



# Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

**8613**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 10 September 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Safronkov . . . . . (Russian Federation)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Côte d'Ivoire . . . . .	Mr. Adom
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mrs. Mele Colifa
France . . . . .	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Djani
Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru . . . . .	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland . . . . .	Mr. Radomski
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Pierce
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Cohen

## Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2019/703)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Afghanistan**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2019/703)**

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Egypt, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Fedotov is joining today's meeting via video-conference from Vienna.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Silvio Gonzato, chargé d'affaires of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/703, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Triansyah Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

I now give the floor to Mr. Yamamoto.

**Mr. Yamamoto:** The events of recent days and weeks have shown more than ever the urgency of

finding a political settlement to the long Afghan conflict. Efforts over the past year produced opportunities for peace, which created not only hope but also fear for many. But one point remains clear: the conflict can be resolved only by direct talks between the Afghan people. Those talks must be inclusive and must represent the whole spectrum of Afghan society. It is imperative, therefore, that direct talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban commence as soon as possible. Many efforts have been made for that purpose, working with Afghan parties, and have created an opportunity where the beginning of direct talks between the two Afghan parties seems to have come within reach. Yet often the period just before coming to an agreement is the most difficult phase. All those concerned with peace efforts, above all the parties to the conflict, need to continue to work to bring about direct talks. I call on the parties to continue to seize the opportunity of direct talks so as to build a peaceful future.

I have listened to many Afghan people from across the country who express their hopes and fears about the future. They hope for an end to the conflict, but they also fear that peace might come at the sacrifice of freedom and rights, which the country has striven to protect and advance for the past 18 years. Many young people of Afghanistan, especially young women, are worried about future restrictions on their participation in the social, economic and political life of their country. Any political settlement must include a promise to continue to protect and advance human rights and fundamental freedoms for all who live in Afghanistan, including those of women, youth and minorities, as well as the freedom of expression the media.

Another important achievement over the past 18 years, which needs to be maintained and further promoted, is the institutional capabilities of the State, including in the areas of security and service delivery. The recent informal talks between representatives from Afghan society and the Taliban in Moscow and Doha gave opportunities for dialogue to address some key issues needed for peace. I hope that that experience will be carried forward and help deepen dialogue for constructive outcomes.

The United Nations stands ready to support an intra-Afghan process drawing on impartiality and expertise. I also wish to point out that peace efforts need to address and bring about a reduction in violence and an eventual ceasefire.

Finally, the support of the countries in the region and beyond remains critical. Their active engagement in, and support for, peace efforts will be essential going forward, particularly from neighbouring countries that have the most to gain from peace and stability in Afghanistan.

On 20 September, the people of Afghanistan are scheduled to head to the polls in the fourth presidential election since 2001, whereby the country will take another step in strengthening the foundation of a representative democratic political system. The United Nations fully supports the efforts of the Independent Election Commission (IEC), the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), security institutions, civil society and, above all, candidates, their supporters and voters to conduct credible and inclusive elections on schedule. Credible elections would provide an important political foundation for the future of the country as well as legitimacy and authority to the elected President, which will be particularly important in view of the anticipated peace process.

As for the technical and operational preparations for the elections, which are led by Afghan institutions, things are so far on track. The ballot papers and other voter materials are being delivered to provinces and districts. The recruitment and training of polling staff is ongoing. The timely roll-out of electronic technology is being managed by the IEC. The voters' list has been updated, and over 9 million records have gone through the public display and corrections process. Those are some examples of reforms that reflect lessons learned from last year's parliamentary elections. They and other measures will go a long way towards improving key aspects of fraud-mitigation measures designed to increase the transparency and credibility of the vote. Our United Nations advisers are working hand in hand with the electoral management bodies during these last weeks and days of intense preparation. However, concerns still remain ahead of the elections. One is security, another is voter turnout, and another is possible fraud and irregularities.

There are serious efforts under way by Afghan security institutions, in collaboration with international partners, to ensure adequate security arrangements during the preparations and for the polling day. However, we still hear much anxiety expressed by Afghan citizens, particularly in view of the Taliban's stated threat to disrupt the electoral process, especially by targeting civilians participating in elections.

Attacks directed against polling centres and civilians participating in the electoral process are unacceptable. They are clear violations of international law. I urge the Taliban to retract their threat, and I urge the Government to provide adequate security arrangements to safeguard the electoral process.

Voter turnout is important for elections, and 9.6 million people have registered. Voter turnout could be negatively affected by security, but also by the general interest of voters. Through our field offices, we have a sense that interest in elections is not as high as it could be. That might be partly because there has been stronger interest in the peace process, but also because campaigns, which started on 28 July, have not picked up full momentum. I appeal to Afghan citizens to exercise their right to vote. Electoral bodies and the candidates also need to call on people to come out and vote.

Another challenge that could affect credibility is the issue of fraud and irregularities, which includes the need to provide a level playing field for all candidates. In that regard, I should like to point out that the best technical preparations cannot substitute for the political commitment to play by the rules and accept the results of the elections. Candidates, political parties, civil society and the media all have the ability to field monitors for the process on election day. I therefore call on all stakeholders to obtain accreditation with the IEC in order to be present in every polling station. I also urge all actors to refrain from taking actions that could give any candidate undue advantage or call into question the legitimacy and credibility of the process. I encourage all stakeholders to bring cases of alleged violations to the relevant bodies, including the ECC.

The most difficult choice for candidates and politicians after elections is to accept defeat, but it is the supreme act of statesmanship in a democratic process. All technical and operational efforts are put in place to make the presidential election credible. I appeal to and urge all candidates and supporters to respect the democratic process to reach an outcome acceptable for the people and the country.

Efforts for peace should be accompanied by a reduction in violence. Yet violence has intensified in recent days. Recent attacks by insurgents in Kunduz, Baghlan and Farah, and, above all, the multiple attacks in Kabul, are of serious concern. Trying to obtain the position of strength in negotiation cannot be an excuse for the escalation. The parties to the conflict must

reduce the levels of violence and civilian casualties to demonstrate their seriousness for peace.

I am much troubled by the continuing high number of civilian casualties from such attacks. In particular I must point out that the deliberate targeting of civilians is a matter of grave concern and that it is a war crime. The increasing number of civilians killed during search operations and air strikes is also of concern. I urge all parties to review the way in which they conduct their operations in order to protect civilians and to minimize the harm caused.

In that connection, I am very concerned about the continued harm to civilians caused by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, which is showing signs of its unabated and persistent intention to expand its influence.

While the search for peace goes on, let us not forget the millions of people across Afghanistan who suffer the consequences of conflict. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations currently work in 331 of the country's 400 districts, in particular in the areas of agriculture, education and health. Their access and reach provide short-term relief as well as the building blocks for a better future.

At the same time, it is never too early to start thinking about how to assist people following peace as well as while peace is being negotiated. The international community has already embarked on a study of post-peace assistance, led by the World Bank in collaboration with the United Nations and countries such as the United Kingdom. International assistance and mutual commitment to Afghanistan, starting from the ministerial meeting in Tokyo in 2012 to those in London, Brussels and Geneva, will need to be reviewed so as to meet the new requirements and situations brought about by peace. The United Nations, as the co-chair of the 2018 Geneva Ministerial Conference, is conscious of the need to work vigorously in that area, and we stand ready to work with the co-chair of the 2020 Ministerial Conference, yet to be chosen.

I cannot stress enough the importance of advancing efforts for delivering peace, specifically the start of intra-Afghan negotiations. Examples from past peace negotiations from around the globe show that as the prospect for substantive talks becomes real, the challenges will become greater. The final stages leading to the start of intra-Afghan talks become more difficult and require delicate handling. They require cooperation

from all of us. The United Nations commends the efforts of all those concerned to bring about direct talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban and we in the United Nations will continue to assist such efforts.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

**Mr. Fedotov**: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on what the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is doing to support Afghanistan to promote peace, security, the rule of law and sustainable development.

