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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [68/11](#) and Security Council resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), including at the subnational level.
2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, dated 14 September 2022 ([A/77/340-S/2022/692](#)).

II. Relevant developments

3. The Taliban de facto authorities announced ministerial-level changes and the continued the restructuring and establishment of institutions, with Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, playing a more decisive role. At the same time, they stepped up outreach towards local communities and non-Taliban actors. Security incidents linked to the armed opposition and attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) continued. UNAMA continued to receive credible allegations of human rights abuses and violations against former government officials and security personnel, in violation of the general amnesty proclaimed by the Taliban upon taking power in 2021, and in the context of clashes with the armed opposition. Afghans' fundamental rights and freedoms remain severely curtailed, especially for women and girls, who face persisting restrictions to their right to education, participation in public life and access to services. Despite reports from the Taliban of some positive developments on macroeconomic issues, the overall economic outlook remains of great concern. Humanitarian needs will further rise as winter approaches. Beyond humanitarian assistance, the United Nations continued to operationalize the new aid architecture for Afghanistan and develop a three-year strategic framework for special circumstances.



A. Political developments

4. The de facto authorities have still not addressed persistent ambiguities over the parameters of the political and legal system, although Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, stated in October that efforts to draft a new constitution were ongoing. No progress was seen with regards to girls' access to secondary education or the inclusiveness of governance structures during the reporting period.

5. Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, began to assert himself increasingly as a decision-maker, often relying on the advice of a small group of advisers outside the de facto Cabinet. He nonetheless convened large-scale consultations with Kabul-based de facto Cabinet members in Kandahar in mid-September, early October and early November. While policymaking appears increasingly formalized, de facto Cabinet meetings in Kabul usually focus on implementation and administrative processes and more strategic decisions. Senior appointments, usually issued through edicts, appear mostly generated from Kandahar. No moves have been made to formally define the decision-making roles within the de facto authority, which continues to operate on an interim basis according to the Taliban's own description.

6. The de facto Cabinet was reshuffled with three ministerial appointments: Attaullah Omari (Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock) on 20 August; Habibullah Agha (Education) on 21 September; and Neda Mohammad Nadeem (Higher Education) on 17 October. In total, 7 de facto non-security deputy ministers and 12 de facto provincial governors were also reshuffled. Those appointments continued earlier trends regarding the exclusion of women and the prominence of religious and militant credentials.

7. The political opposition, comprising exiled former Republic officials and political figures, continued to meet and issue statements. Three new groups were announced during the reporting period. Between 15 and 17 September, several opposition figures met in Vienna, where the preference was expressed for political dialogue. Others called for military resistance, including the Afghanistan Freedom Front on 18 September and former Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum on 21 September.

8. Amid those developments, the de facto authorities increased engagement with political figures based in Afghanistan and continued efforts to attract the return of exiled Afghans through the Commission for Return and Communication with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures. Senior de facto officials met Republic-era personalities, including, in October, former parliamentarians, some of whom were returnees, along with former politicians and their cadres. On 23 October, the Commission's spokesperson, Ahmadullah Wasiq, stated that the Commission would investigate allegations against former political elites, including returnees.

9. Subnational outreach also increased, with provincial visits by senior Kabul-based de facto officials, including from the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs in six northern and north-eastern provinces, and with local conflict resolution efforts, often involving community and religious figures. The de facto authorities reported the resolution of a 63-year long feud between two families in Nangarhar Province, a 5-year enmity between two Pashtun families in Farah Province, a land-dispute between Pashtun returnees and Uzbek and Tajik residents in Takhar Province and a long-standing conflict between two Pashtun tribes in Herat Province.

10. Meanwhile, the de facto authorities reported that they continued to pay civil service salaries, including for female civil servants, the vast majority of whom had not been allowed to report to work since August 2021. By 30 October, all civil servants had been paid through August and most of them through September, as

technical challenges in processing the payroll reportedly prevented payments for a minority of budget units. On 20 October, the Taliban leader issued a decree establishing a commission to prevent land-grabbing and recover usurped land, a long-standing source of conflict. After the addition of a provincial shura to Takhar Province on 19 October, such structures are currently present in 15 out of 34 provinces. According to de facto Deputy Minister of Interior, Noor Jalal Jalali, the shuras will be replicated in every province, in part to report on provincial administrations, and are in direct contact with Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada.

11. The conversion of the former Republic judiciary and legal framework continued, amid concerns over the prevailing ambiguity regarding applicable laws. On 21 August, the de facto Attorney General instructed prosecutors to transfer ongoing investigations to de facto courts; the Deputy Chief Justice for Administration of the de facto Supreme Court informed UNAMA that judges would also perform investigative functions under sharia law. The measure increased the courts' caseload and delays in judicial proceedings, increasing already extended pretrial detention periods. With the attendant rise in the prison population and a request by the de facto Office of Prison Administration in June, Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, instructed the de facto Supreme Court in late September to appoint panels of judges for every province to expedite consideration of the cases of pretrial detainees. On 13 November, Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, posted that the Taliban leader had met with judges and reminded them that the application of "hudud" and "qisas" sentences was compulsory when conditions under sharia law were met.

