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meeting

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New York

President: Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Ms. Bongo
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Mr. Flynn
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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

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

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for his service as President of the Council for the month of February. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Nebenzia and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

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

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): 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: Ms. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and Ms. Mariam Safi, Executive Director, Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/64, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Ms. Lyons.

Ms. Lyons: The United Nations and its implementing partners have spent the past winter months doing everything we can to meet the growing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. That has been possible due to the generous support of donors, the ongoing support of the

Security Council and access to all parts of the country, assured by the de facto authorities.

As the winter season comes to an end, we believe that we have perhaps averted our worst fears of famine and widespread starvation. Our humanitarian agencies were able to reach nearly 20 million people with some form of assistance in 397 out of Afghanistan's 401 districts. That is the first time we have achieved that degree of reach and coverage in more than two decades. Providing short-term relief, however, is not the same as giving hope or preparing a strong foundation for Afghan self-reliance. Let us be realistic: what we have done has been only to buy a little time. It is imperative that we not find ourselves six months from now in the situation we faced six months ago, with millions of Afghans facing another winter of starvation and the only tool at our disposal being expensive and unsustainable humanitarian handouts.

It is now most urgent to address Afghanistan's economy. I would therefore like to take a moment to highlight some of the key challenges. I want to start by emphasizing that we are nearing a tipping point that will see more businesses close and more people unemployed and falling into poverty. It is approaching a point of irreversibility. We welcome the many recent General Licences issued by the United States Treasury — and most particularly, the recent General Licence 20, which is aimed at facilitating commercial and financial activity and allowing work with all governing institutions, which is a huge step forward, albeit with some restrictions with regard to sanctioned individuals.

But other challenges to reviving the economy remain. These include the collapse of demand, owing to the cessation of all development assistance — all development assistance — restrictions on international payments, lack of access to hard currency reserves, lack of liquidity, and constraints on the Central Bank to carry out some of its core functions.

To date, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has taken all conceivable measures to inject liquidity into the economy, including the physical import of cash. UNAMA, together with United Nations partners and the World Bank, is also seeking to establish — on a temporary basis, I would emphasize — a humanitarian exchange facility to allow a scale-up in humanitarian programming, which, as Council members know, is badly needed in this coming

year, and will provide access to United States dollars to legitimate business to enable them to import goods and allow the supply chain to function once again. We will continue to engage with the Central Bank and the de facto authorities on this facility, and, of course, with Member States on further support to the all-important banking sector.

When UNAMA's mandate was rolled over for six months in September 2021, it was still too early for the international community — indeed, perhaps, even this Chamber — to react to the Taliban's seizure of power. Six months of indecision, marked by continued sanctions, albeit with some relief, and unstructured political engagement, are eroding vital social and economic coping systems and pushing the population into greater uncertainty.

Let me make clear that we do not believe that we can truly assist the Afghan people without working with the de facto authorities. This must be difficult for some to accept, but it is essential for the future. We must acknowledge, however, that, as we move forward, there remains an enduring distrust between the Taliban and much of the international community and, yes, even countries of the region, including Afghanistan's neighbours. The Taliban feel misunderstood and complain to us that our reports do not reflect the reality as they see it. They tell me that we underappreciate their achievements and that we exaggerate the problems — problems that they acknowledge, I must say, and that they claim they are trying to solve.

Above all, the Taliban have told us that they should receive greater acknowledgement for the security that prevails in Afghanistan. In the six months since 15 August, there has been a 78 per cent decline in civilian casualties as a result of the reduction of the conflict. They also note that their amnesty declaration has been honoured for the most part and that violations are not State-sanctioned and that those violators will be punished. Of course, security problems remain, and I would like to note the tragic and senseless killing last week of eight polio vaccinators in northern Afghanistan, which was particularly unfortunate, given the progress that we have been making with the de facto authorities on expanding the polio programme. Of course, our sympathy is with the families of the vaccinators.

The Taliban also highlight progress on the economic front, including strong revenues despite decreased economic activity, reduced Government corruption and

a budget that does not require donor resources — again, one of the first in several decades. They also point to public universities being reopened and their desire to see Afghans — all boys and all girls — educated to a high international standard. On this issue, the Minister of Education recently stated that the plan to reopen schools for girls and boys had been finalized and is now awaiting Cabinet approval. We all anticipate with great hope and determination the reopening of the schools on 22 March.

In addition, yesterday, on the anniversary of the signing of the Doha agreement some two years ago, the Taliban reiterated their declared commitment to ensuring that Afghanistan does not become a threat to any country and expressed their desire for good relations with all States and international organizations. This complements another important point made to me recently by the de facto Foreign Minister, namely, that their diplomatic policy is to ensure that Afghanistan also does not become an arena of competition between other Powers or countries. Most importantly, they complain that these positive achievements are being undermined by an undeclared economic war against them by the international community that has greatly affected them and resulted in a choking of their economy. They also note that it is exacerbating the suffering of the population. This clash of perspectives forms the basis of a serious gulf and distrust that must be addressed, which is what UNAMA has been doing these past six months, and what we hope the Council will be giving us a mandate to continue to do in the year ahead, namely, to bridge this gulf for the betterment of all Afghans.

In response everything I mentioned, we have articulated to the Taliban the concerns of the international community, and most notably the instructions from this Chamber. As UNAMA, we must continue to report on what we see, even as we continue to build an understanding and a working relationship with the de facto authorities. We are concerned by restrictions on women's and girls' fundamental rights, of course, by extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, and by failure to respect minorities or uphold freedoms of assembly and expression.

We were extremely vocal on the need to release the disappeared women protesters and their family members last month, and indeed they were released. However, another group of women was arbitrarily arrested. Nevertheless, before coming into the Chamber

this morning, we received news from Kabul that that group has also been released. Naturally, our team in Kabul is working to verify those reports, and I will be following up with the de facto authorities when I return. But those releases continue to be good news. We continue to work with the de facto authorities on investigative processes, protocols, procedures and due diligence that must be put in place for all these cases. Recent sweeping house-to-house searches in Kabul, carried out by the main security institutions ostensibly as a crime-fighting measure, are also of concern. I will raise this with the de facto authorities as part of our ongoing collaboration on such cases. I am confident that our communications on these issues will continue to improve.

Afghanistan indeed presents a complicated situation, with positive and negative trends occurring simultaneously. UNAMA has so far been able to address many issues through constructive engagement and cooperation with the de facto authorities, both on humanitarian delivery as well as on some of the sensitive issues that I just noted. We believe, as a political mission, that we can do much more to work with the de facto authorities on the main issues facing Afghan society.

But a political mission implies a political purpose. That purpose, implied in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/64), is ultimately to see Afghanistan, one of the original Members of the United Nations, rejoin the Organization as a Member in good standing, benefit from the resources of the international community and contribute to the global discussion on issues of common concern. Naturally, working with the de facto authority in no way means condoning everything that it does. But this will give us the opportunity, on behalf of all Council members and the rest of the international community, to help shape a future for the people of Afghanistan, free of conflict and where they can peacefully pursue their quest for prosperity, participation and respect for their rights.

The Secretary-General, in his report to the Security Council, notes that the situation ahead is uncertain. He has therefore proposed a one-year mandate, after which we can evaluate the results of a sustained political engagement.

The mandate the Security Council adopts for UNAMA will send a signal from the international community to the Afghan people that they have not

been forgotten, and to the Taliban de facto authorities that the world does not desire future conflict in Afghanistan, but that it will need to recognize basic standards of global citizenship in order to be accepted by the international community.

If UNAMA is appropriately equipped and empowered by the Security Council, a busy but worthwhile agenda awaits us.

First, we must address the economic crisis that I mentioned earlier.

Secondly, we must work with the Taliban de facto authorities to ensure strong, vital, high-level education for all girls and boys to help the country move forward.

Thirdly, we must continue supporting respect for internationally recognized of human rights.

Fourthly, we must engage in a discussion about political inclusion to ensure that the concerns of all Afghans in their very rich diversity are in fact reflected in decision-making.

Fifthly, we must support a structured policy dialogue with the de facto authorities that supports this process of securing domestic legitimacy, as well as addresses the key concerns of members of the Security Council, namely, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and regional security.

Combined, the elements I just mentioned will allow us to work with the de facto authorities and other Afghans, and indeed all Council members, to establish a pathway for the Afghan State to rejoin the larger international community.

The international community, represented by the 15 countries in the Council Chamber, must make a choice. The Security Council has the lead decision-making power. Its deliberations and decisions on the mandate in the coming weeks have immense consequences. Yes, they will resonate across the region and the world but, more important, they will be felt in every village in Afghanistan.

