



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9283rd meeting

Thursday, 16 March 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Afonso	(Mozambique)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Spasse
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Sanchez Izquierdo
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Osei-Mensah
	Japan	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/151)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/151)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Afghanistan to participate in this meeting.

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

Members of the Council have before them documents S/2023/196 and S/2023/197, which contain the texts of two draft resolutions.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/151, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolutions before it.

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

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I deliver this statement on behalf of the United Arab Emirates and Japan, as co-penholders on the issue of Afghanistan.

We thank Mozambique for convening this meeting and all members of the Council for their constructive engagement.

We have before us two draft resolutions on Afghanistan today.

The first draft resolution (S/2023/196) is for a renewal of the robust mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), allowing it to continue its work for another 12 months.

Afghanistan faces enormous challenges. The dire humanitarian and economic situation is compounded by the Taliban's decisions that deny opportunities for education, employment and freedom to women and girls. The threat of terrorism also persists. All of these have a devastating impact on the people of Afghanistan.

The role of UNAMA is becoming more important and indispensable at this time of crisis. All the components in the mandate for UNAMA are crucial in addressing the complex challenges faced by Afghanistan, including promoting inclusive political dialogue, monitoring and reporting on human rights, facilitating humanitarian assistance and addressing economic and social challenges, and countering terrorism and narcotics. We sincerely hope that all Council members will support the mandate renewal.

The second draft resolution calls for an independent assessment on the international approach in Afghanistan. This initiative would provide forward-looking recommendations on how relevant political, humanitarian and development actors could address the existing challenges in an integrated and coherent way.

The adoption of the two draft resolutions would send a strong signal to the international community that the Security Council is united and unwavering in its support for UNAMA, as well as in its commitment to a secure, stable, prosperous and inclusive future for Afghanistan and its people.

The President: I shall first put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/196, submitted by Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2678 (2023).

I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2023/197, also submitted by Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2679 (2023).

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

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Japan and the United Arab Emirates in our capacity as co-penholders on Afghanistan.

Today, the Security Council unanimously adopted two resolutions concerning the situation in Afghanistan (resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023)). The first extends the robust mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for another 12 months in an unequivocal show of support for the Mission and the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Otunbayeva. At a time when the Afghan people are facing a set of profoundly difficult challenges, the Council has responded with a strong and unified message: Afghanistan, and in particular its women and its girls, will not be abandoned.

On the second resolution we voted on today, I would like to express our deep appreciation for the constructive and valuable engagement of Council members on the proposal requesting an independent assessment of the international approach to Afghanistan. This proposal reflects our recognition that Afghanistan faces an exceptional set of challenges, from the severe deterioration of the rights of women and girls to the rise in humanitarian needs and the escalating security threat, as well as the unsustainable economic situation. The scale of the crisis demands our departure from business as usual.

In requesting this assessment, the Security Council is not only demonstrating its deep concern with the alarming trajectory in Afghanistan, but it is choosing to do something about it. Without a persistent and coordinated international effort, the status quo that contributed to the worst women's rights crisis in the world is likely to continue. If we all share the objective of a secure, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan — and we believe that today we have shown that we do — then we all must be working towards the same objective in unity. For this, we must prioritize integration and coherence between the efforts of all the relevant actors within and outside the United Nations System, including those from Member States and regional and multilateral organizations.

We are grateful for the spirit of cooperation and the sense of responsibility demonstrated throughout the negotiation process, and we believe it will continue to be necessary if we are to live up to our commitment to Afghanistan and its people. The work truly begins now.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): Restrictions on the rights of Afghan women and girls across political, economic and social spheres are becoming increasingly acute. Women continue to be erased from Afghan society, and girls are still barred from secondary school. Today's unanimous decision to renew the robust mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) sends a clear message: the international community will not abandon women and girls.

The work of the Mission in protecting, promoting and monitoring the rights of all Afghans, including advocating inclusive and representative governance, is more important than ever. And through it, we will work to hold the Taliban to account on its commitments.