The situation in the country as related to drug production and drug trafficking, as well as transnational organized crime, remains complex. Insurgents and other non-State actors control areas under opium poppy cultivation and are raising hundreds of millions of dollars. The persisting challenges posed by illicit drugs, economic and financial crime, corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism continue to undermine the stability of the country. Such crimes have a profoundly negative impact on the Government's macroeconomic objectives of financial inclusion, job creation, robust private sector-led growth and stable domestic revenues.

Nevertheless, we can also report some good news. UNODC is currently working with the Afghan Government to finalize the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2019*, which will be released in October. We do not yet have the results but we expect that the area under opium poppy cultivation will decrease from the record high levels in 2017 and 2018. That may be due to a combination of factors, including saturation of the market, weather conditions, shifting consumption trends and so forth. However, we must also acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and other countries in the region, supported by the international community. UNODC, including through our Office in Kabul, provides enhanced technical assistance and capacity-building to enable Afghanistan to pursue balanced health- and rights-centred responses to the drug supply and demand, in line with the 2019 ministerial declaration adopted by Member States at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March.

Mobile detection teams and precursor control units, which were established with the support of UNODC,

last year seized approximately 800 kilos of heroin, more than 1.2 tons of opium and nearly 9 tons of hashish. They also seized more than 7,500 litres of precursor acetic anhydride. That is a huge amount, sufficient to produce more than 3 tons of heroin.

Alongside building national capacities, UNODC is committed to strengthening regional cooperation, including by linking initiatives and platforms for regional and subregional cooperation to address the trafficking in illicit drugs and precursor chemicals. Important operational mechanisms include the Triangular Initiative and its joint planning cell, the Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan initiative and the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre, which is considering expanding its membership to include Afghanistan.

In view of those regional responses, it is worth noting that this year's *World Drug Report* showed a decline in opiate trafficking from Afghanistan along the northern route through Central Asia towards Russia. UNODC is also promoting coordination with other regional initiatives and mechanisms, including the Heart of Asia Process, the Paris Pact Initiative, the Afghan Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and others.

Furthermore, alternative development to enable farmers to free themselves from illicit opium cultivation, as well as evidence-based drug use prevention and treatment, remain crucial to other components of UNODC's support. Particularly through our alternative development work, more than 8,500 jobs were created and more than \$4 million of income was generated last year. I am pleased to note that nearly 4,200 women and girls are among those employed. More than 4,800 social contracts were signed with individual beneficiaries and 26 such contract with communities, all of which agreed to refrain from opium poppy cultivation, production, processing and trafficking.

Alongside those efforts, UNODC is also scaling up its support to the Government in order to address vulnerabilities to human trafficking resulting from conflict, in line with resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017). Only last week, we launched in Afghanistan the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, which will be funded by the European Union and implemented with the International Organization for Migration.

Disrupting terrorist financing and linkages to drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime remains a priority element of UNODC's work with Afghanistan. The Government's efforts demonstrate the continued high-level political commitment to countering money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

UNODC is supporting those efforts and, at the Government's request, is concentrating on the areas of greatest risk. Our assistance focuses on investigating and disrupting the financing networks of terrorist and organized-crime groups, as well as money laundering, corruption and other economic crimes. It also includes combating the illegal flow of cash out of and into the country, and improving the supervision of banks and money or value transfer services.

The international community recently marked Afghanistan's 100 years of independence. That occasion for joyful celebration was tragically marred by terrorist attacks on innocent people. I welcome Afghanistan's determination to stop such despicable attacks and commend the Government for establishing and co-chairing, with Spain, the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism.

UNODC is working closely with Afghanistan and other partners to better understand the challenges faced by victims and provide assistance through victim-centred criminal justice approaches. The Office remains strongly committed to supporting Afghanistan in addressing the interlinked challenges of drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism, and we rely on the assistance of the international community to help us carry out this essential work.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Fedotov for his briefing.

I now call on Ambassador Djani.

**Mr. Djani** (Indonesia): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), which I am pleased to do in accordance with paragraph 56 of resolution 2255 (2015).

I am also grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support of the work of the 1988 Sanctions Committee and continued assistance to its Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

I would also like to thank the previous Committee Chair, Ambassador Kairat Umarov from Kazakhstan, for the work and efforts of his team over the past two years.

As the Council is aware, the main goal of the 1988 Committee is to deter the Taliban from continuing to support Al-Qaida and its affiliates and to deter Taliban attacks against the Government of Afghanistan through the use of tools such as global asset freezes, global travel bans and global arms embargoes. At the same time, the 1988 Committee, through the sanctions regime, helps facilitate conditions to promote Taliban dialogue with the Afghan Government, resulting in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

We have witnessed positive steps and many efforts in that direction in the form of a series of discussions between the relevant parties, with the launching of an intra-Afghan dialogue in Moscow in February and its second round, held in Doha. In an effort to support that process, on 6 April the 1988 Committee adopted a nine-month travel ban exemption, ending on 31 December, for 11 listed Taliban members to attend talks in the interest of promoting reconciliation and the prospects for peace in Afghanistan. The exemption to the ban was accompanied by a decision to grant a limited asset freeze exemption for the financing of exempted travel. The Committee fully supports the nine-month travel ban exemption for listed Taliban to attend talks that are in the interest of promoting the prospects for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

As Committee Chair, I would remind Member States likely to host the peace process of their obligations, pursuant to resolution 2255 (2015), to provide follow-up reporting to the Committee on completion of travel and the costs incurred therefrom. I would also like to express some caution and concern regarding the continued strong links between the Taliban and the Haqqani Network and Al-Qaida.

The concern about the Taliban's broad alignment with terrorist groups is compounded by the issue of its continued participation in terrorist acts and its deep-seated involvement in the cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotics, which has strong negative effects both in Afghanistan and globally.

It is also worth noting that, as underlined by resolution 2255 (2015), in order to maintain continued and close cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan, which would contribute to further

enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the sanctions regime, on 12 March Ambassador Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, and Ambassador Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Adviser of Afghanistan, briefed the Committee on progress in the peace process.

While there are structures and frameworks in place for the implementation of the 1988 sanctions regime, the effectiveness of the implementation depends not only on internal but also regional and international actors. The Committee therefore encourages Member States to play a more active role in providing information that would help keep the sanctions list as up to date as possible and to assist the Committee in enhancing the effectiveness of sanctions measures.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind members that the Security Council, in presidential statement S/PRST/2017/15, decided that the implementation of the measures outlined in resolution 2255 (2015) required no adjustment at that time.

Moreover, I would like to remind the Council that the mandate of the Monitoring Team was last extended in 2015 through resolution 2255 (2015) and is set to expire in December. Meanwhile, within the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, resolution 2368 (2017) extended the work of the Monitoring Team to December 2021. It is therefore imperative for the Security Council to start to consider extending the work of the Monitoring Team, in pursuance of its mandate relating to Taliban sanctions, to align with that of the 1267 Committee, until the end of 2021.

Finally, the Committee looks forward to continuing its close engagement with UNAMA, with the Government of Afghanistan, and with the States of the region during my chairmanship of the 1988 Committee in 2019 and 2020.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ambassador Djani for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Raz** (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your delegation on assuming the presidency of the Council for the

month of September. We thank you for holding today's meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. This meeting comes at a crucially important time as we prepare for our presidential election and continue to make efforts to achieve sustainable peace.

I would also like to welcome Ambassador Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, here today and thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the overall current situation in Afghanistan.

As we meet, my country is taking another historic step towards strengthening and further institutionalizing democracy. Later this month, Afghans from all walks of life will exercise their constitutional rights by casting their vote to elect their president through a democratic process. They have eagerly anticipated this important national event as a measure to once again defy terror and extremism, determine their political destiny and secure the future of the country.

The Afghan Government is approaching the election with a full and unprecedented commitment to ensure a transparent, free, credible and inclusive process, in accordance with the strong demand of our people. Preparations for the upcoming polls are moving ahead steadily, following the electoral timetable for the Independent Election Commission. The Government will spare no effort to ensure the safety and security of the voters, and will put all the necessary measures in place in order to ensure the most efficient process.

