajudicial killings, detentions and disappearances, including of civil-society activists, former security forces personnel and Government officials. The past few months have also seen the imposition of deplorable restrictions on the rights and freedoms of women and girls, including on their access to education, jobs and services and on their freedom of movement and dress. It is clear to all but the Taliban that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in society is a prerequisite for a stable, prosperous Afghanistan. The Taliban has also been repeating other mistakes from the past, not least the harbouring of the leader of Al-Qaida, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, in downtown Kabul, in breach of its international commitments. We again call on the Taliban to meet its commitments to ensuring principled, unhindered humanitarian access across the country, upholding basic human rights, most pressingly for women and girls, and making sure that Afghanistan is never again a permissive environment for terrorist groups.

Strong and consistent United Nations leadership remains crucial to ensuring a well-coordinated and prioritized response. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has our full support in delivering its mandate provided by the Council.

One year ago, the Council adopted resolution 2593 (2021), which set out our shared expectations of the

Taliban. We hope the Council can continue to speak with one voice to press the Taliban on its commitments and to support the Afghan people in overcoming the challenges ahead. We thank the United Nations for its ongoing and tireless efforts.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings today.

Two weeks ago, we marked one dreadful year since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan. One year on, the Taliban has proved that it has not reformed. It has shown the same unjust and cruel behaviour it had in the past, using repression and fear. Fundamental freedoms have been severely curtailed, while Afghanistan's once vibrant civil society and media landscape have been violently suppressed. Those who raise their voices in opposition, including women protesters, are met with intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention or enforced disappearance. Human rights defenders, activists, and journalists remain among the most at risk. The Taliban has sought to render women invisible. They are quite literally being systematically wiped from public life. Banned from most places of work and subject to onerous restrictions on when they can leave their homes, Afghan women are living a nightmare.

Despite international condemnation, the Taliban continues its draconian assault on human rights. The vacuum left by Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, dissolved by the Taliban in May, makes robust international monitoring all the more important. Support for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's human rights service and the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan is essential.

The past year has been one of unconscionable hardship for the Afghan people, with economic collapse spurring one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. More than 19 million people remain food-insecure, with children suffering the most. Afghanistan now has the highest number of people in emergency food insecurity globally and its health system is on the brink of collapse. Overwhelming humanitarian need has been compounded by natural disasters, most recently devastating flooding in central and eastern Afghanistan.

We applaud the work of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations on the ground. They have stayed and delivered in the most challenging of

circumstances, preventing a spiral into widespread famine. The preservation of the humanitarian space is an overarching priority for Ireland across the sanctions regime. In that regard, we therefore strongly supported the adoption in December of resolution 2615 (2021), which provides a humanitarian exemption from sanctions imposed under the resolution 1988 (2011) Taliban sanctions regime. Such efforts to provide clarity and facilitate the provision of much-needed humanitarian aid are essential, and we support the introduction of licences to further aid delivery. However, as a result of the Taliban's policies, dire humanitarian need remains, as does the imperative to find solutions to relieve the effects of economic collapse. We must also be clear on the solutions that lie within Afghanistan. Economic recovery is impossible while half of Afghanistan's workforce are confined to their homes and denied economic opportunity. Any future economic growth is impossible without girls graduating from high school.

Last August, we sat in the Chamber and insisted that the international community would now have to address the consequences of not heeding the many warnings of Afghan civil society. Despite repeated assurances in the weeks following its takeover, the Taliban has shown utter contempt for its commitments made to the Afghan people and the international community. It vowed to respect the rights of women — instead, women have been forcibly and systematically excluded from public life. It promised that girls would return to school — instead, girls have spent 345 days banned from their classrooms. It promised to counter and combat terrorism — instead, we have seen frequent attacks on the Afghan people, particularly minorities, and evidence that Al-Qaida continues to operate with the full knowledge of the Taliban. Neither the international community nor the Council can stand by in the face of such disregard for international law and the principles that underpin our common commitment to humankind.

We owe it to the Afghan people to listen, to heed their warnings and to act. Ireland stresses again the importance of including Afghan civil society in the Chamber. The international community must demonstrate its solidarity with the Afghan people by holding the Taliban to account. Last August, we shared our view that the Council must be prepared to consider further measures from the toolbox at our disposal. That includes revisiting the broad-based privileges that were granted to the Taliban for the purposes of pursuing peace and security. On the basis of what we have seen

to date, we cannot and should not take a business-as-usual approach.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Brazil welcomes the participation of the representatives of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in today's meeting. I would also like to thank the briefers for their informative contributions.

I want to extend our condolences to both the Afghan and Pakistani peoples for the lives lost during the floods that have hit their countries. That recent destruction adds to the extremely concerning humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. It is likely that as we saw last year, the approach of the colder months will herald a further deterioration in living conditions. The international community's continuing engagement with Afghanistan remains a matter of life and death for millions.

It is painful to note that one year after the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghan territory, some of our worst expectations for the country's future have been confirmed. That is particularly true for the scourge of terrorism. The attack this month on the Abu Bakar Mosque in Kabul clearly illustrates how precarious the security conditions are. Brazil expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims and reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Women and girls remain relegated to the status of second-class citizens in Afghanistan, faced with increasing restrictions on their access to work and education. Despite the Security Council's condemnation of the discriminatory measures taken by the de facto authorities, there are no signs that the Taliban is willing to review its positions. The expectations for an inclusive Government, with the participation of women and minorities, remain a distant goal. The leaders of Afghanistan are depriving half of the country's population its dignity. In the aftermath of the withdrawal of foreign forces, Brazil's Government established a policy of humanitarian visas for Afghans threatened by the crisis in their country, with a particular focus on women and girls. More than 5,000 humanitarian visas have been issued so far, providing Afghans with opportunities to rebuild their lives in safety.

Although the prospects for engagement with Kabul are not encouraging, we remain convinced of the importance of fostering dialogue with the de facto authorities. We have in mind the words of Ambassador

Deborah Lyons, who as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reminded us that the Taliban, which only a year ago was an insurgent force, is transitioning to becoming a Government. At this stage, technical contacts that can benefit the local population, as well as the provision of services, should be considered.