12. The licensing of defence lawyers was ongoing, and women remained excluded from the process. The de facto Ministry of Justice reported that, as at 10 November, 1,275 of 1,332 assessed lawyers had met the requirements, and 947 had received renewed licences, compared with an estimated 6,000 defence lawyers, including 1,500 women, practising prior to August 2021. On 4 October, the de facto Ministry of Justice announced plans to establish a lawyers' union at a defence lawyers' conference slated for 19 and 20 October, which was later cancelled. According to de facto judicial authorities, the de facto courts had heard over 13,000 cases and Departments of Justice countrywide received 97,700 civil cases, of which only 2,339 had been processed through de facto courts since August 2021.

13. The institutionalization of the security apparatus increased. During the accountability sessions at the end of August, security ministries reported that 150,000 army and nearly 200,000 police personnel had been recruited. The de facto Ministry of Interior reported on the reactivation of all its systems, including employee salaries and identity cards, and the Kabul International Airport's immigration and travel ban systems. The de facto ministry also reported it had distributed 700,000 passports, although that process had been suspended since 8 October, reportedly owing to the lack of blank passports.

14. Several security commissions were created in October, including a de facto Ministry of Interior's Reform Commission with nine subcommittees to expel personnel with criminal backgrounds and a military ranking commission to assess the "jihadi" and educational backgrounds of army personnel. In addition, at least 52 appointments in the de facto security ministries were announced, mostly reshuffles, including four deputy ministers, a new Air Force Commander, seven Corps Commanders, and 13 provincial chiefs of police; 27 defence appointments, announced on 26 October, followed the visit by de facto Minister for Defence, Mujahid Yaqoub, to Kandahar.

15. Throughout the reporting period, de facto Minister for Defence, Mujahid Yaqoub, and de facto Chief of Army Staff, Qari Fasihuddin, visited select provinces to assess the situation and engage local forces on professionalization, command and

control. In October, Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, separately addressed the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence provincial directors, as well as intelligence officials, corps commanders and key units of the de facto Ministry of Defence, emphasizing the need for allegiance and integrity, support for sharia law implementation and respect for the population, including for prisoners. He also met elders from restive Baghlan and Badakhshan Provinces, ostensibly to understand their grievances.

16. United Nations officials and the UNAMA leadership continued to engage with the de facto authorities, emphasizing fundamental rights and freedoms, including for women and girls; inclusive, participatory and responsive governance; and concrete action to counter terrorism. This included visits from the UNAMA leadership to various provinces, including Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Kunduz and Paktika. UNAMA advocated for the extension of the deadline of the defence lawyers' licensing process, for the inclusion of women in the process and for measures to increase accessibility for provincial lawyers. In September, the Mission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a pilot legal aid project in Bamyan and Herat Provinces that had so far benefitted 320 people (including 77 women). In November 2022, UNDP launched a project to provide legal aid services and conduct consultation workshops to identify positive traditional justice practices in southern provinces.

17. UNAMA, through its country-wide field office presence, continued to implement local peace and outreach initiatives to encourage communities to address conflict peacefully. These included supporting the resolution of a conflict over forest revenue in Nuristan Province, as well as 21 UNAMA-led engagements in 11 provinces between 20 August and 10 November to encourage, facilitate and broker dialogue between the de facto authorities and civil society groups, and consultations with local communities.

B. Security

18. Between 17 August and 13 November, the United Nations recorded 1,587 security-related incidents, a 23 per cent increase from 1,291 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021. Armed clashes increased by 27 per cent, from 99 to 126; air strikes by 25 per cent, from 4 to 5; detonations of improvised explosive devices by 7 per cent, from 74 to 79. Assassinations decreased by 53 per cent, from 160 to 75. The Western, Southern and Eastern regions accounted for 52 per cent of recorded incidents, with Kabul, Herat and Kandahar being the most affected provinces.

19. Armed opposition activities intensified. UNAMA recorded 22 armed groups claiming to operate in 11 provinces. The National Resistance Front and the National Liberation Front claimed attacks in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa, Nangahar, Nuristan, Takhar, Panjshir and Parwan Provinces. While the National Resistance Front expanded its operations in eastern and north-eastern provinces, the most significant clashes took place in Panjshir, where de facto security forces launched an offensive in several districts on 9 September, following Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir's appointment on 20 August as military commander for Baghlan's Andarab valley and Panjshir. Operations in Panjshir, Badakhshan and Baghlan continued through October.

20. Attacks claimed by or attributed to ISIL-K decreased to 30 attacks in six provinces from 121 attacks in 14 provinces during the same period in 2021, although casualties remained significant. Claimed incidents included a suicide attack on the Russian Embassy on 5 September; an explosion in the Sekandar Mosque in Kunduz Province on 7 October; and several detonations of improvised explosive devices, including against a de facto security forces vehicle in Mehterlam City, Laghman

Province, on 10 October, in which 44 civilians were wounded; and against a bus in Herat City on 27 October, in which 10 de facto security forces were killed or wounded.

21. Several high-profile attacks against religious targets were unclaimed, including a suicide attack in the Gazargah Mosque in Herat City on 2 September, in which 20 people were killed, including pro-Taliban cleric Mujib Rahman Ansari, and a further 22 injured; an improvised explosive device detonation in Kabul on 23 September, in which 4 civilians were killed and 52 wounded; and a suicide attack on 5 October at the de facto Ministry of Interior compound mosque, in which 9 people were killed and 30 injured.