To that end, voting centres have been allocated countrywide and, for the first time, voter lists are available online, and biometric verification will be used alongside printed lists. Approximately 72,000 security force personnel have been assigned to ensure the safety of voters. Of those 72,000, almost 9,900 female security officers will be tasked with the security of women's voting centres. The elections further underscore Afghanistan's commitment to taking ownership of strengthening the rule of law and democracy since, for the first time, the Government has committed to covering a major part of the financial costs associated with the elections by allocating \$90 million to the process.

Despite all the security threats and challenges, the people of Afghanistan are determined to hold and participate in the elections. The casting of each ballot by a cross-section of our society will yet again signify our people's firm determination to work towards stability, democracy and prosperity. Afghanistan wants

to move forward, not backward. We must respect the desire of the Afghan people and should not prejudge the credibility of the election or question or underestimate the turn out. Afghans, again and again, have proven that despite security threats and being attacked by the Taliban, they will come out to vote and participate in the future of their country. Peace and elections have been equally important to the people of Afghanistan.

My request to the Council and all our international partners and allies is to support the people of Afghanistan in their quest for democracy, as they have always done. This Chamber should also call on countries that could influence the Taliban to respect the aspirations of all Afghans and prevent them from being attacked on election day.

Peace is another top priority for the Government of Afghanistan. President Ghani has laid the foundation of a clear path for a carefully calculated and responsible peace process with the Taliban through various initiatives over the past two years. That includes the announcement of unconditional peace talks, the enforcement of a ceasefire and the release of prisoners during the Eid festivals last year. Those measures were reinforced by the holding of a grand consultative *loya jirga* for peace in April, at which 3,000 representatives from across the nation adopted a declaration laying out the road map for peace.

The Government of Afghanistan has welcomed all international initiatives in support of our peace efforts that will lead to a dignified and lasting peace and preserve the shared gains that we have made together, including but not limited to strengthening the Republic and women's constitutional rights. The people of Afghanistan have also stressed that a real and genuine pledge to peace by the Taliban should be manifested in ending violence, as well as engaging in direct peace talks with the Afghan Government.

The Government of Afghanistan, as always, remains committed to peace talks conducted on a set of common principles, in accordance with the demands and expectations of all Afghans from across the country. Any potential agreement should be endorsed by the people of Afghanistan and ensure their mandate of an immediate ceasefire, a long-lasting peace and stability, and the preservation of the gains and achievements of the past 18 years, which include democratic values, the Republic and, in particular, the rights of women, as stipulated in our Constitution.

We cannot ignore the meaningful role and participation of women in Afghanistan. Our women, as agents of change and a symbol of resilience, play a key role in the political, social and economic development of the new Afghanistan. They have the legitimate right to be an active part of all negotiations and decisions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and her accompanying United Nations high-level delegation for their visit to Afghanistan in July, in the context of women and peace and security. Her recognition of the achievements made by Afghan women and her echoing of their strong call in the Security Council for a peace that safeguards their hard-won rights once again reaffirmed the United Nations firm pledge to stand by our women and the progress they have made in our society. I thank her for her strong support and commitment on behalf of all Afghan women.

One of the greatest challenges to achieving a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan is the protracted war against international terrorism, for which we continue to pay a very high price. The Taliban and international terrorist groups continue their attacks on civilian targets, creating horror and fear. They further put civilians and civilian infrastructure at risk by using them as shields while conducting their operations. Furthermore, the Taliban have also remained hostile to humanitarian workers and have issued threats to members of the press. We call on the Taliban to end the senseless violence, show a true commitment to peace and respect the pledge they made at the Doha Intra-Afghan peace conference, when they said that they would reduce civilian casualties to zero.

Contrary to that pledge, a heinous and cowardly attack was launched at a wedding hall in Kabul on 17 August and caused the death of more than 70 civilians, wounding 180 others. That was followed by the attacks of 19 August in Jalalabad, which happened during our Independence Day celebration, in Kabul by the Green Village and the 5 September attack, which caused a high number of civilian casualties.

Additional attacks also took place last week in Kunduz and Puli-Khumri, but were repelled by the efforts of our Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. In that regard, allow me to highlight that our forces, as true allies in the war on terrorism, are fighting fearlessly at the forefront of international terrorism and

making sacrifices on a daily basis. Their bravery should be recognized and supported by all of us.

In line with efforts to defeat terrorist groups militarily, we have also been working on limiting their operational capabilities, including in tackling financing that may come from the proceeds of narcotics operations. To that end, we have conducted counter-narcotics operations throughout the country, seizing tons of illicit drugs and destroying hundreds of drug-processing facilities.

Other efforts have included improved security at airports and border crossings to detect and deter any instances of trafficking. Those measures have concluded with the apprehension of individuals involved in the drug trade, and our justice system is committed to holding them accountable for their actions. However, we must look at the issue of counter-narcotics in broader terms, including the demand in the supply chain, and consider it a regional issue. We must also look into a regional counter-narcotics strategy as an option.

The Government is committed to the realization of a self-reliant Afghanistan as a hub of regional connectivity and a platform for global, economic and regional cooperation. That has been reflected in the implementation of several regional mega-projects, which are already paying economic dividends in our country and beyond. The increased trade, investments, infrastructure and development brought by those projects, coupled with other initiatives that have also enhanced regional efforts on security, especially the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, have shown the direction of that new Afghanistan as a regional platform of cordiality and cooperation.

The gains of the past 18 years have left us with a committed young generation that continues to take charge of the future of their own country. That includes men and women who are engaged within the private sector as innovative and successful leaders in industry and entrepreneurs and within the public sector as loyal and dedicated civil servants. Among those, women have reached new heights, taking leadership positions in various ministries.

In standing by the re-emergence of our country and the spirit of that new generation, we thank the United Nations and our international partners for their support since 2001. The role of the United Nations and the international community in helping us get to this point has been evident through the work of the United Nations



Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Security Council and other bodies of the Organization. As we move forward onto a new chapter in our modern history, new challenges require that we recommit and develop our relationship together.

On that point, we hope for a thorough renewal of the UNAMA mandate that will highlight core priority issues for Afghanistan's future in achieving a sustainable and lasting peace agreement but also beyond that, into a post-conflict development setting. A new mandate should incorporate updates to the country's situation. We hope for the mandate to be extended for a year, at the minimum.

In closing, allow me to reiterate Afghanistan's gratitude for the Council's tireless work in helping us make progress towards stability and peace. We remain focused on facing the challenges ahead of us. We trust in the support of the Council and our international partners in meeting them together. As such, the Council can count on Afghanistan's firm commitment, as a partner, to the defence of the rule of law, respect for international rules and obligations and the promotion of the values of peace and international solidarity.

**The President:** Before I give the floor to Council members, I should like to inform them that I will have to leave in a little while to present the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/73/2). It is the report we have agreed and approved. Mr. Safronkov will steer the meeting in my absence.

*(spoke in Russian)*

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): I thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling today's debate. It is very timely. We all followed the events of recent days and the cancellation or interruption of the United States-led peace talks. Mr. Cohen will certainly enlighten us on where we stand on that. Despite that cancellation or interruption, we have to determine where we now stand in comparison to last year. Last year, there was no genuine political process. Today, there are prospects for a genuine political process, thanks to the efforts of the Afghan Government, Afghan civil society, the opposition, the United States, Qatar and others.

I would like to repeat what Mr. Yamamoto said at the outset — there is no alternative to a political solution. We have to do everything to return to a political track.

It has to be an intra-Afghan negotiations track, in which the Afghan Government, the political opposition, civil society and key Afghan shareholders take part. We must work very hard and with determination to get there. We must also be patient. The right conditions must be created and, in that respect, I would like to echo what the Afghan Ambassador just said with regard to what the Taliban has been doing in recent days and weeks and the despicable attacks it has launched in Afghanistan, which have killed so many civilians. That needs to stop if we are to create the right conditions.