We regret that the Council could not reach a consensus on renewing exceptions to the travel ban for some of the individuals listed by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). We fear that Afghan leaders' inability to travel abroad will delay the country's reintegration into the international community. The Taliban's first experience in power, before the 2001 military intervention, left the important lesson that isolating it will not lead it to moderate its positions. Preventing its leaders from travelling is not a punishment for misbehaviour but a measure that limits the possibilities for constructive and pragmatic engagement. The Council should not lose sight of the greater goal of improving the living conditions of the Afghan population. The continuation of dialogue is an essential condition for enabling Afghanistan's development and limiting the suffering of its people.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Mr. Potzel for their updates. I also listened carefully to Ms. Morgan Edwards's account.

A year has passed since the Taliban's return to power in Kabul — a long year that by all accounts has been disastrously lost. As we heard, the overall situation in the country is critical. Afghanistan is going through one of the worst possible humanitarian crises. Under-Secretary-General Griffiths' briefing needs no further comment. The economy is in free fall and in one year the Taliban has managed to shrink it by a third. It is therefore no surprise that human and drug trafficking are on the rise. As if the economic, humanitarian, human-made and natural catastrophes were not enough, Afghanistan continues to suffer from terrorism. The presence of the Al-Qaida leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri in Kabul confirmed fears that have been expressed repeatedly in the Council regarding the persistent and pervasive ties between the Taliban and transnational terrorist groups. We call on the Taliban to denounce terrorism in all its forms and to cut its ties with terrorist organizations.

Afghanistan is one of the worst places to be a woman today. Contrary to its promises, the Taliban is

undoing decades of progress in empowering women in Afghan society. They have forced women into silence, deprived them of their legitimate roles in society and made them invisible in the public place. Young girls are forced out of school — and Afghanistan is the only country in the world to impose such shocking measures. Girls are forced into early marriages. Women are starving and have lost access to their hard-earned rights, education and jobs. Under the Taliban, life in Afghanistan has lost its colour. Oppressing half of the population is the shortest path to perpetual misery and obscurantism. It tramples brutally on the basic norms of rights and dignity. We should not accept such an aberration to continue, or worse, gain support. Afghan women and girls need our help more than ever. We call on the Taliban to change its course, take steps to lift the restrictions on women and girls and respect their human rights and to meet the expectations of the Afghans and the world in order to permit their full, equal and meaningful participation in work, education and public life, as well as their freedom of movement and speech. Those are critical prerequisites for the country's long-term peace, stability and development.

The worsening Afghan tragedy unfolding presents a daunting challenge even for a united and responsive international community. The de facto rule of the Taliban lacks legitimacy. It has given no indication of being capable of dealing with any of the existential challenges facing the Afghan people, except for either letting them deteriorate or actively making them worse. Such disarray will only fuel resistance, create tensions and lead to violence. We welcome any help and support to the Afghan people in these dark times and strongly support the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as that of the non-governmental organizations present in the country under such challenging conditions. We stand with the Afghan people in their demand for equal rights, in accordance with Afghanistan's obligations under international law, and reiterate our call on the Taliban to respect them. It is a fact that the Taliban is in charge. It must know that the decisions it has made so far are punishing Afghans and further isolating the Taliban from the international community, making it the only entity responsible for sending the country spiralling into an abyss. The Taliban is being judged, and will be judged, by what it does. It is not very difficult to understand, even for the inexperienced Taliban, that one cannot pretend to move forward by walking backwards.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Deputy Special Representative Potzel for their briefings.

I am glad this meeting was called today, not for the reasons the Russians requested it but because the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is grave, as we heard from the United Nations briefers, and it requires our attention. Flash floods, earthquakes, avalanches, droughts and terrorism have made a desperate situation more dire. The global food insecurity crisis, exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate and conflict, has been felt acutely by the Afghan people.

Everyone here heard the statistics Under-Secretary Griffiths outlined, describing what he calls a “relentless layer of crisis”. The Taliban have failed to provide for the Afghan people. In fact, they have done just the opposite. The Taliban’s policies repress and starve the Afghan people instead of protecting them. The Taliban’s exclusion of outside voices means that the people who would contribute towards alleviating the suffering from those crises are not allowed to help.

Among the Taliban’s most egregious actions has been their repression and abuse of women and girls. The Taliban have denied women the opportunity to work, a decision that is both unjust and economically perilous. In Chicago last week, I met with an Afghan refugee who had found a new life in the United States. But he is kept up at night knowing that his wife is still there. She was educated, engaged in the private sector and contributing to her country. Now she is secluded in her home.

It is equally egregious that girls have not been allowed to return to school. That is both a moral problem and an economic one. UNICEF estimates that the Afghan economy would gain \$5.4 billion if the Taliban let girls go to secondary school and join the workforce. On top of that, the Taliban’s proclamation that it would be best for women to simply stay at home if a male chaperone cannot accompany them means that nearly all female-headed households in the country are not getting enough food to eat.

Instead of looking to the international community for help with those crises, the Taliban harboured the leader of Al-Qaida in downtown Kabul. How can the Taliban expect to build a relationship with the world when it provides safe haven to those who seek to do harm to us all — and I do mean all of us.

In recent months the Taliban have even made the delivery of humanitarian assistance more difficult. It continues to interfere with the delivery of critical assistance that the Afghan people desperately need. The Taliban have increased taxes on critical assistance. And they fail to protect humanitarian aid workers. That is all to say that the Taliban are not providing for the Afghan people in their time of need.

But the United States will not give up or look away. We are determined to help the Afghan people. We have worked multilaterally through the United Nations and the Security Council to assist them. Last year, we led the Council’s effort to unanimously adopt resolution 2615 (2021), which established a carve-out for the delivery of humanitarian aid for the Afghan people. We have strongly supported the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), whose critical work we supported extending in March. Its good offices, outreach and human rights reporting continue to be invaluable.

We have also worked bilaterally to help the Afghan people directly. The United States is the world’s leading donor in Afghanistan. Over this past year alone, we have provided more than \$775 million in humanitarian assistance directly to the Afghan people and Afghans in the region. We are proud to be the largest funder of United Nations operations in Afghanistan. We have also issued seven general licenses to enable economic activity for the Afghan people. And we are supporting efforts to protect, preserve and facilitate access to approximately \$3.5 billion in Afghan Central Bank assets for the benefit for the Afghan people.