22. Border tensions continued. Of 17 incidents, 14 occurred along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan – including clashes between the de facto and Pakistani border forces in the Dand-e Patan area, Paktia Province, on 14 September and in the Spin Boldak District, Kandahar Province, on 19 and 20 October; and along the border between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran – including clashes in the Pul-e Abresham area, Nimroz Province, on 17 October.

23. Following a prisoner swap on 19 September, representatives of the de facto authorities and the United States of America met in Doha on 8 October, reportedly to discuss counter-terrorism. This was the first direct meeting since the killing of al-Qaida leader Aiman al-Zawahiri on 31 July. Several countries, including Pakistan and Tajikistan, expressed concerns over the threat posed by terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, amid several killings of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan members, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. On 14 September, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted reports that Jaish-e-Mohammad leader, Masood Azhar, had sought refuge in Afghanistan. Amid rising reports of drones and fighter jets entering Afghan airspace, on 28 August, de facto Minister for Defence, Mujahid Yaqoub, was quoted by the media accusing the United States of using drones over Afghan territory and Pakistan of facilitating these flights.

24. UNAMA continued to engage relevant stakeholders on the risks associated with the illicit trade, accumulation and diversion of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, and of explosive material. Between 17 August and 13 November, there were 52 documented seizures of weapons caches across 19 provinces. The de facto authorities announced at least 42 seizures on social media, amid allegations that a portion of seizures was being retained and sold by individual commanders for economic gain.

25. Central-level de facto authorities reported that they managed weapons and ammunition for their forces through weapons registration and record keeping and by issuing weapons identity cards to de facto security personnel. On 25 October, the Taliban leader issued a decree that personal weapons must be collected from the Taliban and weapons dealers, and military equipment handed over to the state. The de facto authorities reported on the licensing and registration of legally held civilian weapons, although implementation appears to vary across provinces.

26. Regional Member States also expressed concerns regarding weapons proliferation originating from Afghanistan. Several regional platforms increased dialogue on the issue. In addition to Member States, UNAMA held consultations with relevant United Nations entities, international and regional organizations and specialized non-governmental organizations to discuss support to regional and international efforts on these issues.

27. The United Nations documented 58 security incidents directly affecting its personnel, including 23 intimidation cases, 12 crime-related incidents, 4 arrests and 12 incidents affecting United Nations assets. The total represents a decrease from 142 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021.

C. Regional cooperation

28. The region maintained its engagement with the de facto authorities on priorities such as regional and border security, counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, women's and girls' rights and inclusive governance. In the declaration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Heads of State Summit, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 15 and 16 September (to which the de facto authorities were not invited), participants called for inclusive governance, noting the importance of security in Afghanistan for the region and the need for Afghanistan to become an independent, neutral, unified, democratic and peaceful state, free from terrorism, war and drugs. The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, suggested that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization establish a humanitarian fund for Afghanistan. At the Sixth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, held in Astana on 13 October, President Mirziyoyev proposed that an international group of high-level negotiators be established to engage with the de facto authorities. At the Summit of the Organization of Turkic States, held on 11 November in Samarkand, a declaration was issued in which participants welcomed the proposal and expressed support for an inclusive and representative political system that upholds fundamental human rights, as well as strengthened efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and support its economic recovery.

29. On 27 October, the five Central Asian presidents and President of the European Council, Charles Michel, issued a joint communiqué after meeting in Astana, stressing the importance of promoting and respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans, in particular women, girls and minorities; the establishment of an inclusive and representative government; and the need to expand interaction in providing humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. They further recognized the Central Asian countries' provision of educational opportunities for Afghans.

30. The de facto authorities continued to articulate their vision of regional cooperation as a central feature of their economy-centric foreign policy at a 12 October conference in Kabul, attended by the de facto Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, and de facto Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Motaqi. There was some progress regarding connectivity, trade and transit, including the signature on 8 September of a contract for air traffic control with an Emirati company for several international airports, including Kabul; the announcement on 10 September of a quadripartite agreement to pilot a railway and road trade corridor connecting Afghanistan to China via Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; the announcement on 27 September of imports of gasoline, diesel fuel, liquefied petroleum gas and wheat from the Russian Federation at advantageous prices; and on 4 October the extension until March 2023 by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the gasoline transit permit.

31. The de facto authorities regularly engaged with China on the inclusion of Afghanistan in the belt and road initiative and with Turkmenistan on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. On 10 October, the de facto authorities reported that agreements had been reached with Turkmenistan on several issues, including a schedule for land acquisition and pipeline construction, and gas distribution to industrial parks and residents in Herat. On 2 November, in a joint statement, China and Pakistan conveyed consensus on the need to continue their humanitarian and economic assistance for the Afghan people and enhance development cooperation in Afghanistan, including through its inclusion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. On 25 October, the de facto authorities also inaugurated the Mazar-e Sharif International Airport, reconstructed with financial and technical assistance from Uzbekistan.

32. Beyond economic issues, the de facto authorities sought to develop ties with religious scholars from Muslim-majority countries. A delegation led by Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, attended the seventh meeting of Islamic scholars in Türkiye on 15 and 16 October. Following the meeting, a statement was issued calling on Islamic countries to extend cultural, political and economic relations with Afghanistan and reiterating the role of Islamic countries and religious scholars in the recognition of the “Islamic Emirate”, including by encouraging investments in Afghanistan. The delegation also met with Turkish authorities and Afghan businesspeople based in Türkiye. A delegation of Turkish religious scholars subsequently visited Kabul on 26 October. On 30 October, the de facto Minister for Education, Mawlawi Habibullah Agha, signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of five madrasas in Kabul with a Turkish institution.