Germany remains committed to Afghanistan. We are the second-largest donor and the second-largest troop-contributor. In July, on the margins of the Doha talks, Germany, together with Qatar, launched an intra-Afghan dialogue. We are ready to pursue that dialogue. A specific element of that dialogue was the inclusion of women. We believe that the full and effective participation and leadership of women in the peace process and, overall, in the decision-making in Afghanistan at all levels — local, national and regional — are key. I would also echo what the Afghan Ambassador said with regard to the Deputy Secretary-General. Her trip to Afghanistan in July was a very strong and positive signal.

I would also like to highlight one of the many points I retained from Mr. Fedotov's intervention. With the means he has at his disposal, creating jobs for women is very important. As the Ambassador said, women are the agents of change and resilience in Afghanistan.

A sustainable peace process must take place. Here again, I would like to echo Mr. Yamamoto's remarks. To ensure the continuity and stability of State institutions and the Constitution of Afghanistan, any future solution has to respect human rights, in general, and the rights of women and their freedoms, in particular. We, as the Council, have a very important role in communicating that and our expectations.

To avoid a constitutional vacuum, it is very important that the presidential elections of 23 September be held in a fair, transparent and democratic manner. What we heard today from Ambassador Yamamoto and Ambassador Raz with regard to the elections is encouraging. There are certain risks but regarding preparations, much has been achieved.

I would like to raise one specific point that is very dear to our hearts — the effects of climate change on Afghanistan. The effects of climate change are tangible.

There are unprecedented droughts and flash flooding. The impact on the country has been devastating. That is an additional factor that destabilizes the country and has implications for the security situation. All stakeholders must consider that factor and take appropriate action. It perhaps has one positive effect. This question is for Mr. Fedotov. What impact does drought have on poppy cultivation?

We — I and my friend the Ambassador of Indonesia — are the co-penholders for the draft resolution on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We believe that we need a strong substantive mandate that corresponds to the expectations of the Afghan people, as just expressed by the Ambassador of Afghanistan. In particular, in the present situation with the interruption of peace talks, we need to comfort the Afghan people. We need to send the message that the international community is determined to remain present and engaged with the Afghan people. I would urge all Security Council members to put Afghanistan and UNAMA first and be ready for compromise.

**Mr. Djani** (Indonesia): We, too, thank Ambassador Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their briefings. We also applaud the whole UNAMA team, along with humanitarian aid workers, for their valiant and tireless work.

Indonesia would like to highlight three points.

First, security incidents are worrisome and the high number of civilian casualties is unacceptable. For Afghanistan, one is already too many. Indonesia echoes Afghans' calls for zero civilian casualties. That entails full protection for humanitarian personnel too. Whatever their political differences, all Afghan stakeholders must ensure that no harm comes to the people, who have already endured so much in demanding a peaceful and prosperous homeland. Violence and attacks need to stop. The attainment of peace should not be at the expense of civilians.

We call for a ceasefire throughout Afghanistan. The exploitation of the volatile situation by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and increasing attacks are also of concern. The wedding hall attack in Kabul in August was a gruesome reminder of danger posed by ISIL and the imperative for everyone to be united against the vile designs of ISIL and other terrorist

groups. Indonesia strongly condemns that attack. As the co-penholder on Afghanistan, together with my colleagues from Germany, Indonesia will play its role, including by proactively proposing Security Council press statements on such vile happenings, which the international community must stand against resolutely.

Secondly, every effort must be made to advance a credible peace process. We concur with the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/703), which places emphasis on pursuing a negotiated settlement. In that connection, we welcome the various ongoing efforts. Indonesia hopes that all efforts will result in the immediate start of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace negotiations with the participation of women. We also welcome Ambassador Raz's statement on the role of women in Afghanistan. Indonesia continues to feel strongly about the involvement of women in peace negotiations, and we have explored initiatives in that regard. The hard-earned gains in women rights should not be reversed. The relevant entities, including UNAMA, must remain cognizant of this. We also take note of the formation of a 15-member team to represent the Government in the negotiating processes, which includes individuals from all walks of life.

Thirdly, free and fair presidential elections, along with development, are critical. We welcome the preparations for the upcoming presidential election supported by UNAMA. The preliminary registration figure of 9.6 million Afghans shows their determination in a democratic process through which they can shape their destiny. We call for a transparent, credible, free and fair election, and we hope that such an election can be held in a timely manner. We support Special Representative Yamamoto's appeal and call for peace during the elections and restraint in relation to threatening civilians.

We also recognize the many challenges being faced by the Afghan authorities in their nation-building process. We support the Government's efforts to remain vigilant in the fight against corruption, so as to ensure that economic gains can be properly distributed in the interests of the Afghan people.

Indonesia, on its part, is working tirelessly to ensure the well-being of its Afghan brothers and sisters. We are assisting in the Afghan peace process, in capacity-building for Afghan public officials through various programmes and, as the co-penholder, we are supporting UNAMA's work. I would like to echo what

the Ambassador of Germany mentioned by saying that we hope that we receive full support for the upcoming mandate renewal draft resolution. The draft resolution should focus on the most immediate political process and security concerns in Afghanistan, with UNAMA's mandate at its core. It could become a trajectory for the Security Council to support the people of Afghanistan at this critical time. We must not forget that the interests of the Afghan people should come first.

**Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing, as well as Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Djani.

We remain convinced of the need for peace talks. Unfortunately, we cannot ignore the fact that those talks were held in the context of a proliferation of extremely deadly terrorist attacks. Using the lives of children, women and men as a means of pressure in negotiations is unacceptable. One cannot hold the pen to sign a peace agreement in one hand and a bomb in the other.

After so many years of conflict, the Afghan people deserve lasting peace and a peace agreement that is acceptable to the Afghan people and their Government. We fully support the Afghan Government's central role in the peace process and call on the Taliban to engage in talks with the Government and to control their combatants in order to put a stop to any future attacks.

A lasting peace agreement must preserve the gains made in women's rights at all costs, as it would be extremely unjust to sacrifice progress in that area. We also stress the importance of the meaningful and equal participation of women in the peace process and, in that regard, we attach particular significance to the implementation of the new phase of Afghanistan's national action plan on human rights in line with resolution 1325 (2000). Belgium, for its part, is supporting the implementation of the action plan through a contribution to UN-Women.

Belgium fully supports the holding of credible, free and fair presidential elections, which would strengthen the legitimacy of State institutions and pave the way for intra-Afghan dialogue. A high voter turnout will be crucial in order to reflect the democratic will of the Afghan people. In that context, we strongly condemn

the attacks announced by the Taliban and others on the electoral process. Attacks targeting schools and hospitals are particularly heinous. We encourage the Government to honour its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration and to take every measure to protect those serving at polling stations during elections. We also recall the importance of maintaining a level playing field for all candidates and all stakeholders.

Belgium remains gravely concerned by the high number of civilian casualties and the growing number of displaced persons, due to both the conflict and the drought. We recall the obligation of all parties to uphold international humanitarian law and to take immediate measures to prevent civilian casualties. The proliferation of attacks against humanitarian workers is unacceptable, as they deprive the most vulnerable communities of access to vital aid. We also condemn the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices.

We strongly condemn all violations and abuses perpetrated against children in Afghanistan and deplore the record number of minor victims in the past year. We are eagerly awaiting the next report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children in armed conflict in Afghanistan and look forward to the Council taking decisive action in that regard. The treatment of detainees, including minors, requires particular attention.

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm Belgium's determination to implement the sanctions regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) in order to dissuade the Taliban from supporting Al-Qaida and its affiliates and discourage attacks against the Afghan Government. We echo the Committee Chair's appeal 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.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the crucial role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and all United Nations agencies in supporting peace, prosperity and the promotion of human rights in Afghanistan. Belgium, for its part, remains committed to supporting Afghanistan by providing military training through the Resolute Support Mission and contributing financially to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund.

**Mr. Cohen** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Yamamoto, Executive Director

Fedotov and Ambassador Djani for their briefings, as well as Ambassador Raz for her presentation today.