I would like to make a personal plea to the Security Council. Those of us who work for the Council stand in awe and admiration of the work that the Security Council does, of the weight of the world that Council members carry on their collective shoulders and in their collective hearts. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I recognize how busy Council members' schedules are and the many issues that they

are addressing, and even the natural internal tensions that happen within any organization. But I would be remiss if I did not remind Council members that they are about to approach a critical moment in their relationship with Afghanistan. The Security Council has the opportunity, in the next two weeks, to develop and design a much-needed, relevant and solid political mission that will help to build back the country, that will help to build the capacity, that will help to attract back the all-important development dollars and will avoid the constant collapse of Afghanistan into a humanitarian crisis. Have not the Afghan people suffered enough? They will need Council members' collective commitment to move the country forward in a political mission supporting all Afghans. Rebuilding is what political missions do, in concert with the authorities and the citizens of the country. I implore the Security Council to give us the strong, solid mandate that will be required. Without it, I fear for the future.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Lyons for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Safi.

Ms. Safi: I thank the members of the Security Council for this opportunity to address them on the situation in Afghanistan. I am Mariam Safi, an Afghan-Canadian with 15 years of experience working as a researcher and peacebuilding practitioner in Afghanistan.

Before I begin my briefing today, I want to express my solidarity with the people of Ukraine. As a people that have suffered conflict for decades, Afghans understand their pain. And I salute their resolve.

Today I brought with me a piece of Afghanistan — a bit of soil that I have kept with me from my first visit in 2007. To me, every grain represents an Afghan woman, man and child — their aspirations, their courage and their sacrifices. Let this soil remind Council members that Afghanistan is more than images on television or numbers on a page. It is the tens of thousands of Afghans killed so far; it is the Hazaras and other ethnic groups who continue to be persecuted — the 1 million children at risk of malnutrition, the 24 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and the dozens of women protesters, civil society and journalists who have been detained, disappeared or killed since 15 August. Council members' decision in this Chamber affects nearly 40 million lives.

My statement today will focus on priorities for the new mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the humanitarian crisis and the political path forward for Afghanistan.

As Secretary-General Guterres remarked, Afghanistan is hanging by a thread. I would add that so is the credibility of the United Nations, the Security Council and the international community. Peacebuilding in Afghanistan has been intrusive, externally driven, top-down and technocratic for two decades. Afghanistan has been exploited by powerful countries for their own ends. Instead of supporting Afghans in shaping their own destiny, the international community's approach was short-sighted and undermined local autonomy.

That is why we are here today. Since August, five Afghan women have briefed the Security Council. They told the Council to stand strong on human rights and inclusive governance, and they warned members of the consequences should they fail to do so. Today it is in the Council's power to make decisions that could uplift the people of Afghanistan, the region and the world, breaking the cycle of conflict and violence. But it must act now.

As the Council is well aware, there has been a rapid deterioration of women's rights since the Taliban seized power. Members have heard from multiple Afghan women and the United Nations about restrictions on women's movement, dress, access to education and work. While the Taliban has announced the lifting of some of those restrictions, it remains to be seen whether it will follow through on those commitments.

Women's access to justice and due process has been severely curtailed due to the absence of an independent, functioning judicial system. Freedom of expression, along with civic space, has almost entirely disappeared. Nearly 70 per cent of media outlets have closed, and 72 per cent of the journalists who have lost their jobs are women. The repression of women's rights appears to be central to the Taliban's vision for Afghanistan. That is why, despite the life and death choices they face, women continue to protest across the country. Those are home-grown movements that have persisted despite the Taliban's systematic efforts to harm, detain and even force them into making fake confessions.

As we speak, the Taliban is searching homes and offices in Kabul, spreading fear among ordinary Afghans. That campaign of intimidation should signal to the international community, particularly those who

seek to engage the Taliban, that it should be judged by its actions and not its words. Engagement without conditions is complicity. The Taliban is willing to silence those who criticize them. The international community must therefore be clear that it is watching.

That is why it is essential for UNAMA to have a robust mandate to monitor and report on human rights and to support the implementation of Afghanistan's international obligations. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, while also critical, cannot replace UNAMA or the local infrastructure that existed before August.

Without the free functioning of the media and civil society and without the scrutiny of the international community, neither the Taliban's abuses nor its commitments can be monitored. UNAMA must therefore have the resources and capacity to extend its reach and support local organizations to carry out their human rights work. Most important, the Security Council must ensure that UNAMA prioritizes gender equality and the rights of women in terms of both their protection and their participation. The Council will have no one to protect unless it also advocates for the active participation of women in the public and political life of their country.

Therefore, I implore the Security Council to ensure that UNAMA has an explicit mandate to support the full, safe, equal and meaningful participation of women across all processes and regularly consults with women and civil society more broadly, including persons identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others (LGBTQI+), young people, victims and all ethnic and religious communities.

Today nearly 60 per cent of Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance, and an estimated \$4.4 billion is required to provide it. Afghan women's organizations are calling for at least 40 per cent of those funds to be dedicated to women, girls and female-headed households and for a significant increase in funding to local humanitarian organizations. Moreover, women's participation in delivering humanitarian assistance is essential. The humanitarian response must be carried out in partnership with Afghan civil society, which, if given the resources, is ready to support. It is time for the international community to return ownership of those processes to Afghans.

While humanitarian assistance is critical, it cannot take the place of a strong national economy.

Development aid is necessary to prevent the collapse of the banking system and to allow ordinary Afghans and local organizations access to much-needed resources.

Let me be clear: the recent decision of the United States to split \$7 billion of Afghanistan's frozen assets and keep them from the Afghan people is nothing short of theft. Those funds belong to Afghans and must be returned to them. In order to avoid benefitting the Taliban, the funds can be gradually released to the Central Bank, which should remain independent and managed by a neutral technical team of Afghans.

Moreover, since taking power, the Taliban has been collecting sufficient revenues, yet civil servants are being paid irregularly. Where is that revenue going? We need transparency on how those funds are being spent, as well as accountability for any additional funds going into the country.

That brings me to my final point. It has been six months, and the Taliban has yet to articulate its vision for a political path forward. And neither have they fulfilled their assurances of security. On the contrary, the Taliban has maintained close ties with foreign terrorist fighters, mainly through the Haqqani Network and Al-Qaida. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham-Khorasan Province has expanded its reach into the country, and the Taliban has created battalions of suicide attackers to integrate into its own defence forces.

Being in a position of power requires being able to govern and to do so responsibly. It means being accountable to the people you serve and having the wisdom to accept should they disagree with you. There are no two ways about it. The Taliban want an Islamic emirate, a form of Government where power is consolidated in a leader selected by a council — whereas in the past 20 years Afghans have experienced life under a democracy, where citizens choose their leaders through elections.

Afghans must have a means to freely express their views, and all Afghans must be represented in any future Government. The international community can play an important role in facilitating discussions between Afghans and the Taliban, as well as in monitoring progress towards that goal. But to do so effectively, it must unite and set clear benchmarks on fundamental issues such as women's rights, freedom of the press, inclusive governance and the equal representation of men, women, young people, civil society, victims and LGBTQI+ individuals from all ethnic and

religious communities, which can then be supported and monitored through UNAMA. The international community must be willing to withhold its support if those benchmarks are not met.

I believe the United Nations is fit to serve the Afghan people if it has the courage to uphold its own values, to promote peace and to protect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, even when it is difficult. The United Nations can achieve that only if the Security Council gives it a strong mandate and the support to do so.

For years, I held on to this bit of soil to remind me of where I started. While so much has changed, this soil, like the will of the Afghan people, has endured. To my fellow Afghans, let this soil be proof of our resilience and a banner of our hope.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Safi for her briefing.

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

Ms. Juul (Norway): I congratulate the United Arab Emirates on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. Allow me first to thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons and Ms. Mariam Safi for their updates and insights.

After six months of Taliban rule, Afghanistan is facing one of the world's most rapidly growing humanitarian crises. It is a disaster resulting from many years of conflict, climate change, drought and economic collapse. Half of the population now faces acute hunger. More than 9 million people are displaced, millions of children are out of school, the health system is overburdened and women and girls in particular lack access to critical health services. Humanitarian and development assistance from the international community will not be sufficient to respond to the challenges facing Afghanistan. The de facto authorities must recognize and fulfil their responsibilities to meet the needs of the Afghan people.

We also remain deeply concerned about the continuing level of violence, abuses of power and the unpredictable security situation in Afghanistan. The de facto authorities must heed the appeals of the Afghan people and the international community. Respect for the rule of law and human rights and a more representative Government are necessary for sustainable peace and for national and international legitimacy. The

rights of women and girls are inextricably linked to Afghanistan's stability and prosperity.

To build a stable, resilient and self-reliant country, girls and boys must have equal access to education, and both women and men must be able to contribute to all sectors of Afghan society, including policymaking. At this critical point, the decisions of the de facto authorities will have immense impact on both the immediate humanitarian situation and the long-term efforts to prevent Afghanistan from remaining in a perpetual humanitarian and economic crisis.

The international community must do its utmost to assist the people of Afghanistan. Despite our concerns, we must engage and challenge the de facto authorities to alleviate the humanitarian emergency, promote human rights issues and counter international terrorism.