33. UNAMA continued to engage with the de facto authorities on regional cooperation and hosted regular coordination meetings with Kabul-based regional ambassadors. UNAMA attended the aforementioned 12 October conference in Kabul and the international high-level conference on international and regional border security and management cooperation to counter terrorism and prevent the movement of terrorists, co-organized by the United Nations and the Government of Tajikistan on 18 and 19 October in Dushanbe.

III. Human rights

34. During the reporting period, UNAMA documented 530 civilian casualties (124 killed; 406 wounded). The leading causes were improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance. On 30 September, 54 people were killed and 114 wounded – mainly young women and girls from the Hazara community – in an unclaimed suicide attack on the Kaaj Educational Centre in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul. Unexploded ordnance killed 19 and wounded 35 people, mostly children, during the reporting period.

35. UNAMA also documented at least 9 extrajudicial killings, at least 5 cases of torture and ill-treatment and at least 29 arbitrary arrests and detentions carried out by the de facto authorities against former government officials and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members, in violation of the general amnesty announced in August 2021.

36. While human rights violations against individuals accused of ISIL-K affiliation decreased compared with previous periods, UNAMA documented 69 extrajudicial killings, 14 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 6 instances of torture and ill-treatment of individuals accused of affiliation with the National Resistance Front, primarily in Panjshir Province, where at least 48 extrajudicial killings between 12 and 14 September were recorded in Dara and Khenj districts. Some captured National Resistance Front members were reportedly executed extrajudicially. On 17 September, the de facto Ministry of Defence announced that “serious investigations” into such allegations were under way, while reports on 16 October indicated that a six-member commission, led by former de facto Kabul Governor, Mawlawi Neda Mohammad Nadeem (now de facto Minister for Higher Education), would examine the files of individuals detained during military operations in Panjshir.

37. The de facto authorities continued to curtail Afghans’ rights to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. Amid financial challenges related to the cessation of funding following the severe reduction of international support after August 2021, many civil society and media actors reported maintaining a low profile or having discontinued their activities for fear of retribution. Since 23 August 2022, UNAMA documented seven instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and six

instances of ill-treatment and threats against civil society actors and human rights defenders, as well as seven instances of arbitrary arrest and detention and four instances of ill-treatment and threats against journalists. Over half of the 20 peaceful protests recorded in Kabul and other cities, mainly organized by women, were dispersed by unnecessary or disproportionate use of force by the de facto authorities.

38. On 23 August, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture re-established the Media Violations Commission, which had met three times since and was where cases of detained journalists were heard. The journalists were subsequently released from de facto General Directorate of Intelligence detention. While the re-activation of the Media Violations Commission was a positive development, its neutrality was questioned as members were primarily drawn from among de facto authorities officials. In addition, the de facto authorities suspended the websites of two media outlets (Zawia News and Hasht-e-Subh) on 3 October. On 15 October, TOLO News Director, Khpolwak Sapai, departed Kabul, stating on Twitter that he could no longer work in Afghanistan as he had been allegedly detained and threatened on several occasions.

39. The number of women journalists continued to decline owing to restricting directives targeting them and reported threats and intimidation. Research by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) identified a preference by media outlets to retain men over women as journalists out of fear of repercussions for non-compliance with the de facto authorities' broader restrictions. Furthermore, in the current economic environment, the financial loss associated with the risk of being shut down negatively affects outlets' decision to retain female media workers.

40. On 10 November, the de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice announced that women could no longer gain access to public parks across Afghanistan. Reports from various provinces suggested women were also not allowed access to gyms and bathhouses. While the extent and impact of these new policies remained to be assessed, the varied implementation of directives issued by the de facto authorities continued to affect human rights. Despite the insistence of the de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice that its guidance was merely of a "recommendatory" nature, UNAMA documented at least 24 human rights violations carried out by its personnel. These included ill-treatment and torture (primarily beatings) and arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals accused of infractions, including barbers trimming men's beards, shopkeepers allowing unaccompanied women to shop, women without a mahram or women accused of breaking dress codes prescribed by the de facto authorities.

41. Women's and girls' enjoyment of their basic rights and freedoms remains particularly constricted. The inconsistent but sometimes harsh enforcement of the hijab and mahram directives by local de facto authorities continues to result in reported physical and verbal abuse. Gender segregation of health workers in medical facilities is now institutionalized, with female health workers only attending to women, while female patients without a mahram were being turned away. Access to secondary education remains suspended for most girls, while between 8 and 10 September, the de facto authorities closed the briefly reopened public secondary girls' schools in Paktia Province.

42. Incidents of violence against women and girls continue to be reported, ranging from murder, honour killings and suicides to forced marriages and beatings causing injuries or disabilities. Anecdotal reports suggest that local de facto authorities use a combination of formal and informal justice mechanisms to deal with civil matters and reported cases of violence against women and girls, but these are not uniform and do not specifically address concerns over women's access to justice, especially given the

absence of female justice professionals. On 21 August, the office of the de facto Attorney General also abolished a specialized directorate established in 2018 to investigate the harassment of women in the workplace and higher education, ostensibly citing budgetary constraints.