Let me be clear: no country that is serious about containing terrorism in Afghanistan would advocate giving the Taliban instantaneous, unconditional access to billions in assets that belong to the Afghan people. The countries, like ours, that have rolled up their sleeves and tried to engage with this issue have seen how the Central Bank of Afghanistan was hollowed out long ago. It does not have a credible anti-money laundering system in place. It does not have a credible system for combating the financing of terrorism. And it does not have an independent monitor in place to verify improvements in capacity through technical assistance. The Central Bank of Afghanistan therefore cannot currently conduct responsible monetary policy on its own.

Fortunately, there is one reason why the afghani — the Afghan currency — has held stable:

because major donors, including the United States, have generously contributed well over \$2 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance and basic-needs programming to the country since August 2021. Today we heard Russia say that is not sufficient. Russia argued, as others have in the past, that Afghanistan's problems are the fault of the West and not the Taliban — really? Here is my question. What is Russia doing to help other than rehashing the past and criticizing others? If Russia is concerned about Afghan women and children dying, how is it helping them? To date, Russia has contributed only \$2 million to United Nations humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan. And it has contributed nothing this year — not one cent. China's contributions have been similarly underwhelming. If Council members want to talk about how Afghanistan needs help, that is fine. But we humbly suggest that they put their money where their mouths are.

In the meantime, the United States, along with other partners and allies, including many on the Council, will continue to diligently do everything it can to support the Afghan people. We will continue providing humanitarian assistance. We will continue supporting UNAMA. We will continue to be a champion for Afghanistan's women and girls. We will continue to do everything we can to help the mothers and daughters, the fathers and sons — the people of Afghanistan — who deserve so much.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths, Mr. Markus Potzel and Ms. Lucy Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

Today's meeting provides us with another opportunity to assess the situation in Afghanistan. We remain deeply concerned about the situation in that country, especially the condition of women, girls and minority groups. We are appalled by the deliberate policies of the de facto authorities to effectively remove women from Afghan public life, with no representation of women in Government. To date, more than 14 million Afghan women and girls that have lost the right to go to work, high school and university; and they have lost their freedom of movement. Women and girls in Afghanistan need the support of the Security Council and the international community in order to preserve their rights and to hold the Taliban to its earlier promise that women would be able to exercise their rights, including to work and study, within Sharia law.

After decades of war, the recurring natural hazards, chronic poverty, drought and widespread

food insecurity, coupled with the coronavirus disease pandemic, have resulted in millions of Afghans being in need of humanitarian assistance. We note the urgency to meet the \$606 million pledge made during the flash appeal for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. We believe that the Council can play its part by urging support from donors to enable humanitarian agencies to scale up their interventions and bring much-needed relief to the people in vulnerable segments of the population, who are currently bearing the brunt of the harsh living conditions and need to develop resilience in order to establish sustainable livelihoods. For their part, Ghana expects that the de facto authorities will act in good faith and align themselves with global efforts to bring lasting relief to Afghan citizens. In that regard, we acknowledge the untiring efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other international organizations, which continue to provide critical support on the ground.

We are deeply concerned by the security situation and the senseless killings in Afghanistan and urge the de facto authorities to stabilize the situation and desist from arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, extrajudicial killings, collective punishment and the targeting of members of ethnic, tribal and religious groups on mere suspicion. However, we are encouraged by the hesitant efforts at reconciliation as expressed through the amnesty extended to rival groups that abstain from fighting the Taliban and efforts to reach out to former enemies.

We nonetheless deplore Afghanistan becoming a permissive environment for terrorist groups and militants and providing bandwidth to meet and plan attacks. In that context, we remind the de facto authorities to be mindful of their obligations under international law and to ensure that they do not collaborate with terrorists to make Afghanistan a safe haven. We also call on all regional countries to help address the security and other challenges confronting the country, while taking into account their proximate interests. The Taliban need to understand that the Security Council and the international community are prepared to act in a manner that will further constrain them, should it continue along the course that they have chosen.

In conclusion, we urge the Taliban to stop all forms of discrimination and immediately remove all restrictions in place in order to give all Afghan citizens equal rights to participate freely in civic life. We

urge the authorities to channel their energy towards rebuilding the economy of the country for the benefit of the Afghan people, which is one of the cardinal purposes of government.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

This month of August marks a sobering anniversary. Just over a year ago, Afghanistan sank into chaos. Since then, the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate. Afghanistan is among the countries in the world experiencing the worst food crisis, with nearly 20 million people affected, 6 million of whom are at risk of starvation. Afghans, especially Afghan women, are no longer able to enjoy their most basic rights and freedoms. We know who is responsible for that situation: the Taliban. Their seizure of power by force and all their actions since then have brought Afghanistan to the brink of collapse.

The expectations of the international community were clearly set out in resolution 2593 (2021), which was adopted a year ago and which defined the prerequisites for the stability and reconstruction of the country and recalled the obligations flowing from the conventions ratified by Afghanistan, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite the Taliban's systematic and repeated failure to respect their own commitments, the international community has nevertheless continued to reach out to help the civilian population and to leave the door open to dialogue. France, together with the European Union, has played its full role in that collective effort. We responded without delay by contributing €123 million since last September. The European Union has contributed more than €335 million since 2021.

The Security Council adopted resolution 2615 (2021) to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and to prevent any diversion of funds. However, we must remain clear-eyed. The Taliban are choosing isolation. Far from grasping the outstretched hand, they continue to flout their commitments, as evidenced by the ban on girls' access to secondary education. In the face of the serious human rights violations, which are multiplying, it is clear that the international community cannot trust its interlocutors.

Respect for human rights, and in particular women's rights, cannot be an adjustable variable. It is a principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Women and girls in Afghanistan, who have been deprived of all their rights, are prisoners in their own country. In the face of their tragic situation, we cannot allow impunity, and we cannot afford to provide development assistance that would support the Taliban in their human rights violations.