The United States commends the continued hard work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in supporting the people of Afghanistan.

We reiterate our deep sympathies and condolences to the loved ones of those killed in the terrorist attack on a wedding hall in Kabul, committed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province on 17 August. We also convey our sympathies to the victims of recent Taliban attacks in Kabul, Kunduz and across Afghanistan, including attacks that claimed the lives of two United States service members, a Romanian service member and a Romanian diplomat. Their sacrifices remind us of the importance of achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan, for too many Afghans, members of international security forces, foreign diplomats and others have lost their lives to indiscriminate violence.

Regarding the peace process, the remarks made by President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo over the weekend and yesterday speak for themselves; I have nothing to add to them at this time

The United States continues to support Afghan political and electoral institutions. We welcome the findings of the report of the Secretary-General on UNAMA (S/2019/703) that 9.6 million people have been registered to vote. We have pledged \$29 million out of the total \$59 million in donor funding offered towards financing the presidential election and have supported the work of the United Nations Development Programme building the capacities of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission.

We continue to strongly support the role played by Afghan women in Afghanistan's economic, political and social advancement. The United States remains concerned about the high level of illicit narcotics cultivation and production in Afghanistan, including opiates and the growing ephedra problem. We appreciate the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, including the Research And Trend Analysis Branch, in continuing to draw the attention of Member States to this issue. We hope that the international community can expand efforts to address the drug problem.

Finally, as Council members are aware, we are in the midst of a negotiation on a new UNAMA mandate. We must ensure that the renewal draft resolution provides UNAMA with clear, specific guidance to do its critical work, particularly during this pivotal period in Afghanistan's history. We strongly believe that this mandate is too important at this moment to have one Security Council member deny consensus for reasons having nothing to do with UNAMA. All of us must display discipline and political will to focus the mandate on the core issues that will empower UNAMA to support the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, let me once again express my appreciation to the United Nations and other international partners for their support in strengthening the legitimacy of Afghanistan's electoral process and for supporting Afghanistan's peace process.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the holding of this important meeting and to Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Ambassador Djani and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yuri Fedotov, for their valuable briefings.

At the outset, we condemn the senseless attacks carried out last week by the Taliban in various parts of the country. We offer our condolences to the victims' families and wish a speedy recovery to those affected. Such a threat to civil society is all the more troubling in the current electoral context, with reported attacks on candidates, workers and electoral and voter spaces. Those unacceptable crimes must be met with a commensurate response, and those responsible must pay for their actions by facing justice.

In keeping with Special Representative Yamamoto's statement, we believe that Afghanistan is at a decisive crossroads. The presidential elections scheduled to be held in a few weeks will not only mark the democratic destiny of the country, but will also provide a new historical context and an opportunity to contribute decisively to stability, reconciliation, sustainable peace and the fight against corruption, pursuant to the vision developed under the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework, with the support of the United Nations.

In that regard, we stress the importance that the elections be held in accordance with the code of conduct, which promotes and encourages behaviour based on dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect, underpinned by the lessons learned from previous elections. As the

Secretary-General indicates, that requires the process to be perceived as fair, transparent and fair for all candidates, including refraining from the use of State resources for campaigning purposes.

With regard to the peace process under way, we deem it to be of key importance that the solution to the current crisis be framed primarily within the intra-Afghan dialogue, under the inclusive leadership of the process advanced by the Special Representative, and with the firm support of countries with influence. We reiterate the importance of maintaining direct negotiations between the Taliban and Government representatives, as President Ashraf Ghani has stated, with a view to ending the violence.

The multisectoral visit led in July by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed — in the course of which it was emphasized that the peace process will be successful only if it is inclusive and fully respects the rights of all Afghans — was very useful. We must not forget that the majority of the victims of violence are women and children. We therefore welcome the Government's efforts to better promote and protect women and their participation in the main electoral institutions, the Independent Human Rights Commission and initiatives to strengthen their participation in the peace process, as recognized by the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and in the economic empowerment programme.

The precarious security situation that has been described is compounded by the presence of terrorists from the Islamic State and their ties with drug trafficking. As acknowledged at the recent Istanbul Process meeting, it is imperative to establish a regional strategy to adequately address the nexus linking terrorism and organized crime in that area, in accordance with resolution 2482 (2019). We highlight the efforts of the Government, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which Mr. Fedotov pointed out earlier.

In conclusion, we underscore the vital work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in meeting all of those goals, particularly its work in addressing the difficult humanitarian situation of the country, including calls for a more significant response by the international community to respond to urgent food and health needs. We reaffirm our support for the invaluable work of Special Representative Yamamoto

and his team, the renewal of whose mandate we strongly support.

**Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor under the Russian presidency, let me congratulate you, Sir. You have our full support. I thank our Polish colleagues for their stewardship during the month of August. I would also like to thank our briefers: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fedotov and our colleague from Afghanistan.

Like other speakers, I would like to particularly highlight four issues: peace, the presidential elections, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) itself and the issue of women, peace and security.

Together with other speakers this morning, I want to express the United Kingdom's strong condemnation of the Taliban for its recent attacks. Taliban representatives at the intra-Afghan peace conference held in Doha in July committed to reducing civilian casualties to zero, but the Taliban's actions are not matching the group's words. Indeed, on the eve of a historic meeting with United States representatives, the Taliban chose to carry out yet further attacks in Kabul. The Afghan Ambassador enumerated those, but the list before me identifies at least five attacks since the month of August. Those are not the actions of a group that is searching for peace. At a minimum, the leaders of the Taliban need to condemn violence when it occurs and undertake to do everything in their power to stop the rest of its groups from carrying out violence. It also needs to get a united view that peace is in its interests as much as it is in the interest of the people of Afghanistan.

As I am talking about the Taliban, I will take the opportunity now to reiterate what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said about inviting the Taliban to retract the threats against the election. We note that President Ghani remains committed to direct peace talks, and we share other speakers' wish that the intra-Afghan negotiations can proceed apace. President Ghani has appointed a 15-strong member negotiating team, and he said only this Monday, "We are ready for peace talks, but if the Taliban think they can scare us, look at these warriors".

But peace without ceasefire is impossible. If there is to be lasting peace in Afghanistan, the Taliban must enter into meaningful negotiations with an inclusive and representative Afghan negotiating team.

My second point concerns the elections. We are encouraged by what the Special Representative said that the elections remain scheduled for 28 September. I know from experience in Kabul that there are often many stories around elections and many fears that they will be cancelled. Therefore, what Special Representative Yamamoto was able to say about the elections and the arrangements has been very important. The elections represent an important opportunity for the Afghan people to make decisions about their future at a critical time. Our Ambassador in Kabul met in recent weeks with Ms. Hawa Alam Nuristani, Chair of the Independent Election Commission, and with Zohra Bayan Shinwari, Chair of the Electoral Complaints Commission. I think it is important that the Council offer its full support to the Afghan authorities to help ensure that the elections are credible, transparent, participatory and as free as possible from violence, and that we encourage all the leaders to engage faithfully in the democratic process and to take a stand against electoral fraud.

Turning to my third point, about UNAMA, we very much welcome the work UNAMA has done, especially in coordinating international support for the elections. We hope that it will be able to continue that work at the same pace until election day and beyond. Other speakers have referred to UNAMA's mandate, which is due for renewal by 17 September. We hope all Security Council members will be able to support a text that gives UNAMA the clear and strong mandate it needs to support Afghanistan at this critical time.

Turning to the issue of women, which the Ambassador of Afghanistan set out so eloquently, in all cases, the United Kingdom remains committed to a peaceful and democratic future for Afghanistan. We will continue to work with partners and the Afghan authorities to ensure that Afghanistan has the support it needs. It is particularly important that Afghanistan maintain the gains it has made on human rights over recent years. Women play an essential role in Afghan society, a fact that was underscored by the Deputy Secretary-General's visit in July. The United Kingdom will continue to support the full implementation of Afghanistan's national action plan on women and peace and security.

