



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

Ambassador Karen Van Vlierberge, Deputy Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

Session on the situation in Afghanistan Security Council

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Mr. President,
Dear colleagues,

I too want to welcome SRSB Lyons to the Council. Congratulations on taking up your position, you can count on our full support. We also thank Mrs. Waly and Mrs. Akbar for their informative briefings.

We welcome the **political agreement** in Kabul. This needs to pave the way –without delay- to a fully-fledged government and to intra-Afghan negotiations. Confidence building measures such as prisoner releases are useful tools to build trust between parties. However, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was and is no party to the US-Taliban agreement. Ideally, a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire accompanies the start of negotiations. At the very least, it should be the outcome of those talks. I reiterate the importance of full and meaningful participation of women of diverse backgrounds in peace talks. Current female participation should be scaled up and any future agreement must guarantee the rights of women and girls.

While the Eid ceasefire was a welcome development, the **civilian toll of the conflict remains staggering**. We call on all sides to immediately address this unacceptable suffering. I stress the importance of accountability and for those responsible to be brought to justice. We take note of the opening of an investigation by the International Criminal Court. Moreover, Security Council resolution 2513 clearly stipulates the start of intra-Afghan negotiations and violence-reduction by the Taliban as conditions for any review of listings under the 1988 sanctions regime.

We sincerely regret the continued deliberate **attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities** – even amid the COVID-19 crisis, as reported by UNAMA. These attacks violate international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. On May 12th it tragically became clear that in Afghanistan even newborns are not spared the horrors of war. We call upon the government to conduct a thorough investigation into the attack on the Kabul maternity and to hold the perpetrators to account. Sadly, MSF suspended its operations there for fears of further violence.

The conflict in Afghanistan is the world's **deadliest for children**, who are granted special protection under International Humanitarian Law. We are deeply concerned at the scale and severity of grave violations of children's rights in Afghanistan and thank all delegations for unanimously adopting conclusions on CAAC. We urge all parties to swiftly implement the Working Group CAAC's recommendations.

Belgium reaffirms its **steadfast commitment** to the Afghan people. We are contributing through bilateral and multilateral channels to the implementation of the National Action Plan on Resolution 1325, the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and NATO's Resolute Support Mission. I want to emphasize that, in line with the EU Council conclusions adopted last month, future support will be determined by the level of commitment of the Afghan authorities to good governance and human rights.

A just peace must be inclusive of all Afghans, including women, youth and minorities.

Thank you.