The recent neutralization of Al-Qaida leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri is another example of the Taliban's betrayal of their commitments. That is a success in the fight against terrorism, but it also confirms our fears, which have been expressed many times in this Chamber: the Taliban continue to shelter and support terrorist groups, in particular Al-Qaida.

The Taliban must meet five conditions in order to emerge from isolation: the ability for Afghans who wish to leave to do so in safety; free access for humanitarian assistance throughout the territory of Afghanistan; respect for the fundamental rights of all, especially women and girls; the establishment of a representative Government; and the complete and concrete severance of ties with terrorist groups. To date, none of those conditions have been fully met.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate France's full support for the Afghan people, its readiness to participate in the efforts necessary to alleviate their suffering, and its full cooperation with the United Nations, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): At the outset, I would like to thank Russia for requesting this timely meeting to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. I also thank our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards — for their briefings.

A full year has passed since the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan and the Taliban's capture of Kabul. During that time, we have seen the conditions for ordinary Afghans deteriorate, with a growing number of people facing starvation and lacking access to many basic services, including health care. Over the past year, we have heard heart-wrenching accounts of the catastrophic humanitarian situation. Afghanistan is now the only country on Earth where girls cannot attend high school and where the

fundamentals of a dignified life are systematically denied to women.

At the same time, the international community and the Afghan people were promised that Afghanistan would be placed on a path to stability and peace. That has not been the case so far, as confirmed by the presence of Al-Qaida's most recent leader, killed last month in Kabul, and a series of attacks by Da'esh-Khorasan Province. The alarming security situation appears to be worsening rather than stabilizing.

Of course, challenges existed in Afghanistan before the onset of the worst food security crisis the world has seen in a generation, which is hitting the already vulnerable Afghan population very hard, with more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan's population struggling to meet basic food needs.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will continue to be a crucial partner in addressing those critical challenges and in managing the international community's relationship with the Taliban. We are therefore concerned that more than two months have passed without the appointment of a successor to Special Representative Lyons, and we commend her tireless efforts in that role. We urge a swift appointment and the Council's full engagement with UNAMA.

I want to elaborate further on the worsening situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, which remains profoundly troubling. Our fears about the Taliban reversing the gains made in women's and girls' empowerment over the past two decades have, unfortunately, materialized. On this issue, there is agreement around the Council table: we have all rejected the restrictions imposed on women and girls and the erosion of their access to equal opportunity. This is not a question of competing priorities or cultural or religious norms. Ensuring that women and girls can participate fully, equally and meaningfully in all aspects of life is part and parcel of what is required if Afghanistan is to progress into the twenty-first century, and that must remain a mainstay of the Council's demands.

The security situation also continues to be fragile, and countering extremism and terrorism remains a top challenge. Reports by the Secretary-General and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team clearly state that the threats posed by Al-Qaida and Da'esh-Khorasan Province remain of concern. We recall the Council's clear and repeated demand that

the territory of Afghanistan not be used to shelter or train terrorists. The United Arab Emirates calls on the Taliban to live up to their commitment to combating terrorism and on the Council to use the full tools at its disposal to ensure that that is the case.

The United Arab Emirates is also very concerned about the fact that the economy of Afghanistan continues to be in freefall. According to World Bank estimates, the economy shrunk by between 20 per cent and 30 per cent in the past year, and humanitarian indicators continue to worsen. Although the humanitarian carve-out from the 1988 sanctions regime, to which the Council agreed, was necessary to relieve some of the pressure, it did not and could not address the desperate need for liquidity, access to banking services and the Central Bank's core functions. Those are all building blocks that need to be in place to incentivize economic activity and lead to recovery. We recognize that there are difficult and significant policy issues and constraints at play here, but we urge the redoubling of efforts by all those involved to come to an agreement to restore the essential operation of Afghanistan's economy. The United Arab Emirates is ready to play its part in contributing to such efforts.

The United Arab Emirates has been clear-eyed about those challenges for the past year. However, the basic question of how we move forward remains unanswered. The international response cannot be the isolation of Afghanistan. Calibrated engagement with the Taliban needs to be maintained, and shutting off communication channels with the de facto authorities will not yield results in any of the areas where the international community would like to see progress. However, we need a coordinated strategy — and that is alarmingly absent from our deliberations today.

We would also like to highlight that Islamic countries have a special role to play in relation to engagement with the Taliban to help promote religious and cultural dialogue, respect for diversity and the elimination of discrimination. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), alongside other regional organizations, has played an important role in that respect. The United Arab Emirates, as a member of the OIC, stands ready to contribute to a renewed effort for stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and for its people, as we have done over the past five decades, with more than \$2 billion in humanitarian assistance.

Since August of last year, we have witnessed the emergence of seismic global political and economic challenges to our international system. We cannot let

ordinary Afghans pay the price of increasing global polarization. In the case of Afghanistan, identifying our common ground and speaking with a single voice should not be beyond the countries represented in the Chamber. The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with all Council members to ensure a constructive approach to the challenges facing Afghanistan in the coming period. We need to keep our focus on that goal.

Mr. Ndung'u (Kenya): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Markus Potzel and Lucy Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

Kenya stands in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in their unflinching quest for peace, justice and progress. We have watched their unparalleled resilience in the face of formidable challenges. Apart from the protracted conflict that has ravaged millions of lives and livelihoods, the people of Afghanistan have suffered many other man-made and natural calamities. Only recently, flooding claimed more than 180 lives and destroyed thousands of houses. Earlier in June, a devastating earthquake claimed more than 1,000 lives.

In addition, there is other climate-induced insecurity, as well as rising global food prices. All those have conspired to cause an overwhelming humanitarian situation that the already constrained humanitarian assistance programmes cannot meet. As the winter season approaches, we call on the international community to urgently step in and support the more than 23 million Afghans in need with all the necessary assistance.

Sadly, a year since the Taliban seized power, the people of Afghanistan are no better off than they were before. If anything, they are worse off. It is the collective responsibility of the international community and the obligation of the Taliban to create a better environment for the people of Afghanistan that enables them to govern themselves and determine their social and economic progress. The time has come for the international community to consider ways of engaging with the Taliban to articulate practicable near-term policy objectives to rebuild Afghanistan's economy and social fabric.

