



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

Ambassador Marc Pecsteen, Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

Session on the situation in Afghanistan Security Council

New York, 27/3/2020

Mr. President,
Dear colleagues,

Afghanistan was hit by another devastating and deadly terrorist attack last week. Another sad event that prolongs the suffering of the country's civilian population. 100.000 victims since UNAMA started counting more than a decade ago testify to the folly of this conflict.

The violence adds to the growing concerns over the spread of **COVID-19 in the country and its impact** on the Afghan population, and in particular on the most vulnerable. Recent large scale movements across borders are likely to put further pressure on the country's health system.

In the context of the pandemic we echo the call of the Secretary-General for a global **ceasefire**. The period of reduction of violence was a step into this direction. Unfortunately, hostilities are still ongoing.

We call on the Afghan authorities to display political leadership after the recent announcement of the election results. The Afghan population needs an inclusive government that enjoys broad support, that is able to confront the pandemic and that seizes the opportunity for peace. We hope the announcement of a diverse and inclusive government delegation to **intra-Afghan negotiations** can initiate these talks without delay. An exchange of prisoners can be a way to build trust. We expect that during the negotiations a key role is attributed to women. It is important that this Council closely follows the process and emphasizes the importance of respecting Afghanistan's constitution and fundamental rights and freedoms.

In the last three months of 2019 **687 grave violations against children** were verified. We will continue to look for consensus on Council Conclusions with regards to Children and Armed Conflict and count on your support.

We need a **strong voice and clear leadership for the UN** in Afghanistan. We welcome the appointment of the new SRSG and reiterate our deep gratitude for the service by Mr. Yamamoto.

Both bilaterally and as member of the EU Belgium will continue to support - on the basis of clear conditions and parameters - the peace process and the government and people of Afghanistan. Examples of ongoing support are our contributions to the implementation of the National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 and to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, as well as our participation in NATO's Resolute Support Mission, with around a hundred military personnel.

And finally I would like to support the press elements proposed by the co-pens.

Thank you.