The Taliban's recent decree barring Afghan women from working for non-governmental organizations has also affected humanitarian operations, and this at a time when more than 28 million people — two thirds of the population — are in humanitarian need. We commend UNAMA's ongoing work in leading and coordinating efforts in challenging circumstances to get aid to those who need it most.

In closing, I want to pay tribute to the tireless work of UNAMA, United Nations agencies and non-governmental-organization implementing partners on the ground and to reaffirm the United Kingdom's solidarity with the Afghan people.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Today, the Security Council has acted to preserve the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as a lifeline for the people of Afghanistan, and the United States fully supports UNAMA and its mission. We are therefore proud to support a one-year extension of UNAMA's mandate (resolution 2678 (2023)).

UNAMA is critical to working toward the peace and stability that we all agree is so important for Afghanistan and the world. With the extension of UNAMA's mandate, the United Nations will be able to continue its important work to restore Afghans' ability to exercise their human rights, especially those of women and girls and members of minority communities. It is more

important than ever that UNAMA emphasize this work. UNAMA will also continue to address a widespread humanitarian emergency and economic crisis, promote peace and stability, and facilitate dialogue among all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders.

The Council's action today is timely, particularly amid Women's History Month, and, as we convene, the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Council's action directly supports the empowerment of women and girls, their human rights and fundamental freedoms and their full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels and stages of decision-making.

The United States commends the incredible work done by UNAMA staff on the ground. UNAMA staff operate in deteriorating security conditions throughout the country. We remain deeply concerned about the safety and security of UNAMA staff. We are committed to ensuring that the United Nations is able to take steps to protect them and their families.

Today and every day, the United States stands firmly in support of the United Nations work to support peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and to advance respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta welcomes the adoption of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023), and we thank the co-penholders — Japan and the United Arab Emirates — for their efforts and constructive engagement.

Malta fully supports the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to promote and protect the rights of Afghan women and girls, monitor, report on and advocate for the protection of civilians, and prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Turning to the independent assessment, we reaffirm our position that the experts that will be appointed to carry out that independent assessment must have the necessary gender expertise and context-specific knowledge and that women's rights are central to the terms of reference, as set out in resolution 2679 (2023).

In addition, we urge the establishment of a mechanism to ensure continuous consultations with Afghan women and civil society organizations in and outside Afghanistan, including in the elaboration of the terms of reference. We also encourage the engagement of other relevant actors, including UN-Women, to help

to facilitate and ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into all aspects of the assessment.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023), on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the authorization of Secretary-General to conduct an independent assessment, respectively.

At present, Afghanistan is at a critical stage of peaceful reconstruction. Afghanistan faces many serious challenges, including on the security, humanitarian and economic fronts. The international community should work together to help Afghanistan to achieve peace, stability, development and prosperity. We support the Afghan people in their efforts to overcome their current difficulties and build a better future.

In that regard, we support the important role of the United Nations and encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue her work. We also encourage UNAMA to continue to implement the mandate, as set out in resolution 2626 (2022), in a comprehensive and balanced manner in order to help Afghanistan to alleviate the humanitarian situation, promote economic development and improve its governance capacity.

The international community has common expectations and realistic concerns regarding Afghanistan. A genuine solution to the problem cannot be achieved without maintaining patient and effective engagement through mutual respect, rather than by applying pressure or even sanctions.

The Security Council just decided to request the Secretary-General to conduct an independent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan on the basis of full consultations with the Afghan authorities and other relevant parties. Given the current situation, China expects the assessment to focus on the most urgent difficulties facing Afghanistan, prioritizing assisting the country in alleviating the humanitarian crisis and promoting its economic and social development, while supporting engagement with the Afghan authorities. We would appreciate the assessment making forward-looking recommendations on promoting more coordinated and comprehensive efforts by the international community. It should also pay close attention to an assessment of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, which has been exacerbated by unilateral sanctions.

The successful adoption of the two resolutions could not have been achieved without the key role played by the United Arab Emirates, as co-penholder, throughout the consultation process on the draft resolutions. Prior to drafting the resolutions, the United Arab Emirates communicated in advance with Council members and the Secretariat to gain a wide range of views. After listening to the views of all parties, the United Arab Emirates circulated the draft resolutions promptly in order to allow sufficient time for all parties to study and discuss them.