The end goal should be to align humanitarian aid and other forms of development assistance to achieve economic recovery and sustainability to reduce aid dependence. In that regard, such engagement should

include how to ensure that Afghanistan's frozen assets are deployed in a structured manner, with a clear monitoring mechanism, to help the ailing economy. However, in our view, such engagement should be predicated on the Taliban committing in word and deed to two fundamental imperatives.

First, the Taliban must be committed to upholding the rights of the millions of Afghan people without any discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity or religion. The Taliban must, in particular, accord women and girls equal rights and opportunities as their male counterparts in all areas, including access to education, employment opportunities, leadership roles at all levels and freedom of association and movement. We expect the Taliban to engage women at all levels and incorporate their voices in mapping out non-discriminatory policies that address challenges facing the country.

Secondly, the Taliban must disassociate from listed terrorist groups and ensure that Afghanistan is no longer a base for terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaida, used to launch attacks in Afghanistan and further afield.

For its part, the international community, especially the members of the Security Council, must be motivated by the interests of the people of Afghanistan when engaging on the matter. It is concerning that the major Powers continue to pull in opposite directions, as they use the deteriorating situation to advance their own interests at the expense of the well-being of millions of Afghans.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and stand ready to support all endeavours aimed at securing their safety and well-being.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): Allow me to thank the delegation of Russia for requesting today's meeting. It provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the situation prevailing in Afghanistan. Let me also thank the briefers for their briefings.

As we have repeatedly stated in the Security Council, India has direct stakes in ensuring the return of peace and stability, given its position as a contiguous neighbour and long-standing partner of Afghanistan, as well as its strong historical and civilizational linkages to the Afghan people.

In response to the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people, as well as to the urgent appeals made by the

United Nations, India has dispatched several shipments of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. They include 32 tons of medical assistance in 10 batches, containing essential life-saving medicines, anti-tuberculosis medicines and 500,000 doses of the coronavirus disease vaccine. Those medical consignments have been handed over to the World Health Organization and the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul.

India has also dispatched more than 40,000 metric tons of wheat to Afghanistan so far. To ensure fair and just distribution of India's wheat assistance, the Government of India has signed an agreement with the World Food Programme for the distribution of wheat in Afghanistan.

In order to closely monitor and coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance and in continuation of our engagement with the Afghan people, an Indian technical team has also been deployed at our Embassy in Kabul.

As always, our approach to Afghanistan will be guided by our historical friendship and our special relationship with the people of Afghanistan. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate our firmly held conviction that humanitarian assistance should be based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. The disbursement of humanitarian aid should be non-discriminatory and accessible to all Afghans. In particular, assistance should reach the most vulnerable first, including women, children and minorities.

India was the President of the Security Council in August 2021 when resolution 2593 (2021) was adopted (see S/PV.8848). The resolution set forth the expectations of the international community in clear and objective terms. They included: ensuring that the territory of Afghanistan is not used to launch terrorist attacks against other countries; the formation of a truly inclusive and representative Government; combating terrorism and drug trafficking; and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities. The same message has been reiterated in subsequent resolutions, including the most recently adopted resolution 2626 (2022). With those benchmarks in mind, the present situation is indeed one of concern.

With regard to terrorism, the recent findings contained in the report (see S/2022/547) of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution

1988 (2011) indicate that the current authorities need to take much stronger action to fulfil their counter-terrorism commitments. There has been a significant increase in the presence of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) in the country and its members' capacity to carry out attacks. ISIL-KP, with its base reportedly in Afghanistan, continues to issue threats of terrorist attacks on other countries.

The series of attacks at religious sites of the minority community, including the recent attack at the Sikh gurudwara on 18 June in Kabul, followed by another bomb explosion near the same gurudwara on 27 July, are hugely alarming. The linkages among groups listed by the Security Council, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, as well as provocative statements made by other terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan, pose a direct threat to the peace and stability of the region. We need to see concrete progress in ensuring that such proscribed terrorists, entities or their aliases do not get any tacit or direct support either from Afghan soil or from the terror sanctuaries based in the region.

On the political front, India continues to call for an inclusive dispensation in Afghanistan that represents all sections of the Afghan society. A broad-based, inclusive and representative formation is necessary for both domestic and international engagement.

We also express our concern about developments in Afghanistan that directly impact the well-being of women and girls. We join others in calling for the protection of the rights of women and girls and for ensuring that the long-fought gains of the past two decades are not reversed.

Peace and security in Afghanistan are critical imperatives that all of us need to collectively strive for. India will continue to play its role in the pursuit of that objective. The interests of the Afghan people will continue to be at the heart of our efforts in Afghanistan.

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

I thank the Russian Federation for its initiative to hold this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

Exactly one year ago, Kabul was going through the most surreal moment in its history. Foreign troops were being hurriedly evacuated from the airport, from which the echoes of explosions could be heard. Civilians were falling from military planes that were forcibly taking off, and soldiers were shooting innocent civilians. The world was shocked to see such myriad signs of chaos. The two-decade-long war ended in panic, chaos and ignominy. Looking back at those 20 years, we cannot help but ask: What did that war accomplish for us?

The war, which was waged in the name of counter-terrorism, did not eliminate terrorist forces in Afghanistan. Instead, terrorist activities became increasingly rampant, and terrorist forces, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, continue to grow. The war claimed more than 200,000 lives, including 50,000 Afghan civilians and more than 60,000 military police and thousands of foreign soldiers. It has left millions of people homeless and displaced. Behind every lost life is a family in anguish. Another 20 years might not be sufficient to heal their wounds. The war, waged under the banner of democratic transformation, did not bring about peace, stability or prosperity, but rather left behind a fragmented and shattered country. Although foreign troops have withdrawn, the impact of the war continues, and the Afghan people continue to suffer from its various consequences.

The fiasco of the past 20 years has once again demonstrated that military intervention and power politics are not the right way. Foreign models and democratic transformation cannot win the hearts and minds of the people, and the tragedy in Afghanistan should never be allowed to happen again. China has always stressed that the withdrawal of foreign troops is not the end of responsibility, but rather the beginning of reflection and correction. The countries concerned should have seriously reflected on their mistakes and corrected them in a timely manner instead of walking away and shrugging their shoulders.

