

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

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

UNAMA Debate at the Security Council

New York, 10/9/2019

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Belgium supports the statement of the European Union.

Like others, I would like to thank Special Envoy Yamamoto for his briefing, as well as Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Djani.

Mr President,

We remain convinced that there is a **need for peace talks**. Unfortunately, we must note that these talks have unfolded as extremely deadly terrorist attacks have proliferated. The use of the lives of children, women and men as a means of achieving leverage in negotiations is unacceptable. One cannot hold a pen to sign a peace agreement in one hand and a bomb in the other.

After years of conflict, the Afghan people deserve a lasting peace and a peace agreement that can be embraced by the Afghan people and their government. We fully support the central role of the Afghan government in the peace process and call on the **Taliban to engage in talks** with the government and to control their representatives in order to preempt any attack.

A lasting peace agreement must at all costs safeguard the gains made in terms of the rights of women. It would be patently unjust to sacrifice the progress that has been achieved in this regard. We stress the importance of meaningful and equitable participation of women in the peace process and attribute particular importance in this regard to the implementation of the new stage of the Afghanistan National Action Plan under Resolution 1325. Belgium supports this action plan through a contribution to UN Women.

Belgium fully supports the conduct of credible, free and fair **presidential elections**. This will strengthen the legitimacy of State institutions and pave the way for intra-Afghan dialogue. Robust participation in the elections will be crucial if they are to reflect the Afghan people's desire for democracy.

In this context, we strongly condemn the **attacks announced** by the Taliban and others **targeting the electoral process**. Attacks targeting schools and hospitals are particularly

heinous. We encourage the government to uphold its commitments under the Declaration on the Security of Schools and to adopt all measures to protect schools serving as polling stations during elections. We also recall the importance of upholding uniform conditions for all candidates and stakeholders.

Belgium remains gravely troubled by the high number of **civilian casualties** and the growing number of displaced persons, both due to conflict and drought. We recall the obligation incumbent on all parties to uphold international humanitarian law and to take immediate measures to prevent civilian casualties. The increase in attacks targeting humanitarian workers is unacceptable, this deprives the most vulnerable communities of access to vital assistance. We also condemn the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices.

We emphatically condemn all **violations and abuses perpetrated against children** in Afghanistan, and deplore the record number of child casualties seen last year. We eagerly await the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in armed conflict in Afghanistan and look forward to robust measures by the Council in this regard. The treatment of detainees, including minors, warrants close scrutiny.

Mr President,

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm Belgium's determination to enforce the **1988 sanctions regime** in order to dissuade the Taliban from supporting Al-Qaida and its affiliates and to pre-empt attacks against the Afghan Government. We echo the call made by the Chair of the Committee to Member States to provide information to keep the sanctions list as up-to-date as possible, and to assist the Committee in enhancing the effectiveness of sanctions measures.

I would like to acknowledge the **crucial role played by UNAMA and all UN agencies** in supporting peace, prosperity and the promotion of human rights in Afghanistan. Belgium continues its commitment to Afghanistan, by participating in the Afghan army's "Resolute Support" training mission and by contributing financially to the Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund.

Thank you, Mr President.