The United Nations must be part of the solution in Afghanistan. For that, we need a continued, robust United Nations presence. As we look ahead to the renewal of the mandate, it will be important to maintain the flexibility of the current mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) while adjusting to the new realities on the ground. We believe that the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/64) provide a good foundation in that regard.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team need a strong mandate to promote political dialogue and engage with the Taliban, monitor and report on human rights and facilitate the provision of humanitarian and basic human needs. As penholder on Afghanistan and the UNAMA mandate resolution, we appreciate the constructive engagement of all Council members in the ongoing negotiations and look forward to the renewal of a strong mandate by 17 March.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. You have our full support. I thank Special Representative Deborah Lyons for her briefing. I also thank Ms. Mariam Safi for her insights on the current situation.

As an immediate neighbour with strong linkages to the Afghan people, we are concerned about the recent developments in Afghanistan, especially the deteriorating humanitarian situation. India supported resolution 2615 (2021), which provided for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan while ensuring

that the Security Council would continue to exercise its oversight to guard against any possible diversion of funds and misuse of exemptions from sanctions.

We hope that the humanitarian carveouts of that resolution will be fully utilized by United Nations agencies and their aid partners. In that context, we reiterate 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, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or political belief. In particular, assistance should reach the most vulnerable first, including women, children and minorities.

Over the past several months, India has vastly scaled up humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. To tide over the dire food insecurity situation, we recently committed 50,000 tons of wheat, 2,500 of which are being distributed through the World Food Programme. We have also delivered 500,000 doses of coronavirus disease vaccines, 13 tons of essential life-saving medicines, as well as winter clothing, which are being distributed through the World Health Organization and Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul.

As a contiguous neighbour and long-standing partner of Afghanistan, India has a direct interest in ensuring the return of peace and stability. Our approach to Afghanistan, as always, will be guided by our historical friendship and our special relationship with the people of Afghanistan.

The expectations of the international community on the way forward in Afghanistan have been clearly set forth in resolution 2593 (2021). The expectations of the international community, as outlined in the resolution, must be adequately reflected in the upcoming mandate. Those relate to ensuring that the territory of Afghanistan is not used to launch terrorist attacks against other countries, overseeing the formation of a truly inclusive and representative Government, combating terrorism and drug trafficking and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities. That is essential.

Terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to Afghanistan and the region. There are serious concerns about the continued presence of Al-Qaida and the increase in recruitment to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province. We know from the reports of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team that all countries of the region,

especially the Central Asian countries, share grave concerns about the possibility of terrorism from Afghanistan affecting their own security. In that regard, the Security Council has noted the commitment of the Taliban not to allow the use of the Afghan soil for terrorism, including by terrorists and terrorist groups designated under resolution 1267 (1999). We need to see concrete progress in ensuring that such proscribed terrorists, entities or their aliases do not get any support, tacit or direct, either from Afghan soil or from the terror sanctuaries based in the region.

India calls for an inclusive dispensation in Afghanistan that represents all segments of Afghan society, especially women. A broad-based, inclusive and representative formation is necessary for both domestic and international engagement.

Peace and security in Afghanistan is a critical imperative that all of us need to collectively strive for. The recent developments in Afghanistan will have a significant impact on the neighbouring countries and the wider region. We have seen the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/64) on his outlook for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We will be working constructively with other members of the Council to ensure that UNAMA's new mandate focuses on the welfare, well-being and expectations of the Afghan people. The ultimate objective for us is to ensure peace and stability, with the interests of the Afghan people at its core.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I wish the United Arab Emirates all the best during its term in the presidency of the Security Council. It can count on our support.

I thank Ms. Lyons and Ms. Safi for their clear and informative briefings. My delegation welcomes the delegations of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

This month, the Security Council will face the task of renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). More than six months after the fall of Kabul, it is time to adjust the United Nations response to the reality on the ground. It is high time, as members of the Council previously stated, to judge the de facto authorities not by their words, but by their actions.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/64) is an important

step forward. Brazil supports their incorporation into the future UNAMA mandate, with a particular emphasis on the following aspects.

First, we must strengthen the protection of human rights. Reports of violations committed by forces associated with the new regime, including arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings and restrictions on the freedom of expression, are unacceptable. UNAMA must be able to monitor such episodes and help the consolidation of the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Secondly, we must support the rights of women and girls. Women activists continue to suffer persecution, and their presence in public life and the labour market is limited. The de facto authorities should be constantly reminded of their commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international instruments.

Thirdly, we must uphold the protection of children. The international community must raise its voice against practices such as the recruitment of children by armed groups, the closing of schools for girls and the increase in deaths resulting from the presence of landmines and other explosive devices.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. We cannot remain indifferent to the drama of 9 million people threatened by hunger. Brazil understands that the Afghan people must have access to their assets held abroad and that those resources should not be used without regard for Afghan will, priorities and needs.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Let me start by congratulating the United Arab Emirates on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and thanking Russia for its tremendous work as President last month. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and Ms. Safi for their briefings just delivered.

As is often said, if winter comes, can spring be far behind? This cold winter is now coming to an end. However, for the Afghan people, hunger and cold have not yet receded, and hope and spring still seem far away. As data from the World Food Programme show, 22.8 million Afghans face severe food insecurity, and 3.2 million children under 5 years of age are severely malnourished. Afghanistan is facing an avalanche of hunger and poverty. The briefing delivered by Special

Representative Lyons also illustrates the severity of the Afghan humanitarian situation.

At this critical juncture, helping Afghanistan to ease its humanitarian crisis and stabilize the economy should be the most important and urgent priority. The international community, especially major donor countries, should increase their assistance. There should not be any political conditions attached to humanitarian aid under any circumstances. At the same time, it is important to recognize that humanitarian aid alone is far from sufficient to resolve the problem. The international community should actively inject liquidity into Afghanistan and help the country to restore its domestic market and economic system, reintegrate into regional and international economic cooperation and gradually embark on the path of peaceful development. Any economic blockade or unilateral sanctions against Afghanistan should immediately be stopped.

In such a grim humanitarian and economic situation, last month the United States Government decided to divert the frozen \$7 billion worth of Afghan assets for other purposes, triggering protests and demonstrations in many parts of Afghanistan. Those assets belong to the Afghan people and the sovereign State of Afghanistan. The practice of arbitrarily handling other countries' overseas assets under domestic law has no precedent. It is a breach of Afghanistan's national sovereignty and property and is a serious contravention of international law.

Those assets are the only few available assets owned by Afghanistan and are crucial to the stable order and development of the country. For the Afghan people, those assets are their life-saving money and hope for survival. When the Afghan people need it the most, the ruthless freezing and misappropriation of those assets are a secondary injury to them and are completely against the true spirit of morality and justice. If there is genuine sincerity about supporting the Afghan people, there could definitely have been more and better ways to return those assets.

As the United States executive order indicates, some of those assets were unfrozen because the humanitarian and potential economic crisis in Afghanistan poses a major threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Supporting the Afghan people is clearly not the real motive. Returning other people's money in full is not a virtue of generosity, but a matter of course. Paying back half and deducting half of other

people's money is not gifting, but stealing. That is the simplest truth. What the United States did is neither legal and reasonable or humane. China once again calls on the relevant countries to immediately and unconditionally return those assets in full to the Afghan people and not to make matters worse, let alone apply double standards with regard to humanitarian issues.

Afghanistan has been experiencing many trials and tribulations and is at a critical stage of reconstruction. We have seen that Afghanistan is working hard to improve its political structure, restore order in production and life and actively conduct foreign exchanges and cooperation. An increasing number of countries are engaging with the interim Afghan Government in various forms, which is a good trend. The international community should continue to adhere to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned principle, step up engagement with the Afghan Taliban through an equitable, rational and pragmatic approach and patiently guide it to respond to the expectations of the international community. Only in that way can Afghanistan gradually achieve lasting, peace and stability and eliminate the breeding ground for terrorism, and Afghan women and children can thereby achieve better development.

China supports the United Nations continuing to play an important role in assisting with Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction. The Security Council will discuss the next phase of the mandate renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) this month. China believes that UNAMA's next mandate should be realistic, feasible and in line with the current situation and actual needs. It should focus on key priorities, appropriately control the scope and not try to do everything. The top priority is to push the international community to increase assistance to Afghanistan, support the country's efforts to improve people's lives, maintain stability, restore socioeconomic development and better integrate into the greater international community.

The United Nations work in Afghanistan goes hand in hand with the cooperation of the ruling Afghan authorities. Therefore, it is important to take into account their reasonable views and concerns to pave the way for cooperation between the two sides. China will remain closely engaged with Council members to make the proper arrangements for the extension of the mandate.