I want to end by stressing the vital importance of women's participation in the elections, but also in an inclusive peace process.

**Mr. Radomski (Poland):** I would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to Special Representative Yamamoto for his comprehensive and informative briefing. Poland highly values and welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support peace and development in Afghanistan. We are also grateful to Ambassador Djani and Mr. Fedotov, as well as Ambassador Raz, for their insightful interventions.

Let me say that Poland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to touch upon three issues in my intervention that we find of great significance, namely, the presidential elections, the importance of international humanitarian law and safeguarding social achievements.

The forthcoming days will be essential for eliminating the shortcomings and addressing the lessons learned from the 2018 electoral process. It is crucial to ensure credibility and transparency and preserve the inclusivity of the political process during the preparations and conduct of the upcoming presidential elections. Strong, effective measures to safeguard the safety, transparency, accountability and credibility of this ballot need to be taken. We urge anti-Government elements to restrain from attacking polling stations, in order to allow the brave men and women of Afghanistan to participate in the democratic process. Poland reiterates its support for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which provide security protection during the electoral process in close cooperation with NATO Resolute Support Mission personnel. As the previous election has already proven, capacity-building efforts supported by international forces produce very positive and encouraging results.

The presidential statement adopted by the Council on 20 August (S/PRST/2019/8) reaffirmed the Security Council's strong condemnation of violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties to armed conflict, wherever conflict occurs. The condemnation relates also to the situation we see now in Afghanistan, especially with regard to civilian casualties. Poland condemns in the strongest terms the brutal attacks by the Taliban deliberately aimed at civilians. We urge all sides involved in the current conflict to comply with international law so as to end violations, abuses and impunity. We also

strongly condemn the unlawful denial of access to humanitarian assistance and humanitarian personnel and the deliberate attacks on medical and humanitarian personnel, hospitals and other medical facilities subject to protection under international humanitarian law.

In the context of recent developments, Poland strongly believes that any peace process should include mechanisms to safeguard the interests of all Afghans, in particular women, youth and minorities. We wish to underline that peace should not come at the cost of rolling back the progress made in recent years. The full participation of all Afghans, especially women and youth, in all aspects of social, political and economic life has to be preserved. A peaceful resolution of the conflict cannot be achieved at the cost of women's and minority rights.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Poland's appreciation for the crucial role played by UNAMA and all the United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people. The current negotiation process on UNAMA's mandate should lead us all to the adoption of a consistent and meaningful resolution that provides a strong foundation for the United Nations active role in Afghanistan. We remain committed to supporting UNAMA and international partners to achieve a democratic and self-sustainable Afghanistan.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto, Executive Director Yury Fedotov and Ambassador Djani for their briefings. I appreciate the work done by them all, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), pertaining to Afghanistan and the Taliban. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Raz, for her statement.

At present, the Afghan situation is in a critical phase, with the countdown to the elections, the parallel advancement of the peace and reconciliation process and the electoral preparations, the worrisome security situation and grave humanitarian conditions. The international community should effectively implement its commitments and continue to provide resolute support to Afghanistan.

First, there is a need to assist Afghanistan in holding safe and smooth presidential elections. The presidential elections are to be held this month, and preparations are

in their final phase. China appreciates Afghanistan's work and efforts to prepare for the elections. In order to maintain political and social stability in Afghanistan, China hopes that the national electoral bodies will draw on the experiences and lessons of last year's parliamentary elections so as to ensure that all elections unfold in an orderly manner. We hope that UNAMA will provide technical support in this regard.

We hope that the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces will predeploy for security situations that may arise during the elections. We also call on all political factions in Afghanistan to strengthen unity and address any differences relating to the elections through dialogue.

The second point is to assist in advancing the Afghan-led and -owned reconciliation process. China notes that the international community and countries in the region have recently been actively pushing for the Afghan Government to engage in direct dialogue with the Taliban, and we urge the United States and the Taliban to continue to advance their negotiations and to implement agreements. We call on all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, to prioritize the national interests and the interests of the people, seize this historic opportunity, launch inter-Afghan negotiations and speedily elaborate a political framework that is acceptable to all parties.

We hope that UNAMA will continue to assist the Afghan Government in advancing the domestic political dialogue and push the Taliban to return to the negotiating table promptly.

The third point is to assist Afghanistan in strengthening its security capacity-building. The Afghan security situation remains weak. Air strikes and search operations have resulted in a large increase in civilian casualties, terrorist organizations remain active and drugs are still a major source of income for terrorist organizations.

China calls for foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan in an orderly and responsible manner and for the United States and the Taliban to honour their commitments on troop withdrawal and counter-terrorism. China hopes that UNAMA will continue to help Afghanistan strengthen security capacity-building. The international community should provide training, funding and technical support in that respect and assist Afghanistan in effectively countering the threat of terrorism, cross-border crime and drug smuggling.

The fourth point is to assist Afghanistan in achieving socioeconomic development and improving livelihoods. Recently, Afghan economic development has been at a standstill. The Afghan people have an urgent desire to improve their livelihoods. As peace and stability require good socioeconomic conditions, China calls on the international community to assist Afghanistan in leveraging its own advantages and in participating in regional economic cooperation and interconnectivity so as to enable it to achieve stability and prosperity as soon as possible.

UNAMA should plan out United Nations agencies' overall capacities in Afghanistan to assist the Afghan Government and people in eradicating poverty, improving livelihoods and overcoming the challenges resulting from natural disasters. The international community should effectively honour its commitments of assistance to Afghanistan, help displaced Afghans and improve the humanitarian situation of Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries.

China has consistently supported the Afghan political process and the swift realization of broad and inclusive political reconciliation. Regarding future political arrangements in Afghanistan, China believes that three principles should be followed: first, there should be broad representation and inclusiveness to ensure that all parties and ethnic groups in Afghanistan can participate in the political life of the country on an equal footing and promote power-sharing; secondly, terrorism must be fought tirelessly to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorist organizations; and, thirdly, a foreign policy of peace and friendly relations should be pursued to ensure that Afghanistan can live in peace with the countries of the world, especially its neighbours, and play a constructive role in regional peace and stability.

The third session of the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, held in Pakistan on 7 September, issued a joint statement and adopted a list of initial projects under the trilateral memorandum of understanding on counter-terrorism cooperation among Afghanistan, China and Pakistan. The Foreign Ministers of the three countries expressed their hope that the intra-Afghanistan negotiations would begin as soon as possible and lead to a full cessation of violence; underlined the need to reach a comprehensive agreement through an inclusive, Afghan-led and -owned peace process; and reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the building of interconnectivity in the framework of

the Belt and Road Initiative, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and other regional economic initiatives. The Ministers stated that they would not allow any terrorist organization, element or individual to use their respective territories to engage in activities against other countries. That declaration is reflective of the current situation and highly significant for the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

China, through such multilateral mechanisms as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Afghanistan Liaison Group and the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, will continue to provide support to Afghanistan in its political process and other relevant areas and to work with it to actively implement the memorandum of understanding between China and Afghanistan on jointly advancing in the Belt and Road Initiative, thus actively supporting the reconstruction of the country and its reintegration into the regional economy.

China will continue to support UNAMA and other relevant actors in playing a greater role on Afghanistan. We will continue to make our contribution by working together with the international community for the security, stability, development and prosperity of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Adom** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to welcome the convening of this debate and thank Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their very enlightening briefings. I would also like to thank Ambassador Triansyah Djani, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), for his report, and our colleague the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mrs. Raz, for the particularly enlightening information that she has just shared.

Just 18 days from the presidential elections in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire would like to commend the outstanding work done by the Independent Election Commission in registering 9.6 million people on the electoral roll, including in areas where the security situation remains precarious. We encourage the Commission to continue its efforts by stepping up awareness-raising among the electorate regarding the use of and safeguards provided by the voting machines.

As we look ahead to the elections scheduled for 28 September, my country calls once again on Afghan political actors to help establish an environment



conducive to the holding of free, transparent and credible elections despite the latest developments regarding the Doha talks. The security context continues to be characterized by persistent attacks against the security forces and civilians, particularly since the launch of the electoral campaign on 28 July, which is indeed a source of profound concern.