Regrettably, rather than duly fulfilling their responsibilities, the relevant countries have cut off development aid, frozen Afghan assets and imposed political isolation and a blockade. That does not amount to only evading responsibility and abandoning the Afghan people, but also perpetuating their mistakes and exacerbating the suffering of the Afghan people. It is even more perplexing that we do not see any reflective thought indicative of humility or sincere

effort to correct the mistakes made. On the contrary, we hear malicious accusations and attacks against others.

With the withdrawal of foreign troops, the Afghan people have an opportunity to truly take control of their own destiny. The past year has seen the Afghan interim Government in action and the significant improvement of the security situation. The interim Government has promoted political dialogue and recently held a new Loya Jirga. Currently, many things need to be done in the country, and its peaceful reconstruction is facing multiple challenges. The country still has a long way to go.

We expect the Afghan interim Government to pursue sound and inclusive domestic and foreign policies, actively safeguard and improve people's livelihoods, resolutely combat all forms of terrorism and live in harmony with all countries, including its neighbours. The international community should support Afghanistan in advancing peaceful reconciliation, restoring public services and market activities and engaging in regional and international economic and trade cooperation.

The international community should strengthen its engagement with the Afghan interim Government in a rational and pragmatic manner. Since 2019, in order to facilitate dialogue on peace and stability in the country, based on the United States proposal, the Security Council has granted exemptions to the travel ban for some Afghan Taliban personnel. From the very beginning, that was not meant as a reward for anyone or as bargaining chip in negotiations on other issues.

Regrettably, however, certain Council members now oppose the extension of the exemption, citing the Taliban's failure to live up to its commitment to upholding women and girls rights. Undeniably, the rights of Afghan women and girls should be guaranteed, and we also expect efforts to be made by the Afghan authorities in that regard. At the same time, linking the two issues is unreasonable. Ending exemptions will only close the door to dialogue and exacerbate antagonism and division, and it will never achieve the desired effect. We call on the countries concerned to take a constructive stance by supporting the extension of the existing exemption.

As we learned from the briefings, the humanitarian situation in the country is grave, and the survival and development of tens of millions of people, including women and girls, are worrisome. Many women and girls

have no food or clothing, and some families even rely on selling organs and children to survive. Without food, survival is out of the question. How can we expect girls to go to school or women to take part in political life under such circumstances? It is ethically hypocritical and practically deadly to clamour for the rights of Afghan women and girls while slashing humanitarian and development aid to the country and stubbornly maintaining unilateral sanctions against Afghanistan.

The current humanitarian and economic predicament faced by the country results from economic stagnation and the lack of liquidity caused by foreign sanctions. Afghanistan's overseas assets belong to the Afghan people, and freezing those assets is tantamount to depriving them of their life-saving funds. We note that more than 70 renowned scholars published an open letter earlier this month calling on the United States to immediately return the frozen assets in full, pointing out that splitting the frozen \$7 billion is arbitrary and unjustified. We once again urge the United States to return those assets to Afghanistan in full, unconditionally and without delay.

As Afghanistan's largest neighbour, China has always firmly supported its peace, stability and development, and we have been making tremendous efforts in that regard. Since last winter, the Chinese Government has provided emergency assistance to the country totalling ¥300 million and imported more than 1,400 tons of Afghan pine nuts through the "Air Corridor of Pine Nuts", thereby helping the Afghan people, including many housewives, to increase their revenue. Apart from contributing to the United Nations response plan for Afghanistan, China will follow through on the announced ¥1 billion in bilateral aid, and we will actively strengthen economic and trade cooperation with Afghanistan and promote the country's integration into regional efforts.

China's assistance to Afghanistan is tangible and has always been delivered as promised, benefitting the Afghan people and reflecting equality and mutual respect. We urge the international community, especially the countries responsible for the war, to take concrete actions to continue helping the Afghan people, rather than abandoning or punishing them. Afghanistan needs the help of the international community, and the world also needs a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Somewhere in the lengthy arguments of our United States colleagues, we heard a call for Russia and China to reach for their wallets and pay for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. They say that the United States and its allies alone are paying for everything, while Russia and China are only whipping up hot air. The cynicism of such statements is stunning — we are being asked to chip in for the reconstruction of a country whose economy was essentially destroyed by 20 years of United States and NATO occupation. That is to say that, instead of admitting their mistakes and trying to remedy them, they are now reprimanding us for not wanting to settle other people's bills. That is a very original proposal. However, for quite some time now we have ceased to be surprised by anything. I say to our former Western partners — no, they are the ones who need to pay for their mistakes. But first they must return to the Afghan people the money stolen from them.

We have been helping — and will continue to help — Afghanistan, and we recommend that our Western colleagues focus on compensating the Afghans for the 20 years of senseless occupation that destroyed Afghanistan and left its people on the brink of survival. And not everything is measured in monetary terms. The lives of those killed in the attempt to plant democracy in Afghanistan and of those maimed as a result of fighting in that military campaign cannot be measured in monetary terms, and neither can the United States buy the loyalty of the Afghan people, which the United States seems to have lost once and for all.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I will be brief. Let me just state that, if the Russian Federation believes that there was an economy in Afghanistan to be destroyed, it has been destroyed by the Taliban.

Also, let me be clear that the United States has not turned its back on Afghanistan. We have remained in the country and have continued to provide essential assistance to the Afghan people. We are working closely with the international community and partners to support the establishment of mechanisms that will

protect, preserve and disburse, on a limited basis, the assets of the Central Bank of Afghanistan for the benefit of the Afghan people.

I also want to be clear that we will not turn those funds over to the Taliban to be used for their purposes, which do not contribute to the well-being of Afghans.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Faiq (Afghanistan): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely briefing on the humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths, Mr. Markus Potzel, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Lucy Edwards for their presentations and their calls of urgency regarding the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

We are discussing the situation in Afghanistan one year after the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan by force. As we heard in the briefing by Mr. Griffiths, Afghanistan is going through one of the worst social, political, economic and humanitarian crises at a global level. The people are suffering the combined impact of multiple natural and human-made catastrophes, such as floods, poverty, unemployment, internal displacement and migration. Women and girls, constituting half of the population, are being deprived of their legitimate rights and are being systematically erased from social and public life. The doors of secondary schools for girls are still closed; our youth remain hopeless about their future. Afghan citizens from diverse religious and ethnic groups remain highly vulnerable. Professionals and educated people, the human capital, are unemployed or are being dismissed or forced to leave the country. In addition, there are credible reports of detention, torture, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of former security forces, journalists, human rights activists, protesters and civilians accused of having links with resistance forces in Baghlan, Panjshir and Takhar provinces, as well as collective punishment and forced displacement in those provinces by the Taliban. In general, the outlook for a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is bleak and opaque.

