



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

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

Security Council briefing on the situation in Afghanistan

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Mr President,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking **the various speakers** for their presentations.

While the participants in the Doha **peace talks** are taking a break after concluding a code of conduct, we call on all the parties to assess their actions, both present and future. Afghanistan is at a crossroads and we sincerely hope that these peace talks will bring peace to the Afghan people. The gains of the last two decades must be preserved or even strengthened during this process, particularly in the areas of human rights and the empowerment of women. The protection of children must also be at the heart of negotiations, including confidence-building measures such as the release of children held in detention and rehabilitation programmes for children associated with armed groups. We urge all the parties to guarantee the meaningful participation of women in the negotiations. We must listen to young people, such as Ms Zadran.

Violence must be reduced. We consequently call on all the parties, particularly the Taliban, to take immediate measures to achieve a complete and permanent cease-fire, which is all the more essential given the current pandemic.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate our position on the sanctions against the Taliban: there is no automaticity, as the exclusion of the members of the 1988 list depends on the conditions set out in Resolution 2513, including the progress of intra-Afghan negotiations and a reduction in violence. The brutality of Taliban attacks is in stark opposition to their stated commitment to peace and their participation in the peace talks.

We condemn the high level of violence against **civilians, and children in particular**. In the third quarter of 2020, the UN counted 773 children among the victims. That is 773 in three months. We also specifically condemn the recent attacks against human rights defenders and journalists and ask that the perpetrators be swiftly brought to justice. I would like to stress in this respect the importance of the **fight against impunity** and the need for **transitional justice** in Afghanistan. We welcome the work on victim-centred justice of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

As this is our last speech on Afghanistan during our current mandate on the Security Council, I would like to assure the Afghan people and government of **Belgium's firm commitment** to your path towards peace and prosperity. You can count on our support in the UN, the EU and bilaterally. Over the last five years, we have paid more than \$60 million to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, and this year \$8.4 million have been reserved for the purchase of vaccines and medical equipment for the Afghan Army. As the EU clearly stated during last month's Geneva conference, our future support will depend on the progress made in the areas of transparency, good governance, the fight against corruption, and gender equality.

Lastly, I would like to thank the missions of **Germany and Indonesia**, in particular their experts Friedrich and Kartika, for their exemplary work as co-writers over the last two years. We wish your successors, Norway and Estonia, all the best.

Thank you.