43. In August and September, UNAMA and UN-Women convened 15 in-country and online consultations in 12 provinces with 207 Afghan women leaders with diverse personal and professional backgrounds. They unanimously emphasized the reopening of secondary girls' schools as the most immediate priority, followed by safety and security (flagged by 71 per cent of participants), and asked the international community to focus on reinstating the full spectrum of rights for women and girls, beyond education. The women consulted argued that a narrow focus on education would set a path to lowering the threshold for the restoration of all women's rights. They also requested UNAMA to increase their participation in different forms of negotiations and dialogue with the de facto authorities, including through the establishment of a platform/mechanism for women's direct engagement, and requested regional and Muslim-majority countries to exert their influence to improve the situation of women and girls.

44. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified 522 grave violations against 269 children (including 47 girls) during the reporting period. Killing and maiming of children remained the most prevalent violation, affecting 267 children (64 killed, 203 maimed).

45. UNAMA continued to provide technical advice and awareness-raising sessions to the de facto Office of Prison Administration to enable prisons to fulfil their human rights obligations. In addition to ongoing engagement with provincial prison leadership on detention conditions, as of mid-August, the de facto Office of Prison Administration granted UNAMA access to detainees in prisons in several locations, including Kabul's Pul-e-Charkhi prison.

46. Notwithstanding previously reported efforts to reduce the incarcerated population, financial constraints and discontinued donor funding continued to have a significant impact on the ability of the de facto Office of Prison Administration to meet international standards, including the systematic provision of adequate food and hygiene supplies, vocational education and training, and health needs. Children remained incarcerated alongside adults in most provincial prisons, often in a different wing or section, owing to insufficient funding to maintain separate juvenile facilities. In some locations, girls were held with women detainees. In recent months, two additional separate juvenile facilities started operating in Paktia and Baghlan Provinces, bringing the total to four.

IV. Economic development, donor coordination and aid effectiveness

47. The economy shows signs of slowly stabilizing, albeit at a much lower level of economic activity than prior to August 2021. Most factors adversely affecting the economy since August 2021 persist, such as the steep reduction in development aid, international financial transactions challenges, the impact on the banking sector and skilled workforce shortages. State revenue collection in the first seven months of 2022, primarily driven by customs revenue, reportedly marginally exceeded collection in the same periods in 2021 and 2020. Exports to India and Pakistan are higher than in the previous year, while essential commodity prices have stabilized, and in some cases declined – possibly owing in part to imports from the Russian Federation. A World Bank report published 18 October suggests marginal improvements in business revenues and household incomes. Most Afghans remain

impoverished with little prospect of meaningful improvement as over 90 per cent of the population is estimated to be food insecure.

48. On 14 September, the United States announced the establishment of the Afghan Fund, hosted by the Switzerland-based Bank of International Settlements, to preserve the \$3.5 billion of Afghanistan in international reserves set aside by the United States Executive Order No. 14064. While the de facto authorities protested the Fund's establishment and continued to call for the reserves to be provided to the Afghan Central Bank, the United States has stated that the Fund is expected to make targeted disbursements to help provide greater stability to the Afghan economy. In a separate development, two transactions between the de facto authorities and European companies for the printing of new Afghani banknotes were processed in October, and a first batch of notes arrived in early November; the new banknotes were required to help alleviate liquidity issues related to the natural aging of banknotes.

49. The cash import pipeline established by the United Nations for humanitarian operations and salary payments of United Nations staff and contractors continued to function, with \$1.63 billion transferred between 1 December 2021 and 14 November 2022. The funds were distributed directly to 19 different United Nations agencies, funds or programmes, the World Bank and 30 international non-governmental organizations through the Afghanistan International Bank. The cash delivery continued to contribute to stabilizing the Afghan currency and serve as an economic stimulus without directly supporting the de facto administration. Cash provided to non-governmental organizations allowed them to sustain their operations in the sectors of health, education, environment and the protection of vulnerable communities, with reduced reliance on high-cost money service providers.

50. The UNDP-managed inter-agency Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan remains a critical financing platform for the 2022 United Nations Transitional Engagement Framework for Afghanistan. It has so far received \$126.23 million from contributing partners, supporting 1 million people in Afghanistan. Implementation activities, which began on 1 January 2022, address basic human needs in the areas of essential services, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, community resilience, planning and social cohesion. These complement humanitarian activities and are intended over the medium term to reduce humanitarian needs. Eight regional joint programmes and one joint sectoral project on health have been developed in collaboration with 17 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, delivering as one. On 30 August 2022, the Fund's steering committee approved the allocation of \$41.5 million for the Eastern Region, in addition to \$102.20 million already allocated to two regional joint programmes. Efforts are ongoing to mobilize resources for the remaining five regions.

51. The United Nations is developing a new strategic framework to succeed the Transitional Engagement Framework, currently slated for launch in the first quarter of 2023. Subnational consultations were held in October and November in Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyan, Faryab, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar, Kapisa and Paktika Provinces. The consultations gathered 514 stakeholders – including women, young people, community leaders and elders, private sector actors and farmers – to integrate Afghan citizens' voices in the development of priority interventions, and 117 de facto authorities' representatives. In September, representatives from donors, financing platforms, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations established a coordination mechanism to develop a shared high-level framework to inform further engagement on basic human needs, including the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan for the period 2023–2025.