During the consultations, we noted that the United Arab Emirates communicated patiently with all members, worked to build consensus, accommodated the legitimate concerns of each member as far as possible and put forward creative ideas to resolve differences. We can say that the approach of the United Arab Emirates set a good example for serving as a penholder. That once again shows that a non-permanent member is fully capable of playing the role of a penholder. There are various disparities among Council members, but there are always more solutions than obstacles. As long as we persist in striving for consensus, we can find a suitable settlement.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today the Russian Federation voted in favour of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023), on Afghanistan.

We are pleased that the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as set out in resolution 2626 (2022), was extended by 12 months in a timely and technical way. We believe that such parameters allow the Mission to fully carry out its activities in Afghanistan during a critical period for the country.

We commend the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and Japan, as co-penholders on the Afghan dossier in the Security Council, to find compromise solutions while taking into account a wide range of positions. We note the tireless work of United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, in particular the Head of UNAMA, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, who are fulfilling their tasks under difficult conditions.

We are convinced that the Security Council's unanimous support for the United Nations Mission will demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan that the entire international community is committed to establishing long-awaited peace and stability in that long-suffering country. Such a message is now more relevant than ever.

At the same time, it is essential to maintain pragmatic engagement between UNAMA and the de facto authorities so as to discuss all core issues, in accordance with the new mandate. It is important not to allow Afghanistan to be isolated. Everyone will benefit from patient and constructive dialogue.

We believe that the Mission will continue to fully discharge its duties, including the coordination of international humanitarian assistance to the country, in particular by providing assistance to the most vulnerable groups of the population, including women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Any attempt to politicize the humanitarian aspect under any pretext is unethical and unacceptable.

We are convinced that stabilizing Afghanistan and resolving the complex tasks facing the country cannot be achieved without the international community's comprehensive and unified approach to a settlement in the country. We have repeatedly emphasized that an important prerequisite for the success of our joint activities should be taking decisions that are based on careful analysis and take the current realities into account. We believe that collective efforts on that path will contribute to stability in the region and beyond.

In that regard, we trust that an independent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan will be conducted, including on the basis of consultations with the de facto authorities. We expect the report to be balanced and to reflect the real challenges regarding, inter alia, the freezing of Afghan assets, the fostering of development and economic reconstruction in the country, as well as a review of the negative consequences of the unilateral sanctions.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to join other speakers in thanking the co-penholders for their valuable work and all Council members for their constructive engagement, which led to the adoption of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023).

However, let us be clear: if the situation has become very serious in Afghanistan today, it is clearly because the actions of the Taliban obstruct the work of the international community. In that regard, Switzerland welcomes the unanimous decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) by 12 months, which sends an important message conveying the international community's continued support for

the United Nations presence in Afghanistan and its confidence in the work of the Mission. We encourage UNAMA to pursue its valuable work and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders in the full implementation of its mandate, whether at the political, humanitarian or human rights levels.

In that regard, Switzerland places particular emphasis on the situation of women and girls, who are currently excluded from public life owing to the repressive measures of the Taliban. I would also like to echo my colleague from the United Arab Emirates in saying that our work has only just begun and we must work even harder.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023)), which sends an unambiguous signal of the Security Council's support for the mandate and work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would like to thank the United Arab Emirates and Japan for having succeeded in preserving the unity of the Council on such a crucial issue. We will continue to support UNAMA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, all the relevant United Nations agencies and their partners, especially their humanitarian partners, who are courageously doing outstanding and vital work on the ground for the benefit of the Afghan population.

France remains particularly concerned about the massive human rights violations in Afghanistan, in particular the continued acute deterioration of the situation of women and girls owing to the repressive measures taken by the Taliban. That is why we will continue to ensure that UNAMA is able to implement a robust mandate, especially with regard to monitoring human rights violations, and that the Mission contributes to making the voices of Afghan women heard. France will continue to work with its partners, including those in the region and Afghanistan's neighbours, to ensure that the demands of the international community pursuant to resolution 2593 (2021) are heard and that the Taliban uphold their commitments, which to date remain unfulfilled. France welcomes the fact that the independent assessment referred to in resolution 2679 (2023) is specifically intended to make recommendations on addressing violations by the Taliban of human rights, in particular the human rights of women and girls.