As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China has always been committed to supporting the country's peace, stability and development. China will work closely with countries in the region and make good-neighbourly contributions to Afghanistan's long-term peace and stability through mechanisms such as the Foreign Minister's meeting on the Afghan issue among the countries neighbouring Afghanistan. We will also actively participate in various Afghan-related multilateral mechanisms, promote coordinated actions by all parties to create synergies and help Afghanistan embark upon a path of sound development.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleagues in wishing you, Madam President, every success for your presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. Know that you have our full support. I would like to thank Deborah Lyons for her briefing and assure her of our unwavering support in all her work. I would also like to commend Mariam Safi for her first-hand account, which was extremely powerful, and I thank her for that and commend her courage.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) fulfils an essential mission. We want to see the United Nations maintain a strong presence in Afghanistan, as the Secretary-General has recommended.

We heard once again from Ms. Lyons that the people of Afghanistan face many significant challenges. Every day, all Afghans, especially women and children, struggle to survive and have their rights upheld. The right to security; to unconditional freedom of movement, above all for women and girls; to education; to exercise a profession; to the freedom of expression and for respect for the rights of minorities are not optional. Since taking power by force, and contrary to their commitments, the Taliban has increased abuses and violations of rights, including the most fundamental.

Furthermore, we note that the Taliban is among the persistent violators on the infamous list in the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. We must therefore support a robust monitoring and evaluation component of the human rights situation during the next UNAMA mandate, including to enable upholding women's rights and the protection of children. In the same way, it is imperative that, in carrying out its political support mission, UNAMA work with the Taliban for the establishment of a Government that is

representative, inclusive and legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan population.

Faced with a constantly deteriorating disastrous humanitarian situation, UNAMA must also maintain its role as coordinator of humanitarian aid so that the latter can be delivered to all those in need in all of Afghanistan. We will remain vigilant in ensuring that UNAMA prevents any misappropriation of such aid. We are counting on the United Nations to put in place a robust monitoring mechanism, including through the Risk Management Unit, to that end.

In terms of security, everyone can see the shortfalls of the Taliban's record. We have listened to their promises. We are judging — and will judge them — on to their actions. They must prioritize cutting all ties, regardless of their nature, with terrorist groups, in particular Al-Qaida and its regional affiliate, Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent. The latest report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team under the aegis of the Committees established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and 1988 (2011) indicates that the Taliban has so far taken no steps to limit the activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan and that the latter have enjoyed unparalleled freedom that has not been seen in many years.

The report shows that, far from having severed its ties with Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, which has integrated members of the terrorist organization into its own interim Government, risk turning Afghanistan once again into a sanctuary for the group and its affiliates. It is therefore crucial that the Monitoring Team be able to continue its work independently and in complete safety, including by enabling the Team's work on the ground. Similarly, UNAMA will need to work together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to combat drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan.

The Taliban must demonstrate that it has changed and that it is ready to join the international community. It must assume its responsibilities. In that context, the assessment and dialogue role of UNAMA will be crucial to retaining Afghanistan in the concert of nations. The Council can count on France's resolve and commitment side by side with the Afghan people.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me join others in wishing you, Madam President, and your team all the best for your presidency. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons and Ms. Mariam Safi for their powerful sobering briefings.

The situation in Afghanistan remains of deep concern. Afghanistan is facing the world's most severe food security crisis, and more than half the population is in need of emergency assistance. The risks of a humanitarian catastrophe remain real, and urgent action is needed to avert economic collapse. The work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and United Nations leadership in leading an adequately resourced, prioritized and coordinated international response remain absolutely crucial.

The United Kingdom remains one of the foremost supporters of the humanitarian response. United Kingdom aid to Afghanistan has already doubled this year, to \$381 million. The United Kingdom has also agreed to co-host a pledging conference on 31 March to raise funds for the United Nations humanitarian response plan. I urge all Member States to step up their support.

However, humanitarian assistance can go only so far. We welcome the United Nations Transitional Engagement Framework for Afghanistan, a whole-of-United Nations system approach to provision of life-saving assistance and support for basic human needs. The international community must act quickly to find creative solutions to address the liquidity crisis and establish principles and mechanisms for providing assistance beyond basic humanitarian aid.

For its part, the Taliban needs to address the international community's concerns, as we set out in resolution 2596 (2021). We are particularly concerned by the reports of increased reprisals against former security forces and Government officials, as well as attacks against minority groups and detentions of civil society representatives. The recent arrests of female activists, and members of their families, for protesting peacefully in support of women's rights were especially worrisome, as were announcements that appear to further restrict women's ability to travel.

In the past few weeks in certain provinces, some women have been able to return to university, and the Taliban has made important public commitments that all girls will be able to return to secondary school at the end of March, when schools reopen following the winter break. Educated healthy women and girls will contribute to peace, stability and development, and we will be watching closely to see that the Taliban meets its commitments.

It is vital that we in the Security Council continue to speak with one voice in support of the United Nations work in the months ahead, and we look forward to discussions on the upcoming UNAMA mandate renewal. The United Kingdom fully supports an empowered and effective United Nations mission responsible for the delivery of the humanitarian response, monitoring and advocating for the freedoms and rights of all Afghans and promoting stability. We hope that all members of the Security Council will unite behind this in support of the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Lyons for her briefing. I also thank her team at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its work and commitment. I thank Ms. Safi for her intervention and perspective.

The United States remains firmly in support of UNAMA and its mission. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations for UNAMA's strategic objectives and priorities moving forward.

I would like to express my sorrow for the polio workers who were killed last week in Afghanistan while carrying out their life-saving work. We unequivocally condemn those horrific attacks and extend our deepest condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those killed. We are further saddened by the fact that children in Kunduz and Takhar provinces will suffer without access to the critical services those workers hope to provide.

As the Council considers how to approach the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, the United States underscores its strong support for UNAMA's good offices, human rights monitoring reporting functions, its humanitarian coordination role, child and civilian protection activities and work to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of public life. The need for the international community to support and adequately resource the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations also remains of the utmost urgency.

The United States remains the largest donor of funding to United Nations humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. We have already contributed more than \$308 million to this year's humanitarian response plan and regional refugee response plan. However, the scale of the current humanitarian crisis demands much more support from the international community than any

of us alone can provide. That is why we urge donors to contribute generously to those efforts during the pledging summit that Germany, the United Kingdom and the United Nations will co-host later this month. That is also why we have worked with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars out of their Afghanistan-related funds to support the work of United Nations organizations in Afghanistan. We expect the multilateral development banks to issue more support to those lines of efforts in the coming months.

We cannot forget that Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is inextricable from the broader economic challenges facing the country as a result of the Taliban's decision to seek power by force rather than through negotiation. The United States has taken several concrete measures to help address those challenges in recent weeks. On 11 February, President Biden signed an executive order on protecting certain Afghan central bank assets held in the United States and simultaneously requested relief from the court to make them available for the benefit of the Afghan people. Certainly, no decision has been made about how those protected funds will eventually be used to benefit the Afghan people, but any disposition of those funds will have to be made through close and meaningful consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders, including Afghan economic and technical experts, civil society and international organizations, on how those funds can be used most effectively to address Afghanistan's economic and humanitarian needs.

Our courts will also have to determine how much, if any, of the remainder of the assets held in the United States should, under United States law, go to the victims of terrorism who hold judgments against the Taliban. However, without that executive order and accompanying actions, all reserves subject to the jurisdiction of the United States would have remained inaccessible to the Afghan people for the foreseeable future, in the light of established safeguards and the attachment of those funds to ongoing litigation by victims of terrorism.

It seems that those steps do not satisfy our Chinese colleagues. We have listened time and again to their criticism of the actions of the United States at the various meetings we have had on Afghanistan. It is a pity that China spends more time criticizing the actions of the United States than focusing on helping the Afghan people themselves. China is the second-largest

contributor to the United Nations. What China has done to help the people of Afghanistan or contribute to regional security does not match that standing.

We also continue to take steps to implement resolution 2615 (2021), which this organ adopted in December of last year. Just last week, our Treasury Department issued General License 20 to ensure that United States sanctions do not stand in the way of the commercial transactions or institutional engagement necessary for providing aid to and addressing the basic human needs of the Afghan people.

Let me be clear — all those measures should not belie the fact that the onus is on the Taliban to create the conditions needed for Afghanistan to achieve economic stability. We would like to see the Da Afghanistan Bank get to a position where it resumes normal central bank activity, for example. However, whether or not it can do so is, frankly, not up to us.

Moreover, our attention on Afghanistan's immense humanitarian and economic needs cannot distract us from continuing to demand that women, girls and members of minority groups be able to fully enjoy their rights and participate in political, economic and social life in Afghanistan. As public schools reopen throughout Afghanistan this month, we will be watching carefully to see if girls and women are able to access education at all levels, to which the Taliban have publicly committed. Girls have been denied the right to access education for too long now. We call on the Taliban to put an end to reprisal killings and forced disappearances. We also call on the Taliban to respect freedom of expression, including for members of the media, and freedom of peaceful assembly.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

I would like to welcome Ms. Deborah Lyons to today's meeting and thank her for her briefing.

The situation in Afghanistan continues to be cause for serious concern. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned the tipping point. The humanitarian situation remains grave, with dreadful prospects for Afghan society, in general, and is worsening for women, girls and minorities, in particular. The absence of an all-inclusive Government is a serious obstacle to improving the country's

governance, economy and security. The Taliban have yet to articulate what kind of State they intend to build.