The electoral milestones represent without doubt an essential link in the chain of requirements for establishing lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. They must nonetheless be accompanied by a set of initiatives aimed at achieving an inclusive approach for ending the crisis. Côte d'Ivoire would therefore like to welcome the establishment by President Ashraf Ghani of a Ministry of Peace — an institutional tool that will further enhance the coordination of Government actions in implementing programmes aimed at strengthening peace and stability as well as ensuring national reconciliation and social cohesion.

In this regard, my country is of the view that the Government's peace and security initiatives, far from being mutually exclusive, could have been strengthened by the conclusion of an agreement between the United States and the Taliban; such an agreement could have opened the way to possible peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan authorities. Alas, it seems the macabre accounting is not yet over given the ongoing killings perpetrated by the armed opposition. It is the civilian population, particularly women and children, that pays the highest price for such barbaric acts. That is why Côte d'Ivoire condemns in the strongest terms the recent attacks, especially those that took place on 2 September in Kabul, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility even as it had for weeks been engaged in talks with the United States in Doha. Everything must therefore be done for the resumption of the political process in order not to destroy the international community's tremendous efforts for the benefit of the Afghan people, who have suffered so much.

As with any country emerging from crisis, peace, security and development in Afghanistan require the multifaceted and ongoing support of the international community, particularly the United Nations. To be effective, that support must be in line with the strategic priorities of the Afghan Government and help to create sociopolitical and security environments that are conducive to foreign investment. Peacebuilding efforts must also be supported by economic recovery measures so as to overcome the most pressing challenges,

particularly combating poverty and ensuring access to health care and education for all, including girls.

Côte d'Ivoire shares the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General with regard to the southern, eastern and south-eastern regions of Afghanistan, where attacks by armed groups undermine peaceful coexistence among communities and exacerbate the humanitarian situation. The support of the United Nations and international partners for the restoration of State institutions is therefore essential. That is the main purpose of Côte d'Ivoire's call for the Resolute Support Mission's ongoing support to the capacity-building of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and to the improved capacity of judicial institutions, particularly those specializing in the fight against drug production and drug trafficking.

My country also stresses the importance of an enabling environment for constructive cooperation among States and with subregional organizations. In that regard, we welcome the improved bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics efforts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the logistics and operational support of the Resolute Support Mission to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. We commend the unity of the Council, which remains unwavering in its support for UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Côte d'Ivoire hopes that such momentum within the Council will be reflected in the renewal of the UNAMA mandate so that the United Nations mission can continue to contribute towards restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank all the briefers — Mr. Yamamoto, our colleague Ambassador Djani, Permanent Representative of Indonesia, and Mr. Yury Fedotov — for their comprehensive briefings. I would also like to thank our colleague Ms. Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for her statement. We reiterate the support of the State of Kuwait to Mr. Yamamoto and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for all their tireless efforts given the difficult circumstances in which they work. I also thank the Secretary-General for his quarterly report (S/2019/703), which sheds light on the situation in Afghanistan over the past three months.

Today we meet days ahead of the presidential elections in Afghanistan. We note with satisfaction that the recent period witnessed significant progress in preparing for the elections while creating new opportunities for political participation towards achieving peace despite the ongoing serious challenges that must be addressed

The current stage in Afghanistan is a historic one that is witnessing intensified consultations between the various political Afghan parties in order to elect an Afghan President who can shoulder the responsibility for the country's transition to an inclusive and sustained peace. We are also seeing preparations for the presidential elections by the Independent Election Commission (IEC). Those elections are supposed to be held on 28 September. In that regard, I would like to commend the vital role of UNAMA as well as the IEC in registering voters and candidates and the preparation of the polling centres for the elections.

The total number of voters stands at 9.6 million, and that figure demonstrates the desire of the Afghan people to choose the path of democracy despite the security threats. We pay tribute to the valiant Afghan people in stressing once again that the political solution must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led.

In the context of the political developments, we must emphasize the importance of national reconciliation and the Afghan peace process. The State of Kuwait is closely following the steps taken by the Government of Afghanistan, the most recent of which was the formation of the Ministry of Peace as part of the Government's efforts to support reconciliation and intra-Afghan talks. We also follow all regional and international efforts to bring about a comprehensive and inclusive peace process in Afghanistan. We hope that such efforts ultimately lead to a de-escalation and promote the interests of the Afghan people above any other interests.

With regard to security, Afghanistan unfortunately still suffers from a lack of stability in the country. The report of the Secretary-General includes several figures with regard to security incidents and the protection of civilians, which demonstrate the critical security situation in Afghanistan and the ever-increasing responsibility to reach a peace agreement with regional and international support. That agreement would lead to putting an end to violence once and for all.

A discussion of the situation in Afghanistan must include the fight against terrorism, crime and drugs. In that regard, we would like to reiterate the support of the State of Kuwait to Afghanistan in its war against terrorism and its tireless efforts to extend its control and sovereignty over all its territories. We reiterate the importance of addressing the threat of terrorism, which is a main factor for stability in Afghanistan. That is part of the international community's joint efforts against the scourge and of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We also commend the efforts of the Afghan authorities to combat crime and drugs, as clearly noted in the Secretary-General's report.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region can be achieved only through a negotiated political settlement. Consequently, we urge all parties to participate constructively in the diplomatic efforts to achieve peace and promote the interests and prosperity of the Afghan people.

**Mrs. Gueguen** (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to extend France's condolences to the Afghan people and the families of the victims of the attacks perpetrated on 2 and 5 September in Kabul. France stands in solidarity with the Afghan Government in the fight against terrorism. That is a joint commitment of which we are all particularly aware on the eve of the eighteenth anniversary of the attacks of 11 September 2001. I, too, thank Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto for his insightful briefing, in particular with regard to the need to protect civilians and to work for a political settlement to the conflict through an intra-Afghan negotiation process. I also thank Ambassador Djani and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their interventions. I especially welcome the statement made by Ambassador Adela Raz, in particular her support for the rights of Afghan women.

I associate myself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the observer of the European Union. I would like to focus on three main points.

First, France shares the deep concern over the continuing high level of violence in Afghanistan. Civilians continue to be targeted in deadly attacks in violation of international humanitarian law. Women and children continue to pay the highest price. That is unacceptable. Violations of international law, particularly regarding children's rights, must stop.

France welcomes all steps by the Afghan Government to work to that end and to strengthen measures to ensure the rights of Afghan women in all areas.

I also wish to express France's support for the Secretary-General's call for secure and unhindered humanitarian access to all Afghan territory. Humanitarian and health-care personnel, as well as civilian and humanitarian infrastructure, must be protected in order to ensure that the needs of the Afghan population are met.

I would also like to take advantage of Mr. Fedotov's presence today to highlight the importance of the fight against drug trafficking, which continues to fuel the illicit economy, finance terrorist groups and threaten the health of many Afghans. Efforts to combat drug trafficking must continue, and France remains fully committed to working with the Afghan authorities in that regard.

My second point concerns the need to make every effort to ensure that the presidential elections slated for 28 September are held without incident in a free, credible, transparent and inclusive manner. As the Special Representative stressed clearly, it is critical to avoid a new surge of violence as elections approach.

The registration of more than 500,000 new voters, 36 per cent of whom are women, is an encouraging sign. However, all necessary measures must be taken to ensure their effective and safe participation in political life.

Further efforts must be made by the Afghan authorities to restore public confidence in the security and transparency of the elections. In that regard, France welcomes the important work of the Afghan Government to secure polling stations with the assistance of the NATO mission, which must be completed. The future president of Afghanistan will be responsible for meeting the Afghan people's aspirations for peace. It is particularly important that the upcoming elections be held successfully in order to strengthen their legitimacy with a view to future intra-Afghan negotiations.