The good news is that, as compared to previous years, there has been a noticeable decrease in the level of civilian casualties, an increase in national income resources and a sharp decrease in corruption. However, the Taliban de facto authorities have failed to earn

national and international trust, nor have they fulfilled their commitments on core issues, including the reopening of girls' schools, respecting the fundamental human rights of all citizens, particularly those of women and girls, and establishing an accountable, functional and inclusive system to effectively address the current crises. Instead of putting Afghanistan on a path towards economic development and self-sufficiency, the Taliban continued to consolidate its rigid rule by imposing restrictions on citizens and monopolizing power through convening gatherings of religious scholars.

The current situation has triggered discontent among the people and increased civil and military resistance against the Taliban. In addition, there are credible reports about the presence of regional and international terrorist groups in Afghanistan, raising concerns that the country might once again become a safe haven for terrorism and extremism. The recent multiple terrorist attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province and the killing of Al-Qaida leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri in Kabul city are testimony to this fact. What happens today in Afghanistan will not stay in Afghanistan. To address these common threats and challenges, collective and genuine cooperation by all stakeholders — the Afghan people, including the Taliban, regional and international partners — is required.

On behalf of the people of Afghanistan, I would like to reiterate our call for a national dialogue to break the current impasse and provide the people of Afghanistan with the opportunity to discuss and agree on core issues through a framework or a road map for formation of a representative and inclusive system. I want to stress that only an inclusive, accountable and functional system based on the well-being of people, rule of law and justice, and the involvement of professionals and credible people from all backgrounds and with good reputations, including women, can save Afghanistan from the current humanitarian crisis and end the cycle of war. This cannot be achieved without the support of the United Nations, which, as a credible and legitimate organization, can engage actively with all stakeholders and formulate a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

While we wholeheartedly appreciate the work and efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan, we demand a stronger role for and further engagement from it, beyond humanitarian assistance. In this context,

we call on the Security Council and all international partners to support and facilitate intra-Afghan dialogue and a comprehensive political road map that can guide all relevant efforts aimed at an inclusive, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. I would like to express our appreciation to the Council members who spoke before to reaffirm their commitment to supporting the people of Afghanistan, particularly Afghan women.

To ensure aid effectiveness and delivery of assistance to the vulnerable people who desperately need it, a transparent and accountable mechanism to oversee and report on humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is needed. I want to highlight that humanitarian assistance is merely a short-term solution, and Afghanistan needs development assistance operating within a transparent system, which should include, among other conditions, full transparency in the execution of a budget. We also appreciate neighbouring countries and countries of the region for their continued efforts to engage, through the hosting of conferences and issuance of statements in support of the Afghan people, including Afghan migrants and refugees.

I call on the Taliban to protect and respect the fundamental human rights of all citizens of Afghanistan without prejudice based on gender, ethnic and religious identity. This includes reopening girls' schools and restoring full respect for women's human rights. The Taliban authorities must honour their amnesty announcement, immediately end detention, torture, forced displacements and extrajudicial killings of former members of security forces and civilians, and bring perpetrators of such acts to justice. These acts are violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as Islamic values and principles. Afghanistan is home to all citizens who have peacefully lived together for thousands of years, with no minority or majority. We need inclusiveness for the social, political and economic development of our country.

In conclusion, my plea to the Security Council and all regional and international partners is to have a united stance and a cohesive approach in their engagements on the issue of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan have suffered immensely from the protracted conflict and the wars imposed on them. We hope that the Security Council stays fully engaged in supporting the Afghan people and acts in accordance with the principles and mandate entrusted to it by the

United Nations Charter in ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the Russian Federation for requesting today's important meeting and thank you, Mr. President, for convening it. I also thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

Just a year after the irresponsible withdrawal of foreign forces from and the Taliban takeover of the country, Afghanistan is now dealing with a number of interconnected and overlapping crises. The humanitarian situation is particularly dire. Approximately 25 million people are now living in poverty, with many going hungry. A prolonged drought is also exacerbating food insecurity, and human rights continue to be violated, particularly those of women and girls, who are still denied access to education. Meanwhile, the de facto authorities have yet to fulfil their international obligations.

This catastrophic situation entails the responsibility and obligations of those foreign forces that illegally invaded and occupied Afghanistan under the guise of fighting terrorism, leaving nothing but devastation in their wake. It also serves as a reminder that military intervention in other countries under the pretext of combating terrorism, while claiming to bring democracy, peace and prosperity, not only degrades those common values, but also harms those States and their peoples.

Against this backdrop, I would like to emphasize the following points. The international community should continue to support Afghanistan, particularly in terms of providing humanitarian and development assistance, which have been critical to keeping the Afghan people alive, maintaining basic services and bolstering the economy. We call once more for the return of frozen assets belonging to the Afghan people, which is critical for assisting the Afghan economy and saving lives; this matter should not be politicized or conditional.

The Taliban must heed the international community's repeated calls for the formation of an inclusive Government that accurately reflects Afghanistan's multiethnic society. An inclusive Government is the only way to ensure and protect the rights of all Afghan people, including women and girls, as well as linguistic, racial and religious minorities. Despite

repeated international calls, the Taliban has failed to make significant efforts to ensure that the Government is truly ethnically and politically inclusive. The formation of an inclusive Government is a prerequisite for and critical component of international recognition.

New reports on the resurgence of Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliated groups in Afghanistan are alarming, particularly in the light of the recent spate of terrorist attacks across the country that have killed and injured more than 250 people this month, the most recent being the attack on a mosque in Kabul on 17 August, resulting in at least 54 casualties. The emergence of terrorist groups could pose a serious threat to Afghanistan, its neighbours, the region and beyond. This trend highlights the international community's ongoing demand that the Taliban must commit to fighting terrorism and ensure that Afghanistan no longer serves as a safe haven for such terrorist organizations as Da'esh and Al-Qaida.