The fact that more than half of the population relies on international relief alone to survive is extremely worrisome. Albania supports all ongoing efforts of the international community, through all possible means. Access to aid and support for the Afghan people should continue unhindered. We endorse the injection of emergency cash support for public servants in Afghanistan, such as teachers, doctors and nurses, thereby allowing the continued functioning of basic but vital services for the population.

After talks in Oslo and Geneva, Albania reiterates its call on the Taliban to seriously embark on upholding Afghanistan's international commitments. Without meeting those commonly accepted demands and without clarity and strong assurances from the de facto authorities in Afghanistan, it will be hard for the Taliban to engage on the international stage, which will have a direct impact on the humanitarian situation in the country. An Afghan-led, Afghan-owned process of reconciliation and the formation of an all-inclusive Government should be the only way ahead.

We will keep stressing that full respect for human rights set forth in international human rights law, which every State is bound to respect, remains the cornerstone for a fully functional society in Afghanistan. All of society should enjoy the freedom of assembly and expression, and members of the press should be able to report and fulfil their duties in liberty and without fear. Albania reiterates its call for full respect for human rights for everyone in Afghanistan and opposes any form of discrimination based on ethnicity, belief or gender. Recovery in Afghanistan cannot happen without women returning to work and girls returning to school.

Terrorism continues to threaten stability and State-building efforts in the country, but also in the Central Asia region. We cannot allow the achievements of the last 20 years in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and their affiliates to be undermined. The prospect of Afghan territory becoming a haven for international terrorism should amount to zero.

Last but not least, we commend the exceptional role the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is playing in Afghanistan as women and men representing the United Nations. Accordingly, all

of them deserve our praise for their work and efforts. Albania has endorsed the report of the Secretary-General of dated 31 January (S/2022/64) and is of the opinion that giving UNAMA a clear, strong mandate extending the Mission's duties and responsibilities will only improve the interaction between the world and Afghanistan, which is what the Afghan people so greatly need. Albania stands ready to support the activities of UNAMA on the ground and engage in the process of extending its mandate.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, and by extension, the United Arab Emirates, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I offer my best wishes to you, Madam, and hope that together we can advance the important work of the Council. I would also like to commend the delegation of the Russian Federation for the manner in which it conducted the business of the Council last month.

Ghana is pleased that this meeting on the situation in Afghanistan has been convened ahead of the expiration later this month of the current mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). In this regard, we warmly welcome the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA, Ms. Deborah Lyons. We also extend our sincere thanks to Ms. Mariam Safi for her briefing.

It is important that we be clear when we are speaking about the complex political, security and socioeconomic issues and the dire situation in Afghanistan. Therefore, at the outset, let me affirm that resolving the crisis situation in Afghanistan will entail precluding all geopolitical considerations and concerns in the approaches we adopt in the interest of the people of Afghanistan.

I will proceed to make the following three points. First, Ghana maintains that, at all times, the interest and safety of the Afghan people must be pre-eminent and take centre stage in the actions of the United Nations, the international community and actors from the region. Our unified and genuine actions can and will save the lives of millions of Afghans, many of whom face acute food shortages, are internally displaced and unable to gain access to basic services, including drinking water, health care and education.

Secondly, the international community must sustain goodwill and solidarity with the Afghan people. It has never been more critical than it is

today to help Afghanistan stabilize and rebuild. The Security Council in particular will have to shoulder its responsibility and ensure that a fit-for-purpose and robust UNAMA mandate is unanimously and rapidly agreed to effectively backstop reconstruction and recovery efforts in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, and as put succinctly by Special Representative Lyons, we must approach the UNAMA mandate creatively and with flexibility, leaving no room for ambiguity. Ghana is therefore determined to engage constructively in the process and will assist in bridging differences, if any. We will also be resolute in our support for specific language in the UNAMA mandate that encourages inclusive political processes and governance structures, taking into account Afghanistan's multi-ethnic and diverse society. We will firmly maintain our support for a human rights framework within the mandate that ensures the protection of civilians, minorities and such vulnerable persons as the aged and persons living with disability. We will also support a UNAMA mandate that will be a guardian for women and children in need.

Returning Afghanistan to normalcy is an overarching objective that must remain a shared and foremost responsibility for us all. We note in this regard the Oslo-facilitated meetings between leaders of the de facto authorities and Afghan civil society groups in January 2022, as well as the Doha talks between European countries and the de facto authorities. In addition, the recent announcement of processes set in motion to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets and channel the funds into humanitarian activities for the benefit of the Afghan people is commendable. We further commend the growing cooperation between UNAMA and the de facto authorities. Ghana expects that the de facto authorities will continue to act in good faith and aligns itself with global efforts to bring lasting relief to Afghan citizens, many of whom require urgent humanitarian assistance.

It is not the case that the de facto authorities are being called upon to do the extraordinary. On the contrary, we are simply asking the Taliban to commit to upholding the fundamental freedoms and liberties of all Afghan citizens without discrimination and provide them with equal access to basic human services as well as access to a fair judicial system, employment, freedom of expression and movement and guaranteeing girls full access to education. This is the minimum

standard expected of every responsible member of the international community.

In conclusion, Ghana reiterates her commitment to a stable resurgent and secure Afghanistan living peacefully with its neighbours.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset of my statement, I would like to congratulate the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on the start of its presidency of the Security Council this month and wish you, Madam President, every success; you can count on our support.

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Ms. Deborah Lyons, for sharing her views and the assessment of the situation on the ground. We also listened carefully to the opinion expressed by the Afghan civil society representative, Ms. Mariam Safi. We are glad to see that the representatives of countries of the region are given the floor to discuss topics of such great importance to them.

We read the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the country (S/2022/64) very carefully. The current situation in Afghanistan keeps changing. The new Afghan authorities demonstrate that they are ready to build a constructive interaction with the international community. We note certain efforts that they are undertaking to resolve the political, socioeconomic, humanitarian, and human rights issues. Among the positive changes, we can list the decree issued by the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, on the measures being taken to ensure women's rights in marriage, property, inheritance and some other areas. Women can be involved in business in line with Islamic and Afghan values.

Increased attention is being paid to educational issues. In February, public universities reopened their doors, and education for girls is already accessible in a third of the provinces of the country. We also note an improvement in the security situation in the country, which has allowed humanitarian workers to reach those regions that were inaccessible until recently.

We still expect that the Taliban will undertake serious measures to implement the obligations they undertook, first of all, with regard to finalizing the process of intra-Afghan reconciliation and putting in place genuinely inclusive governance authorities that

reflect the interests of all key ethnic and political forces in the country. It is important to continue making efforts to counter the terror and drug trafficking threats. I would like to underscore that we are raising all of these concerns in the course of our bilateral contacts with the new authorities.

Our overall priority remains unchanged: maintaining stability in Afghanistan, which is a goal we share with Afghanistan, and the situation in the region overall hinges on it. It is impossible to effectively resolve old issues and take on new challenges when there is an absence of national potential or when there is an outflow of professionals and a lack of financial resources.

Allow me to recall that 20 years ago the United States entered Afghanistan with a special mission to fight terrorism. However, its arrival in the country only strengthened Afghanistan's status as a hotbed of terrorism and drug trafficking. In addition to Al-Qaida and related entities present in Afghanistan, we saw the arrival of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the spread of its influence. At the same time, during the years in which the United States military was present in the country, it had many opportunities and time to eliminate terrorism in Afghanistan, including material, military and technical options.

On many occasions, we have asked about unidentified helicopters that transported ISIL fighters and their weaponry to various regions in the country, including to the north, at a time when we were being told the Coalition forces fully controlled the situation. The growth of drug trafficking over these years also reached unprecedented levels.

Against this background, the socioeconomic situation of the country remained deplorable. Billions injected into the country ended up in the pockets of the corrupt American puppets. As a result, the country has become an international dependent with no prospects for independent development. The 20-year United States presence in Afghanistan claimed thousands of lives of ordinary Afghans and American soldiers, as well as billions of dollars. The Afghan people were hypocritically left to fight ruin, poverty, terrorism and starvation alone. In this regard, we regret that some members of the international community are still not ready to extend comprehensive assistance, without reservations or preconditions, to normalize the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

It has been two and a half months since the Security Council adopted resolution 2615 (2021), which calls for a strengthening of humanitarian assistance through all channels in order to counter the growing crisis in the country. We note the efforts being undertaken by United Nations humanitarian agencies. We have also taken note of their preliminary plans to organize, on 31 March, another international donors conference to mobilize financial support and assess progress made in these areas. But these steps are not enough to ensure sustainable post-conflict recovery in Afghanistan.