52. In September, the working group on national durable solutions for Afghanistan was established under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator to provide strategic direction for collective action on protracted internal displacement in line with the

Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The working group has developed a 24-month strategic framework for solutions to internal displacement in Afghanistan, focusing on protection, area-based approaches and the humanitarian, peace and development nexus.

53. In the context of operationalizing a new aid architecture, UNAMA and the World Bank organized an Afghanistan Coordination Group meeting in Istanbul, Türkiye, on 7 and 8 September for a quarterly stock-take on coordination efforts, funding and programme delivery. The five strategic thematic working groups provided an update on their priorities. The Group agreed on a coordinated approach between funding streams to avoid fragmentation and duplication. Donors discussed potential technical assistance to de facto institutions to strengthen basic human needs programming and macroeconomic stability. Given some donors' concerns on the level of engagement with the de facto authorities, the Group discussed the feasibility of defining broadly shared objectives with the de facto authorities for economic stabilization and requested UNAMA to spearhead this dialogue and identify possible points of convergence. Donors recognized the need to identify clear modalities for providing technical assistance to the de facto entities involved in basic service delivery and vital cross-cutting functions. They are also exploring options for the resumption of small-scale infrastructure programmes suspended since August 2021.

54. On 15 September, the special envoys and representatives for Afghanistan of France, Germany, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States and the European Union met in Washington, D.C., and issued a statement highlighting that foreign assistance and engagement with Afghanistan was for the benefit of the Afghan people, while reiterating persisting concerns over political, security and human rights developments.

55. UNAMA also continued to coordinate the United Nations agencies, funds or programmes on risk management and the mitigation of fraud and diversion risks. A joint application of an electronic contractor information management system is being established to enhance information sharing on potential and common partners. Common risk mitigation actions identified by the United Nations system-wide risk management working group are being assigned to lead agencies and reassessed on a regular basis.

V. Humanitarian assistance

56. The humanitarian situation remains of concern as Afghanistan enters its third consecutive year of drought-like conditions and its second year of economic contraction, with families unable to recover from recurring disasters and decades of conflict-driven vulnerability, and facing another winter. The 2023 humanitarian response planning figures show that two thirds of the population, or 28.3 million people, will need humanitarian and protection assistance in 2023, up from 24.4 million in 2022 and 18.4 million at the beginning of 2021. As at 16 November, the 2022 humanitarian response plan was only 54.1 per cent funded, with a \$2.04 billion shortfall.

57. Acute food insecurity and malnutrition persist. The projected number of people facing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity between November 2022 and March 2023 is expected to increase to 20 million (up from the 18.9 million previously projected at these levels of food insecurity until November 2022). This is marginally higher than recent projections but lower than projections made for the same period last year, as the worst-case scenario of a complete collapse in systems and reduced operational ability of the humanitarian community was mitigated with sanctions exemptions, liquidity solutions and other enabling systems. Notwithstanding, the

severity of food insecurity is plateauing with 6 million people at emergency level of food insecurity – one of the highest figures in the world.

58. Humanitarian partners continued to scale-up the response to rising needs. Between January and October, humanitarian partners reached at least 24.3 million people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance. This included 21.7 million people provided with food and livelihood support; 9.4 million people with health care; 5.2 million children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women with acute malnutrition treatment; 9.8 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance; 518,000 children with education support; 1.5 million people with shelter and household items; and 4.7 million people with protection assistance.

59. Humanitarian partners mounted a three-month rapid response plan for the 5.9 magnitude earthquake in south-eastern Afghanistan on 22 June, reaching 515,000 people across nine affected districts. The emergency phase concluded in September.

60. Between 1 January and 12 November, there were 72,789 suspected cases of measles that were associated with 380 deaths. Of those cases, 77 per cent were in children under five years of age. The United Nations vaccinated over 2 million children against measles between 21 August and 15 November. Between 21 August and 12 November, 88,118 cases of acute watery diarrhoea with dehydration (55 per cent affecting children under five years of age) were reported in 172 districts (34 provinces), with a case fatality rate of 0.04 per cent. Since January, Afghanistan recorded two cases of wild poliovirus type 1 and no cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2. Since 1 January 2022, six nationwide polio vaccination campaigns were conducted, each targeting 9.9 million children and using house-to-house and mosque-to-mosque vaccination approaches, reaching approximately 3 million children inaccessible since 2015.

61. Conflict-related trauma cases decreased by 87 per cent between 21 August and 30 October compared with the same period in 2021, with 2,225 people having received conflict-related trauma care, compared with 10,802 previously. Between 1 January and 15 November, 41,624 children suffering from severe acute malnourishment with medical complications were admitted and treated in 127 in-patient departments for severe acute malnutrition. Over 500 mobile health and nutrition teams continued to reach populations in remote areas, providing over 450,000 consultations every month.

62. While reduced levels of military operations and kinetic activities since September 2021 enabled partners to reach previously inaccessible areas, access impediments persist. Incidents of interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities remained high, with 275 reported incidents between 21 August and 15 November, compared with 146 during the same period last year. Since the start of 2022, 3 attacks on health-care personnel and 302 incidents of violence and threats against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities were recorded, a significant decrease from 522 incidents documented in the same period last year. In addition, 42 incidents of threats or intimidation against female aid workers by local de facto authorities were recorded as movement restrictions imposed on female humanitarian staff undermined access to women and girls, amid concerns over recruitment and retention. Furthermore, 84 bureaucratic impediments were recorded in relation to the pressure to sign memorandums of understanding. Since the start of 2022, one delay/denial of visa was also reported. Increased access impediments were anticipated with the implementation of new guidelines by the de facto authorities, which could have a substantial impact on the humanitarian space.