The security, stability and prosperity of Afghanistan are intertwined and inseparable from those of its neighbours, which have legitimate related interests and immediate and grave concerns for Afghanistan's overall situation, particularly its security. They also have significant capacity to bring peace and prosperity to the country. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must use that capacity to improve Afghanistan's currently deteriorating humanitarian situation and ensure the country's long-term peace and development.

We support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan in accordance with its mandate. The United Nations can play a vital role in addressing Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis, as well as in facilitating the intra-Afghan political process.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues its efforts to assist the people of Afghanistan and work with Afghanistan's neighbours and other partners to ensure durable peace and sustainable development in Afghanistan. We believe that a democratic, prosperous and stable Afghanistan that is free of war, terrorism and drugs benefits its people and is in the best interests of all of its neighbours, the region and the world. We must all work tirelessly and collectively to help achieve that goal, while fully respecting Afghanistan's territorial integrity, unity and political independence.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, let me congratulate you, Sir, on a very successful presidency this month. I would like to express my gratitude to those delegations that expressed their condolences in the light of the devastating floods in Pakistan. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, Deputy Special Representative Potzel and Ms. Morgan Edwards for their briefings. We are grateful to the Russian Federation for calling for this meeting and to you, Sir, for convening it. This is a timely discussion on Afghanistan one year after the withdrawal of foreign forces and the Taliban's takeover in Kabul.

It can be said of this long war — as of all wars in Afghanistan — that it could not have been won and should never have been fought. The withdrawal of foreign forces was inevitable; the important issue was what was left behind. A comprehensive political solution among all Afghan parties, as well as between them and the foreign presence, would have been the best way to end the 20-year conflict.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts made — especially by Pakistan — such an outcome proved elusive. The Security Council, Afghanistan's neighbours and the international community are obliged to deal with the realities in Afghanistan, not with subjective perceptions and desires. What could not be imposed by force is unlikely to be secured by sanctions, assets freezes or travel bans.

Regardless of the ideology and the internal policies of the Afghan interim Government, the primary interest of the international community and of Afghanistan's neighbours — especially Pakistan — is the restoration of sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan. That implies, first and foremost, avoiding another civil war. It would be irresponsible for anyone, neighbour or not, to encourage or sponsor any insurgency or any terrorist group in Afghanistan.

It is vital to continue humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan in order to avoid another civil war, to arrest the rise of terrorist groups such as Da'esh and to prevent economic collapse, a humanitarian crisis and another refugee surge from Afghanistan. Even as Pakistan and its people grapple with the devastating impacts of the unprecedented floods that are ravaging my country, we urge the international community to fulfil the Secretary-General's call for \$4.2 billion in humanitarian assistance and economic support to the people of Afghanistan. Pakistan's help to Afghanistan will also continue.

Similarly, we call for the release of all of Afghanistan's frozen national reserves and the creation of effective mechanisms for their disbursement to, and use by, the Afghan people. Without such support, economic collapse and chaos may be the consequence. The early resumption of reconstruction and the implementation of shovel-ready connectivity projects with Central Asia and other neighbours, including the extension of the China-Pakistan economic corridor to Afghanistan, can consolidate economic stabilization in Afghanistan.

We are disturbed by the disagreement within the Council on the resumption of the travel ban exemption for the 13 Taliban leaders. We hope it does not signify a geopolitical divergence on Afghanistan between major Powers. That would have serious implications for Afghanistan and the entire region. The isolation of the Afghan interim Government is neither in the interests of the Afghan people nor of the international community. While we appreciate the frustration of many Governments with the non-fulfilment of early promises made by the Taliban on women and girls' education, human rights, inclusivity and counter-terrorism, isolating the Kabul leadership is unlikely to persuade it to change its policies, much less its ideology.

It is only through sustained engagement that we can advance the objectives of the international community in Afghanistan, that is, respect for human rights, political inclusivity and counter-terrorism. Despite the difficulties, Pakistan believes that the Council, the international community and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should develop a clear pathway to advance those three objectives. Pakistan hopes that the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General will be appointed soon and that UNAMA's constructive engagement with the interim Government will be maintained.

We agree with the representative of the United Arab Emirates that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has a special role to play in developing a pathway towards normalization. We have presented the views of the OIC to the Council previously. On human rights and girls' education, the OIC countries will seek to make advances, inter alia, through conversations between the Taliban and delegations of Islamic scholars and

Ulema. Pakistan has initiated such exchanges, and we are hopeful that progress can be made through that process. Similarly, the OIC hopes, as do Afghanistan's neighbours, that progress can be made on the issue of political inclusivity. Perhaps, in the first instance, that could be promoted at the functional level. Any encouragement of dissident groups can reverse efforts to promote political inclusivity and reconciliation.

For Pakistan and for most of the international community, the greatest concern is to prevent terrorism from and within Afghanistan. We expect the Afghan interim Government to prevent Afghanistan's territory from being utilized for terrorism against neighbours or any other country, in particular by eliminating the threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, Da'esh, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, as well as Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, which is of vital importance.

Pakistan will support all sincere efforts by the Afghan interim Government to neutralize and eliminate those terrorist groups while fully respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Certain spoilers, however, who wish to encourage terrorism against Pakistan from Afghan soil must be vigorously dissuaded. Their objectives are focused on a strategic advantage against Pakistan and its friends. We will resist them vigorously.

In response to its cooperation on terrorism, human rights and political inclusivity, it is natural that the Afghan interim Government desires reciprocal steps, including humanitarian, economic and financial assistance, the early removal of sanctions and eventual diplomatic recognition. Those steps must not be perceived in Kabul as being a bridge too far.

It is only through continued engagement and mutual accommodation that peace and security will be restored in Afghanistan. Pakistan will continue its endeavours to that end within the format of Afghanistan's six immediate neighbours plus Russia; within the OIC; with UNAMA; with the European Union; with other friendly countries; and, if so desired, within the platform of the troika plus Pakistan.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.