Given the paralysis of the banking system and unemployment, the people of the country remain on the brink of survival. They are selling their children, not to mention their own organs. Despite the tragic situation, we are still seeing attempts by individual States to use any pretext to postpone the unfreezing of the assets for as long as possible. The order by the President of the United States of 11 February to block the accounts of the Afghan central bank and to use these funds to pay compensation to the relatives of the victims of the act of terror of 11 September is nothing short of mockery. It is immoral to blame this tragedy on the innocent Afghan people.

The consequences of a total collapse in Afghanistan will affect everyone and will be far more widespread than first thought. It will inevitably lead to a massive outflow of refugees, a spillover of terrorism, increased drug manufacturing and, as a result, even greater instability in the region and beyond.

Further degradation only serves ISIL fighters and other groups, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Jamaat Ansarullah. We are all well aware that ISIL has plans to spread its influence in the region and then into Russia. The issue of drug manufacturing and smuggling remains acute. Afghanistan remains the largest supplier of opiates in the world. The risk of infiltration by terrorists and drug traffickers into Central Asia, including in the guise of refugees, is a cause of concern among our regional partners. We maintain a regular dialogue within the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In this context, we are also closely following the continued action of the Panjshir guerrillas within the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan. A descent

into full-scale civil war is not in the interest of the Afghan people or of the region as a whole.

We would again like to recall that it is counter-productive to attempt to communicate with the new Afghan authorities in the language of ultimatums and that it is important to learn lessons from past mistakes. Only a constructive dialogue that takes into account regional specificities and a proper analysis of current realities will make it possible to achieve a peaceful settlement in the country. An expanded troika and the Moscow format are examples of such successful and effective cooperation.

Against that backdrop, we maintain regular contacts between UNAMA and the new Afghan authorities. We have taken note of the Secretary-General's recommendations on the modalities for its future work in the country. We share the view that the special political mission in Afghanistan plays an important role as a coordinator of international humanitarian assistance to the country. We support the intention of its head, Ms. Lyons, to continue to monitor the situation and to provide the international community with relevant, objective information. We do not share the idea that we need to strengthen the human rights component of the mission or to link the human rights situation to humanitarian aid and recovery assistance. The desire to make UNAMA into an overseer to satisfy those who are not ready to help ordinary Afghans without preconditions is unacceptable.

We are convinced that the key to the effective functioning of UNAMA lies in a good relationship with the host country and the trust of the authorities. The success of the special political mission depends on having a realistic, clear and achievable mandate, taking into account all regional specificities and nuances rather than abstract ideas. An important factor in that regard was and remains the consent of the new authorities to a new mission format and the changed modalities of its work.

Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya): I congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's assumption of the presidency. My delegation wishes the United Arab Emirates success, and it can count on our support.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for her briefing on the latest developments in Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for the

work it is undertaking. I also thank Ms. Safi for her intervention this morning.

Kenya takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2022/64) and its recommendations.

We welcome reports that the overall security situation in the country has improved. We note with concern, however, that crime has increased at the same time. Any action in seeking solutions for crime-related issues should respect human rights and uphold the dignity of the Afghan people.

The increased regional cooperation of various stakeholders, and in particular neighbouring countries, is encouraging. In this regard, we urge the Taliban to also engage with other regional countries to address and resolve any tensions and security incidents along border areas with a view to enhancing a collective security approach. Such approaches should align to ensure that the Taliban are committed to fighting terrorism and that Afghanistan is not a haven from which terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaida, can perpetrate their acts of terror not only in Afghanistan, but also within the region and beyond.

Kenya remains concerned over the dire humanitarian situation, which has been further compounded by severe drought, leaving over 24 million Afghans dependent on humanitarian assistance. We call on all stakeholders, international donors and friends of Afghanistan to unite and generously contribute to the 2022 humanitarian response plan in order to reduce the \$3.9 billion funding gap.

We stress, however, that humanitarian assistance is not sustainable in the long term. We have to incorporate elements of economic development into humanitarian operations with the aim of establishing effective and sustainable ways of recovery. We hope that every effort will be made to implement the One-UN Transitional Engagement Framework to assist Afghans in 2022.

The state of the economy remains a serious issue affecting every Afghan. Restrictions that disproportionately impact women's access to education and work create a further hurdle to inclusive nation-building efforts. The United Nations Development Programme report entitled *Afghanistan Socioeconomic Outlook 2021-2022: Averting a Basic Needs Crisis* indicates that at least 5 per cent of the gross domestic product is lost when women face

restrictions to work. We therefore urge the Taliban to carefully consider that reality when framing policy.

Additionally, restrictions inhibiting Afghans from leaving the country do not add any value if the people who remain are not enabled to contribute to the development of their country.

We reiterate the imperative of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of Afghan life, including at the grass-roots and leadership levels. We call on the authorities to prioritize eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and other gendered harms against Afghan women, girls and children, as well as reversing any actions intended to restrict women's freedoms and movement.

Finally, Kenya supports a strong mandate to enable UNAMA to do its work effectively. 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.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): Let me join other in congratulating you, Madam, on assuming the presidency of the Council. I would also like to thank Special Representative Lyons and her team for all the vital work they are doing, as well as Ms. Safi for her very powerful message to the Council this morning.

I will focus on three points.

First, I wish to address the continuing and devastating suffering experienced by the Afghan people. Over six months have passed since the Taliban seized control. In every discussion since, including today's, we have heard about the shocking and deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan: destitution, starvation, attacks on freedom of expression, disappearances, the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, particularly girls, intimidation, sexual and gender-based violence, killings — sadly, the list goes on.

For 166 days, the Taliban have denied girls in Afghanistan access to secondary education, denying their fundamental human rights. Horrendously, some who bravely work to alleviate suffering in Afghanistan are paying with their lives. We deplore the murders of eight polio vaccination workers last Thursday and call for those responsible to be held accountable.

As we have heard, economic freefall is causing extreme hardship for millions of Afghans, while

humanitarian operations continue to be impeded by the banking and liquidity crisis. In that context, Ireland welcomes the announcement by the World Bank yesterday of the release of more than \$1 billion to support the people of Afghanistan.

Now, as the Council negotiates a mandate for the continued United Nations presence in Afghanistan, we have an obligation to put the basic needs and human rights of the Afghan people first. We must reaffirm our commitment to decisively addressing the seismic humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, building on the sanctions carve-out of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) agreed in December (see S/PV.8941).

Ireland commends the work of the United Nations country team in Afghanistan, implementing the One-UN Transitional Engagement Framework in very challenging circumstances in support of those most in need. We welcome the strong focus in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/64) on the humanitarian catastrophe being endured by the Afghan people. It is vital that principled humanitarian action be fully safeguarded and remain a key priority in the vital work of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

The Council must not falter in its responsibility to Afghan women and girls. On 18 February, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security was briefed on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. The stark messages conveyed by Special Representative Lyons and her colleagues left us in no doubt of the Taliban's systematic and continuous erosion of the rights of Afghan women and girls.

We need to do much more to hold the Taliban to account for their actions. Afghanistan will achieve stability only when the rights and talents of all its people are respected and when there is an inclusive and representative Government.

The future mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must have at its core an unambiguous commitment to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all dialogue and political processes. To put it simply, the voices of Afghan women need to be heard and, most importantly, heeded. Women and peace and security should be at the heart of the work of the United Nations in Afghanistan. It should be a golden thread guiding us all at this dark time for Afghan women.

Finally, we have witnessed six months of the Taliban's contempt for human rights, compounding the violations and abuses of two decades of war. The Council has a duty to respond. A robust human rights mandate for UNAMA is essential. A strong human rights mandate will save lives, ensuring that those who suffer human rights abuses are heard and not condemned to silence. It will facilitate accountability. It will protect civilians, including women, children and minorities. Human rights issues are far more difficult to address if they are not documented. The minimum that the Council can do is ensure that the plight of the Afghan people is recorded, not forgotten.

To conclude, the Council has a responsibility to stand with and support the people of Afghanistan. They need and deserve the support, advocacy and partnership of the United Nations now more than ever. Their urgent needs must define our efforts over the coming weeks. Let us keep them front and centre as we decide on a new mandate for the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to wish the delegation of the United Arab Emirates the best of luck for the month of March as it leads the work of the Council. Mexico is also grateful for the briefings by Special Representative Lyons and Ms. Safi. My country recognizes the work of Afghan civil society in defending the rights of women and girls.

Afghanistan has been the subject of the largest-ever humanitarian appeal for a single country, seeking to address the most pressing needs of 24 million people. We applaud the priority afforded to it by the United Nations in recent months in response to the scale of the situation.

In the context of that grave humanitarian crisis, any attack on or harassment of humanitarian workers is simply deplorable. We condemn the recent killing of eight humanitarian workers. We sympathize with their bereaved and underline the need to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel so that they can carry out their tasks.

Defending the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls has always been Mexico's principled position. Any regression in that area is unacceptable to us. Nothing is more representative of such regression than the fact that the headquarters of the Ministry of Women's Affairs is today the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

The return to school for all girls in Afghanistan in the coming weeks is critical. If that does not happen in an unrestricted manner, it would have medium- and long-term consequences. Likewise, women must be allowed to return to their places of work without restrictions or exceptions.