63. Between 21 August and 13 November, 231,679 people were recorded to have crossed into Afghanistan. Of those, 110,674 had been deported and 120,005 made spontaneous returns. During this period, 215,144 undocumented Afghan migrants

returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 16,535 from Pakistan. A total of 5,683 Afghan refugees – from Pakistan (5,328), the Islamic Republic of Iran (336) and other countries (19) – returned to Afghanistan under the voluntary repatriation programme of the United Nations between 1 January and 12 November. Between 1 January and 13 November, at least 32,410 people were newly displaced by violence inside Afghanistan. Since 2012, some 5.8 million people were displaced by violence and natural disasters; this includes more than 866,000 people displaced by violence in 2021 alone, 85 per cent of them prior to 15 August 2021.

64. The de facto authorities suspended previous decrees aimed at providing long-term solutions by allocating land to qualified internally displaced persons. Evictions of internally displaced persons living in informal settlements occurred for various reasons, including the de facto authorities seeking to promote the return of people to their places of origin and economic imperatives. With the economic downturn, internally displaced persons are also less able to pay rent.

65. Explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continued to pose a threat to civilians and humanitarian personnel. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service coordinated and enabled the survey and clearance of over 16.4 square kilometres of contaminated land, safely removing thousands of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. As at 15 November, 99 per cent of mine action teams were operational, employing 4,185 people.

VI. Counter-narcotics

66. Opium cultivation¹ increased by 32 per cent over the previous year to 233,000 hectares, making the 2022 crop the third largest area under cultivation since monitoring began. The increase in area under cultivation was offset by a reduction in yields, resulting in a reduction in production compared with 2021.

67. Cultivation remained concentrated in southwestern Afghanistan, which accounted for 73 per cent and saw the largest increases. Following a drought in early 2022, opium yields declined from an average of 38.5 kg per hectare in 2021 to an estimated 26.7 kg per hectare, resulting in a harvest of 6,200 tons, 10 per cent less than in 2021. The 2022 harvest could be converted into 350 to 380 tons of heroin of export quality, at 50 to 70 per cent purity. Afghan opiates supplied some 80 per cent of worldwide opiate users.

68. Seizure of opiates by enforcement agencies indicated that opiate trafficking from Afghanistan proceeded without interruption since August 2021. The de facto authorities cultivation ban of April 2022 was followed by a dramatic increase in prices, with per-kilogram prices nearly doubling from \$116 in March to \$203. Farmers' income from opium sales tripled from \$425 million in 2021 to \$1.4 billion in 2022 – or 29 per cent of the 2021 value of the agricultural sector (against 9 per cent of the agricultural output in 2021). This did not necessarily translate into farmers' purchasing power, given inflation during the same period, as food prices increased on average by 35 per cent.

69. The alternative development programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reached 10,601 farmers (30 per cent women) in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces, providing agricultural inputs and extensions services on the production of cereal and high-value crops, livestock and animal husbandry, poultry farming, the rehabilitation of irrigation structures and establishing market linkages for producers. These interventions aimed to strengthen food security and livelihoods

¹ See www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Opium_cultivation_Afghanistan_2022.pdf.

and resulted in a 7 per cent increase of cereal crops and milk production for beneficiaries. In addition, UNODC and UNDP started a joint project providing essential medicines and medical supplies for 17 drug treatment centres with a total 930-bed capacity across the eastern, western, northern and central highland regions.

VII. Mission support

70. As at 31 October, vacancy rates in UNAMA were 10 per cent for international staff, 7 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 13 per cent for National Professional Officers and 11 per cent for national staff, compared with approved rates of 8 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. The proportion of female staff was 32 per cent for international staff, 33 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 12 per cent for National Professional Officers and 8 per cent for national staff.

VIII. Observations

71. The United Nations has maintained its presence in Afghanistan, scaling responses to existing and new humanitarian emergencies, working towards economic recovery, promoting respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, including for women and girls, and facilitating dialogue between communities and the de facto authorities, especially at the subnational level, on inclusive, participatory and responsive governance. Donors continued to fund humanitarian and basic needs programming to preserve community systems and livelihoods. The region played an important role in terms of its engagement with de facto authorities on priorities such as trade and transit.

72. After decades of conflict, Afghans from all factions and communities deserve to reconcile based on a shared vision of their future, drawing on the traditions of Afghanistan of cultural tolerance and coexistence. Respect for human rights and inclusive governance must underpin this vision to prevent future cycles of violence and instability. The general amnesty proclaimed by the Taliban in August 2021, as well as the activities of the commission on the return of former officials, are positive steps in this regard and should be enhanced.

73. Progress towards peace also requires the political opposition to draw lessons from the divisions that plagued the Islamic Republic and shape a realistic, united and forward-looking proposal for political engagement, and the Taliban to draw lessons from previous peace agreements that failed because they were not sufficiently inclusive. The United Nations stands ready to support a process of national dialogue that addresses the root causes of conflict and sets the foundation of a durable peace and national reconciliation.