Mrs. Sanchez Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador is grateful for the efforts of the co-penholders, the United Arab Emirates and Japan, in particular their efforts to incorporate the perspectives of all delegations and to propose a balanced text that responds to the situation with regard to the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the authorities of the Taliban regime.

My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2678 (2023) on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for 12 months, because we believe in the strength and comprehensiveness of the mandate and that it brings together the elements that can support the way forward towards negotiations and an inclusive political transition that is respectful of international law. We also acknowledge the work of UNAMA to that end.

Similarly, as signatories of the statement of shared commitments, we are grateful to the co-penholders for the initiative to conduct and provide an independent assessment that will enable the Security Council to monitor the current situation and consider the recommendations aimed at reversing the violations that have been institutionalized by the policy of discrimination against Afghan women and girls, and at promoting dialogue in order to implement the principles of the women and peace and security agenda, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). The adoption of resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023) reflects the concern of the members of the Security Council about the situation faced by the Afghan population and sends a message of unity.

Ecuador reiterates its commitment to peace in Afghanistan. We will remain attentive to the recommendations provided by the independent assessment and will support all efforts required for their effective and timely implementation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Faiq (Afghanistan): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for leading the Security Council's efforts to ensure global peace and security at this perilous time.

I would like to express our profound appreciation to the members of the Security Council for coming together in consensus and unanimously renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission

in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We especially thank the co-penholders, Japan and the United Arab Emirates, for their outstanding efforts in facilitating and finalizing resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023).

This action comes at a critical time, as the people of Afghanistan face a dire social, political, economic and humanitarian crisis, owing to the Taliban's failure to address the current crisis, break the impasse and engage constructively to respond to the national and international calls for establishing a fair, responsible and inclusive system of governance, policies that respect human rights and the rightful inclusion of women in all aspects of society, and counter-terrorism efforts — all of which they promised the world and the people of Afghanistan. We are pleased that resolutions 2678 (2023) and 2679 (2023) recognize that fact and that the extremely grave situation that our people now face requires renewed and more determined efforts by the United Nations, the Council and the broader international community to improve the situation and help set our country on the path towards stability. We hope that in the coming months, we will see sustained and parallel progress on all aspects of the United Nations mandate, especially with regard to establishing a political dialogue that leads to the start of a meaningful political process for inclusive and legitimate governance; addressing the grave human rights situation, in particular with respect to the rights of women and girls; and meeting the humanitarian needs of our people.

Let me express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and the UNAMA team for their indefatigable and continued efforts. Despite immense challenges and adverse circumstances, they have stayed and have delivered essential services to the people in need.

Today the Security Council also took an important step in supporting a comprehensive assessment of the overall situation in Afghanistan, including recommendations for the adoption of an integrated and coherent approach by the international community, to be developed in consultation with the people of Afghanistan, other relevant political actors and representatives of the region and the international community. We are grateful to the President of the Council and to the co-penholders, in particular the United Arab Emirates, for submitting resolution 2679 (2023) and for their vital support. It is an important step, which reflects a new degree of unity and consensus within the Security Council on ensuring a more effective response by the United Nations in order to address the many challenges on the ground that our people face. Looking forward, the best and most effective way to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan is by ensuring the establishment of a legitimate and inclusive system of governance that is able to respond to and deliver on the needs of our people. We therefore hope that the United Nations focus on political dialogue for a meaningful political process will remain a priority, together with the other important aspects of UNAMA's mandate.

In conclusion, I thank all the members who spoke today and expressed their support for the people of Afghanistan, in particular its women and girls. We once again thank all Council members for unanimously renewing the UNAMA mandate, but more importantly for demonstrating their renewed support to helping to improve the plight of our people and achieve a genuine peace in a stable and united Afghanistan.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.