As co-Chair of the informal Working Group on Women and Peace and Security, we reiterate the importance of taking into account the recommendations from the recent meeting with regard to the renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). In particular, I would like to highlight two: to facilitate a dialogue between women and the de facto authorities and to continue to report on the human rights situation.

We recognize the efforts, particularly by countries of the region to foster dialogue so as to ensure that the Government is inclusive and reflective of the plurality of Afghan voices and that it includes the effective and meaningful participation of women and minorities. In that connection, we will follow closely the outcome of the meetings to be held in the coming weeks.

Reports of the increased presence of terrorist groups are also cause for serious concern. At all costs, we must prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for such groups. In recent months, a large number of weapons have been recorded in the country. Mexico is concerned about their possible diversion, and we launch an appeal to prevent them from having an impact, particularly on the civilian population.

Mexico expresses its full willingness to work constructively on the renewal of the Mission's mandate. We have heard it before in this Chamber — for my country, it is also critical to have a robust mandate in line with the strategic objectives proposed by the Secretary-General and with a clear structure that divides its work into two areas: political and governance matters and humanitarian and development.

Maintaining the Mission's capacity to monitor the human rights situation is a priority. The provision of impartial information regarding the protection of civilians is equally vital. In the same vein, UNAMA must retain the capacity to engage with all decision-makers in defence of fundamental rights and freedoms.

I conclude by expressing Mexico's support and appreciation both to Special Representative Lyons at the helm of UNAMA and to all United Nations agencies,

programmes and funds on the ground for their tireless commitment to the Afghan people.

Ms. Bongo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, in turn, to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. You can count on the support of my delegation. I am also grateful to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation for the professionalism with which he conducted our work during the month of February.

I thank Ms. Deborah Lyons and Ms. Mariam Safi, for their clear and informative briefings on recent developments in Afghanistan. I welcome the presence among us of the representatives of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

My speech will focus on three points: the worrisome sociopolitical and economic situation, the status of women and girls in Afghan society and the security challenges, including the issue of foreign fighters.

Six months after the Taliban took power, the lack of inclusivity of the Afghan ruling class remains a serious issue. The diversity of the Afghan people is poorly represented, with ethnic, geographic, political and social minorities, including women, kept on the periphery of the political process. The stabilization of 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.

We are also of the opinion that the international community must maintain a constructive dialogue with the Taliban, for the individual and social well-being of the people. We note positively the steps taken by countries of the region and others to establish such a dialogue.

Hard hit by the financial and economic stagnation linked, among other things, to the freezing of the central bank's assets, Afghanistan is being plunged into poverty. It is thus prey to unspeakable destitution and precariousness, which is leading to massive population displacements in the midst of a pandemic. The stage is thus set for a large-scale humanitarian crisis, with children and women as its first victims.

My country remains concerned about the condition of women and girls in Afghanistan, whose fundamental rights and freedoms remain largely restricted to this day, despite the commitments made by the de facto

authorities to protect women's rights, particularly the right to education. Afghanistan, which has no women in its Government and provincial governorships, needs to restore women to their rightful place and move towards an inclusive Administration.

Indeed, we all know that the inclusion of women is not an option; it is a requirement for the peace and security of any society. It is crucial to ensure respect for women's human rights and their effective participation in all decision-making processes and at all levels of Government in Afghanistan.

On the security front, it is clear that despite the Taliban's assurances of blanket amnesty for former members of the Afghan Government and security forces, as well as for those working with international military forces, serious allegations of killings, enforced disappearances and the like have been recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). That stigmatization of dignitaries of the former regime, accompanied by human rights violations, is extremely serious, as it hinders national reconciliation, which is so essential for peacebuilding.

Despite the Taliban's efforts to establish control over the border areas, with a view to restricting attacks by extremist groups from Afghan soil into neighbouring countries, the active presence of foreign fighters, over which the Taliban clearly has no control, is a matter of real concern.

Such a large number of foreign fighters could pose a permanent threat to Afghanistan's neighbours or create a staging ground for international terrorism and cross-border drug trafficking, rendering futile the international community's efforts over the past 20 years.

In conclusion, we endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations on UNAMA's mandate and express our full support for UNAMA's work on the ground, particularly with regard to promoting and protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, especially women and girls, as well as coordinating humanitarian assistance.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank Special Representative Ms. Deborah Lyons and Ms. Mariam Safi for their valuable insights.

Our meeting today is taking place at a critical juncture for Afghanistan as the Council considers how the United Nations can best serve the people of Afghanistan. The Organization's presence is needed now more than ever in order to tackle Afghanistan's multifaceted crises.

The United Arab Emirates therefore supports a robust mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), one that is calibrated to align with the realities on the ground. The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2022/64) are sensible and offer a good starting point for our deliberations.

As such, I would like to make several points.

First, the United Arab Emirates believes that moving forward the coordination of donor activities should remain a cornerstone of UNAMA's activities. We also support the Secretary-General's proposal that UNAMA play a role to minimize the risk of aid diversion in Afghanistan. That should be well coordinated with the relevant agencies through their own risk management work.

Providing financial contributions to support the Afghan economy remains an urgent necessity. We therefore echo the calls made by the Secretary-General for allowing international funding to pay for the salaries of civil servants. In that regard, we recognize the recent steps made and are also encouraged by the pledge of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to set up a humanitarian trust fund, as well as the launching a programme for food security in Afghanistan. The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with its partners, including the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank, to support humanitarian activities.

Secondly, as a vocal supporter of the protection and empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan, we believe that UNAMA's mandate should reflect the situation of women and girls. Their exclusion from education, public life and the workforce in Afghanistan hinders the prospects for peace and security, as well as economic prosperity in the country. The United Nations Development Programme recently estimated that restrictions on women's participation in the workplace, for example, could cost the Afghan economy up to \$1 billion. That statistic demonstrates that women's equal and meaningful inclusion is a necessity.

We reiterate that religion cannot be used to justify discrimination against women. We welcome UNAMA's efforts to ensure that engagement in Afghanistan is informed by the cultural and religious context, including by working with the OIC. The United Arab Emirates stands ready to provide its assistance in that respect.

Thirdly, the United Nations can play a critical role in facilitating political dialogue with all relevant parties, including the Taliban. That is necessary to encourage it to heed the calls of the international community, improve governance and effectively deliver vital services to the Afghan people.

Lastly, the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan and the wider region remains a top concern. Our concerns were confirmed by the most recent report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (see S/2022/83), which indicates that terrorist groups may enjoy greater freedom in Afghanistan now than at any time. The Taliban must implement the necessary measures to combat terrorism in Afghanistan under international law, including by severing ties with all terrorist groups and preventing the use of Afghanistan territory as a safe haven for terrorism.

As part of our presidency pledge to highlight the two-year anniversary of the pandemic, we would also like to draw attention to the fact that 10 per cent of the population in Afghanistan has been vaccinated. We believe that bundling coronavirus disease vaccination with other essential services is likely one of the most effective response measures, alongside international investment in the primary health-care system. The tragic recent killing of eight polio health workers also underscores the need for the protection of humanitarian workers to achieve vaccine equity.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates is committed to contributing constructively to the Security Council's deliberations on the UNAMA mandate, as well as to achieving stability and security in Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to make another statement. Just now, several Council members made reference in their statements to

the Afghan assets illegally frozen by the United States Government. It seems that the representative of the United States feels uncomfortable about that. It is very simple for the United States to feel comfortable, namely, by immediately returning all those assets to the Afghan people, as called for by the international community.

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

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I am sorry to take the floor again. I just wanted to make the point that China's extended references to the reserve issue contain falsehoods and, it seems to me, were designed to score political points with the Taliban, I suppose — I am not sure — rather than anything else. China knows exactly what we are trying to do, but instead prefers to make a show, it seems, for its benefit. I am not able to reach any other conclusion.

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

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to remind the United States representative that the Afghan people are very angry about their assets being frozen by the United States.

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

Mr. Isaczai (Afghanistan): I would like to thank all members of the Council for their statements and continued support for the Afghan people. I also wish to congratulate the United Arab Emirates on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and for convening this briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lyons for her comprehensive briefing and Ms. Safi for her insightful and powerful remarks.

It has been more than six months since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, and yet the social, political and economic situation in Afghanistan remains gravely concerning in the face of the growing humanitarian emergency, paired with the absence of a functional Government to provide basic services to the people. The Taliban caretaker Government has not been able to establish an accountable, inclusive, effective and responsible Government and to fulfil its national and international commitments that it made to

upholding the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all Afghans, including women, girls and minorities.

That political, economic and social crisis has created a state of uncertainty and dismay for Afghans about their future. Since the previous meeting of the Council (see S/PV.8954), nothing has improved on the ground. There are continued credible reports of human rights violations committed by the Taliban, including house searches, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of former members of the Government, the Afghan National Army and security forces, ethnic groups, human rights defenders and media workers.