74. The de facto authorities continue to maintain security control over virtually the entire national territory. Yet serious concerns remain over the presence of foreign terrorist groups in Afghanistan and risks of weapons proliferation emanating from Afghanistan and the degree to which the de facto authorities are willing and able to address these concerns. The de facto authorities must take more concrete actions on the security and political fronts, including engaging in counter-terrorism dialogue with the region and the international community to strengthen cooperation in countering these threats, while complying with their obligations under international law.

75. The ongoing harm inflicted on Afghans by targeted attacks on civilians remains deeply concerning. Improvised explosive device attacks against civilian targets or in civilian areas violate international law and must cease immediately. I call on the de facto authorities to uphold their obligations to protect all Afghans by implementing

adequate protection measures, in particular for places of worship, educational facilities and communities facing heightened risks, such as Hazaras. Unexploded remnants of war remain a tragic and preventable source of harm to civilians, mostly young children. The de facto authorities must implement their international humanitarian law obligations with regards to mine clearance and awareness-raising activities.

76. While the de facto authorities have taken steps towards establishing investigative mechanisms to address alleged human rights violations in Panjshir Province, they so far fall short of providing accountability for extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and ill-treatment. The de facto authorities must uphold their obligations to promote and protect the human rights of all Afghans, to investigate violations transparently and prevent their reoccurrence in the future.

77. The de facto authorities' use of force to disrupt peaceful protests and the further erosion of civic space and fundamental freedoms due to arbitrary arrests and detentions, threats and ill-treatment of journalists, media actors and civil society activists remain of great concern. I urge the de facto authorities to respect the independence of media and civil society organizations, as well as Afghans' rights to peaceful assembly.

78. The women and girls of Afghanistan should not and must not be left behind. Their meaningful participation in public life, across all sectors of the country's political and economic sphere, is critical to long-term prospects for peace consolidation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan must deliver on its commitments to international principles, norms and standards against discrimination, inequity, inequality, injustice and impunity. This requires the de facto authorities to review the mahram and Islamic hijab directives and clarify their recommendatory, non-mandatory nature, and to facilitate girls' access to all levels of education, women's employment and participation in governance and other areas of the daily life of the nation.

79. Fair and impartial justice systems are essential to the rule of law, which in turn is a foundational element of a peaceful society. The reported recourse to corporal punishment by de facto judges and officials, coupled with the recent statement of the Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhunzada, on the applicability of "hudud" and "qisas", raise additional concerns over the delivery of justice. UNAMA will continue to advocate with the de facto authorities to clarify the applicable legal framework and ensure that it is in accordance with international norms. UNAMA will continue to encourage the involvement of lawyers in promoting legal awareness and people's access to rights, and the presence of women professionals in the justice sector, who play a critical role for women's access to justice, especially to address gender-based violence.

80. Despite their efforts, de facto prison authorities do not meet minimum standards in line with international norms on the treatment of prisoners, in part owing to a lack of resources. Regional and international organizations, and the international community, are encouraged to consider scaling-up financial support to meet the basic needs for the incarcerated population, including the provision of food, medical, educational and clothing needs and the deployment of health and education personnel in detention facilities.

81. I remain alarmed at the unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. The approaching winter season will stretch Afghan resilience to its limit as climate forecasts confirm a triple-dip La Niña phenomenon, extending the drought-like conditions for the third consecutive year, worsening the water crisis and preventing any return to traditional livelihood. This is compounded by crippling

restrictions on women's participation in public life, which create unmatched levels of additional vulnerability for half of the population.

82. The humanitarian response plan of \$4.4 billion remains only 54.1 per cent funded, with a shortfall of some \$2.04 billion, despite the \$2.4 billion in pledges made in March. Despite the historic scale of the 2022 humanitarian response, including in previously inaccessible areas, underfunding limits our ability to meet needs. I urge donors to renew their support to scale-up and deliver the life-saving response ahead of winter and to expand support for essential services and the preservation of the community systems through which humanitarian assistance is delivered. The humanitarian community's continued ability to stay and deliver life-saving assistance is contingent on flexible funds, enabling financial systems and assurances of aid worker safety, including and especially for female staff, and a principled humanitarian response. The United Nations remains committed to continuing the dialogue with the de facto authorities on the implementation of humanitarian activities.

83. While de facto authorities have managed to fund their own institutions with revenues they have raised, political, financial and diplomatic challenges have limited efforts towards economic recovery. An increasing number of Afghans today rely on humanitarian assistance as their only source of survival. Still, the economy is a sphere where the de facto authorities, economic actors and international stakeholders can build confidence as well as create employment, empower women, build environmental resilience and enhance regional connectivity. This hinges primarily on the de facto authorities reversing regressive policies with respect to women's rights and providing transparency on their budget. I also urge donors to fund a broader scope of technical assistance to support basic human needs, including in the agricultural sector and minor infrastructure.

84. The United Nations remains committed to continued engagement with the de facto authorities on political, humanitarian and economic priorities for the benefit of the Afghan people. However, it is undeniable that progress towards normalized relationships between Afghanistan and other Member States has lost momentum as mistrust endures on both sides. All sides must set aside mutual blame and hardened positions, and engage, with respect, patience and realism, on an agenda that places Afghans' future at its centre.

85. I extend my deep appreciation to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Roza Otunbayeva, and to non-governmental organization partners for their continued dedication and service under extremely challenging conditions and during an extremely challenging time for the Afghan people.