



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

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

Arria on the situation of Women in Afghanistan Security Council

New York, 27/7/2020

Mr. President,
Dear colleagues,

- We thank H.E. Rula Ghani (First Lady of Afghanistan), H.E. Ms Hasina Safi (Minister of Women's Affairs), Dr Habiba Sarabi (member of the negotiation team), SRSG Deborah Lyons and H.E. Sheikh Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani (PR of Oman) for their interventions. We have listened closely to your recommendations and experiences and I want to emphasize that you can count on us to support your efforts.
- The past twenty years **Afghan society has made progress** in realizing the rights of women as guaranteed by Afghanistan's constitution. I want to commend the Afghan government for its dedication and efforts. Women leaders are demonstrating today across all sectors of society why a country should never exclude half of its talent.
- All eyes are currently focused on the **intra-Afghan peace** talks to be launched in Doha. I reiterate the importance of full and meaningful participation of women of diverse and representative backgrounds in peace talks. Current female participation should be scaled up and any future agreement must guarantee the human rights of women and girls. We join the call of the vast majority of Afghans, both men and women, who will not accept turning back the clock to darker times.
- The **level of violence** in Afghanistan remains alarmingly high. We call on all sides to immediately end this unacceptable suffering and stress the importance of accountability. Sometimes, women are specifically targeted, such as the recent atrocious attack on a maternity ward in Kabul, which this Council condemned in the strongest terms. We also condemn violence against women-led NGO's and women human rights defenders (including the killing of Fatima Khalil), educators, health workers and journalists. We are furthermore concerned about reports of an increase in domestic and gender based violence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and urge for the response/policies to be inclusive and gender responsive.

- The conflict in Afghanistan is the world's **deadliest for children**. We are deeply concerned at the scale and severity of grave violations of children's rights in Afghanistan. Protecting girls and boys should be at the center of our work. We urge all parties to swiftly implement the recommendations agreed by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.
- From our side we are supporting the **implementation of the National Action Plan for Resolution 1325** together with UN Women. We are also a proud member of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan. The EU is working to prevent and end violence against women in Afghanistan through the joint Spotlight Initiative with the UN.
- As outlined in the latest EU Council Conclusions on Afghanistan, **any future support that is expected from Belgium or its EU partners will be conditional** upon the continued commitment of that country to promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls.
- The promotion of women's rights in Afghanistan falls squarely within the **mandate of this Council**. Soon this Council will renew the mandate of the UN mission in Afghanistan. We expect the promotion of women's participation and women's rights to remain at the center of its work.

Thank you.