Those acts are utterly against all national and international human rights laws and Islamic laws, values and principles. That dangerous situation has prompted growing migration and displacement of Afghans across the country. Such violations must be stopped, and the perpetrators of those heinous acts must be held accountable. The continuation of this situation will further endanger any prospects for ensuring viable peace in Afghanistan, including efforts to establish an accountable, inclusive, effective and responsible Government that would acquire national legitimacy.

We are grateful to all regional and international partners and donors, including bilaterally and those through United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for life-saving efforts, humanitarian assistance and other activities to support basic human needs in Afghanistan.

We appreciate the issuance of new general licences to expand authorization for commercial and financial transactions in Afghanistan, including with the governing institutions. We urge all Member States to continue their support by funding the United Nations humanitarian response plan in support of Afghanistan. I wish to request Council members, the United Nations and donors to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism to ensure the transparent, accountable and effective implementation of any humanitarian projects by NGOs and aid delivery to vulnerable people in Afghanistan.

We firmly believe that, in order to have a long-term solution to the current crisis in Afghanistan, we need a legitimate Afghan Government, with Afghan ownership and effective governance, to restart channelling development aid and the resumption of economic development projects in Afghanistan. That

requires the formation of an inclusive, representative, responsible and accountable Government based on integrity, competence and merit, with professional and committed people, including women, with national and international legitimacy. We call for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, regional and international partners, to start negotiations and intra-Afghan dialogue among key Afghan stakeholders and the Taliban to amend the Constitution and enable the Afghan people to decide their future based on their votes. That will ensure the protection of the achievements of the past two decades and rescue the Afghan people from starvation and poverty. In that regard, I would like to request that, in any future intra-Afghan dialogue for achieving a political settlement in Afghanistan and inclusivity, that the Council engage with Afghan stakeholders that have credibility, legitimacy and a good reputation among Afghans and those who actually represent Afghanistan's national interests.

I would like to reiterate the Afghan people's call for countering corruption by opening investigations into the bank accounts and properties of the former Afghan Government high-level officials who were involved in corruption and allegations of embezzlement involving international aid to the Afghan people. They must be held accountable. I also take this opportunity to call on all Afghan diplomatic missions to continue their service to Afghan citizens, based on the national interests of Afghanistan, and not allow any former Government officials to misuse national resources for personal and political purposes.

As the Council discusses and adopts the extension of the UNAMA mandate, I would like to emphasize the importance of the United Nations role and the work of UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in promoting peace and stability, as well as in monitoring and reporting on the human rights crisis in Afghanistan. I further reiterate our full support for the recommendations and implementation of the strategic objectives of the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2022/64), including the long-term extension of the mandate.

In conclusion, I urge Council members to remain united in their support for Afghanistan and not abandon the Afghan people in these difficult times. I also call on the Taliban to respond to the calls of the Afghan people and the international community for the formation of a just, accountable and inclusive Government and to

respect and protect the privacy, safety, security and fundamental human rights and freedoms of all Afghans, including women, girls, minorities and former security and defence forces. Women's and girls' rights to social, economic and political participation must be ensured and protected. Without the full and equal participation of all Afghan citizens, there will be no peace, stability or prosperity in Afghanistan.

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

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank Ms. Lyons for her briefing on the latest developments in Afghanistan.

We take note of the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2022/64). The report provides a good update on the United Nations activities in Afghanistan, including its humanitarian efforts.

According to the report, the situation in Afghanistan has remained challenging, and Afghanistan is grappling with a growing humanitarian crisis, a major economic downturn, crippled banking and financial systems and challenges related to the establishment of an inclusive Government. The risks of a humanitarian calamity remain. More than 20 million people, or half of the population, continue to be in critical need of assistance, and immediate action is required to avoid the economic collapse of the country.

We are deeply concerned about the potentially disastrous ramifications of the situation for the region's security and stability, particularly those of neighbouring countries. If the situation is not addressed effectively, the country's socioeconomic collapse is possible, resulting in widespread destitution and a large influx of migrants into neighbouring countries that are already overburdened with hosting millions of refugees. We once again urge the international community, particularly donor countries, to meet their responsibilities to Afghanistan's neighbours in order to assist refugees and displaced persons.

We support the United Nations efforts to meet Afghanistan's expanding humanitarian needs. As we have emphasized on several occasions, the frozen assets of Afghanistan belong to the Afghan people, and their release, which is critical to restoring the Afghan

economy and saving lives, should not be politicized or conditional in any manner.

Iran remains deeply concerned about terrorist activities in Afghanistan. According to the Secretary-General's report, terrorism remains a major challenge in Afghanistan. Attacks claimed by or ascribed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan have intensified and spread outside its previously focused locations in Kabul and eastern Afghanistan. The United Nations recorded 152 attacks by the group in 16 provinces for the period from 19 August to 31 December 2021, compared to 20 attacks in five provinces during the same period in the previous year.

The trend underlines the international community's continued demand that the Taliban commit to fighting terrorism and ensure that Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for terrorist groups like Da'esh and Al-Qaida, which have been responsible for heinous acts of terror, not only in Afghanistan, but throughout the region and beyond.

Of equal importance, the international community should continue to emphasize the need to establish an inclusive and representative Government in Afghanistan. We expect the Taliban to take serious steps to ensure the Government's true ethnic and political inclusivity. To that end, Iran continues to engage with all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, to address different challenges facing that country. The Taliban needs to be responsive to the demands for the establishment of an inclusive Government that truly represents Afghanistan's multi-ethnic society.

The Taliban should also heed the international community's call for the protection of human rights, particularly the rights of women and minorities. We continue to consult with Afghanistan's neighbours, as well as regional and international partners, including the United Nations, in order to assist Afghanistan in achieving long-term peace, security and stability.

Lastly, we stress the vital role of The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan and support the extension of its mandate. We consider that the situation requires a strong UNAMA mandate in order to help the people of Afghanistan and maintain peace and security in that country.

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

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to congratulate the United Arab Emirates on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I am sure that it will be hugely successful. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Deborah Lyons, for her briefing and for the important work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is doing under her leadership. We also thank Ms. Mariam Safi for her intervention.

After four decades, there is a chance to promote durable peace in Afghanistan. One Government controls the entire country. There is no existential threat to its survival. The main objective of the international community must be to stabilize Afghanistan and ensure durable peace within the country and in the region. To that end, we must address the massive humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and prevent the collapse of the Afghan economy.

Pakistan commends the role of the United Nations and its agencies in mobilizing and distributing such assistance. We welcome the generous response to the Secretary-General's initial appeal and trust that there will be an equally generous response to his new appeal. We hope that the new crises we are now witnessing will not lead to the abandonment of Afghanistan. That mistake was made twice in the past 40 years, with devastating consequences.

Reviving the Afghan economy is critical. We welcome United Nations-led efforts to inject cash into the Afghan banking system. In that context, it is vital to release all of Afghanistan's financial reserves. It is most regrettable that half of the country's reserves are proposed to be sequestered by another country.

Beyond humanitarian help, stabilizing Afghanistan requires reconstruction to rebuild damaged infrastructure and implement connectivity projects, such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, the Central Asia-South Asia power project and the Central Asia-Afghanistan-Pakistan railroad, as well as the envisaged extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan.

UNAMA is playing a constructive role in promoting those objectives and has established constructive engagement and trust with the new authorities in Kabul. We hope that it will continue to play that role. In that context, the approach and elements for UNAMA's new mandate, as suggested in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/64), raise several questions. In our view, as in the past, UNAMA's mandate must be based on respect

for Afghanistan's sovereignty. It should be discharged with the consent of the Afghan Government, whether recognized or not. It should be designed to support efforts to promote stability and improve the lives of the Afghan people, including women and children. Any effort to create a parallel governance structure alongside the actual Government is likely to be unacceptable and will erode the trust and cooperation that exists between UNAMA and the authorities in Kabul.

UNAMA's new mandate must focus on humanitarian and emergency assistance and the revival of the Afghan economy, as well as on building the capacity of Afghan institutions and facilitating reconstruction and connectivity projects. Political objectives, such as promoting inclusive governance, is the sole purview of Afghanistan and the Afghan authorities. The six-neighbour platform has also helped to move the process in that direction. The platform will meet at the ministerial level in China in the near future. Similarly, UNAMA's role in monitoring human rights will be inconsistent with its role as a partner for progress in Afghanistan.

Security remains of pre-eminent concern for Afghans and their neighbours. There are still some who wish to continue using Afghan territory to promote terrorism, including against countries of the region, especially against Pakistan. The international community must encourage and support the efforts of the Afghan authorities to eliminate Da'esh — or the Islamic State-Khorasan Province. Effective strategies are also needed to address other terrorist groups in Afghanistan, in particular Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al-Qaida. An important element of success will be the early lifting of the sanctions against Taliban members under resolution 1988 (2011), as envisaged in the Doha agreement and resolution 2543 (2020).

Pakistan will continue to work with the Afghan authorities and with the countries of the region and other interested countries to promote the common objectives of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.