Finally, I would like to stress the need to work towards a negotiated and lasting peace in Afghanistan. The concept of an Afghan-led peace process is more relevant than ever. Such a process must be inclusive and not exclude any segment of the population. The gains made in the field of justice, the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms must also be consolidated

in order to guarantee lasting peace. That will require condemning and abandoning violence.

To that end, the resolute commitment of Afghanistan's partners is essential. France, with long-standing ties to Afghanistan, will do its part and urges all countries of the region to actively and unambiguously support the stabilization of Afghanistan and to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace in that country.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's full support for the Afghan Government and for the Organization's efforts to achieve lasting peace for all Afghans. As we are now discussing the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, I would like to acknowledge the remarkable work that the Mission does on a daily basis. In order to continue playing a vital role and to support Afghanistan on the path to peace, UNAMA must be able to rely on a robust and clear mandate and the support of the Security Council. In that regard, France welcomes the efforts made by Germany and Indonesia and expresses to them its full support in the achievement of a balanced text.

**Mrs. Mele Colifa** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I would like first of all to express our condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to those injured in the latest attacks in Afghanistan, which we strongly condemn. We once again call on the parties to abide by international law and international humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians.

I would like to thank Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto for his informative briefing and for his admirable commitment to lasting peace in Afghanistan. We have listened to his remarks, which, for the most part, we endorse. We also thank Ambassador Djani for the excellent work he has done in the exercise of his functions as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), as well as Mr. Yury Fedotov for the relevant information he has provided.

The successful holding of Afghanistan's presidential elections, scheduled for 28 September, will be an important milestone for the Afghan people and a great opportunity for all Afghans to decide the future of their country. We therefore encourage the Government of Afghanistan to fortify security measures through the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces so

that the Afghan people can exercise their right to vote in a secure environment and to ensure the holding of transparent, inclusive and credible elections through the Independent Election Commission. Along those lines, we echo Mr. Yamamoto's call for national leaders and candidates to participate responsibly, and urge the Taliban and other armed groups to desist from threatening or attacking election personnel, candidates or voters.

My delegation believes that, in parallel with the electoral process, it is particularly important that talks on an Afghan peace process continue. In that spirit, we support all of the efforts under way and future efforts to promote the intra-Afghan dialogue for peace in Qatar and the strengthening of regional cooperation efforts through the convening of multilateral forums to build regional consensus on peace.

Equatorial Guinea believes that such a peace process must be inclusive and Afghan-led and -implemented, with a view to achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict and a comprehensive political solution; this means that it must incorporate all social and political forces in the country, including the opposition as well as women in particular, in a meaningful way. While we acknowledge that there has been significant progress in that regard, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue including women in the electoral and peace processes, with women playing a leading role during the negotiations.

With regard to the humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan, we share the grave concern of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's report (S/2019/703) once again reflects a high and devastating number of victims, the result of deliberate attacks through the indiscriminate use of improvised suicide and non-suicide explosive devices, as well as ongoing attacks on humanitarian workers. All of that, compounded by drought, sudden natural disasters, food insecurity and poverty, is displacing massive numbers of people, exacerbating the major challenges facing Afghanistan.

Those challenges require the continuing attention of the international community and the provision of significant support to the Afghan Government to improve the country's security environment. In that context, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea will support any language aimed at addressing those challenges during the negotiations for the renewal of the mandate

of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Last but not least, our country remains concerned about the growing presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Afghanistan, which poses a serious threat to the security of Afghanistan and the countries of the region. In that connection, we encourage Member States to support the work of the 1988 Committee and thus comply fully with their sanctions obligations.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support and well-deserved praise for UNAMA's key role in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Matjila** (South Africa): Please allow me to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto; the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yuri Fedotov; and Ambassador Djani, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), for their insightful briefings.

In that regard, I would also like to commend UNAMA's personnel and Mr. Yamamoto for their vital contribution in supporting Afghanistan's efforts towards restoring peace and stability in the country, especially given the challenging circumstances in which they operate.

We would like to highlight the following three points in our statement: first, the peace process; secondly, the role of women; and, thirdly, the security situation in Afghanistan.

First, regarding the peace process, South Africa believes that the only way for Afghanistan to achieve durable peace and stability is through a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process leading to a negotiated settlement. My delegation is of the opinion that any engagement or peace initiative towards lasting peace and security in Afghanistan should be considered, including that of the United States of America or other parties of the region. However, it is also important that all sectors of the Afghan Government and society be included in those discussions to ensure that a comprehensive and inclusive peace is established and sustained.

Secondly, on the role of women, South Africa strongly believes that an integral aspect of those engagements is the inclusion and participation of

Afghan women. That would safeguard the significant progress and gains achieved regarding women's and girls' rights and provide the necessary views and voices of all segments of Afghan society. We welcome the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to advance the promotion and protection of women's rights and urge that this commitment continue during future discussions.

In that regard, we welcome President Ghani's appointment of Ambassador Raz as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. We hope and have no doubt that she will continue to fly her country's flag high and that she will be a shining example of what the women of Afghanistan can achieve. Equally, we join Ambassador Raz in thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the Executive Director of UN-Women for their visit to the country in July and their engagement with the women and the Government of Afghanistan in the area of women and peace and security.

Peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only by the Afghan people themselves. My delegation urges all stakeholders to work towards that noble and achievable goal.

Thirdly and finally, on the security situation in Afghanistan, South Africa is deeply concerned at the levels of violence and insecurity in Afghanistan, especially attacks targeting innocent civilians through the use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks. The ongoing violence only erodes the positive progress made in recent years. As the Secretary-General stated, those deplorable acts cannot be justified and must come to an end. We pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives in assisting Afghanistan on the road to peace and stability.

The effect of that violence is particularly felt by the most vulnerable in society, notably women, children and those living with disabilities. We call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law. My delegation continues to condemn the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups and calls for their immediate release and reintegration into Afghan society.

In conclusion, the Afghan people are expected to go to the polls on 28 September and exercise their hard-won right to choose their own President. In that regard, South Africa calls on all participants in the

election process to work together to ensure that the elections go ahead as planned as mandated by the Afghan Constitution. We hope that with the necessary cooperation and support among the parties, the presidential elections will be credible, free, fair and transparent, and that the 9.6 million registered Afghans can go to the polls as scheduled.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Djani for their briefings. We also thank and welcome the Ambassador of Afghanistan.

The electoral events and those related to the peace process continue to weigh on the political environment in Afghanistan. In that regard, we take note of the preparations for the presidential elections, to which we hope that the lessons learned from the parliamentary elections will be applied, but above all that they will be credible and legitimate. We applaud the collaboration of international and regional actors with the intra-Afghan dialogue, and we urge the continuation of the talks that have been taking place in Doha in support of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process.

At the same time, we welcome the various initiatives in support of that dialogue, including the third trilateral consultation held in Beijing, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit held in Bishkek and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process senior officials meeting held in Ankara. Meetings such as those are simple steps to create and build trust between the parties. In that regard, we would like to commend the cooperation of the Governments of the United States, Pakistan, Qatar, Germany and Russia, as well as the improvement of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Regarding the security situation, we are concerned about the high number of victims and the consistent level of clashes and attacks perpetrated by anti-Government elements. We urge both the Government and the Taliban to comply with the initiatives emanating from the outcomes of the peace dialogue aimed at bringing about a ceasefire and reducing the number of clashes. The Dominican Republic strongly condemns the recent attacks perpetrated by the Taliban, and we offer our condolences to the families of the victims.

We would like to acknowledge the progress made in protecting women's rights, the allocation of funds to the national budget for women victims of violence and the establishment by presidential decree of the

special secretariat to investigate cases of harassment of women in Government institutions. Similarly, we wish to reiterate our call for the meaningful participation of women in the peace process and all areas of decision-making on the future of Afghanistan.

An area of concern for us is the economic situation caused by conflict and natural disasters. Impoverished farmers are seeing their crops decimated by drought and their living standards diminished, so that illegal cultivation becomes an attractive option. Moreover, we are concerned that the high levels of opium production and trafficking are channelling funds to non-State groups, fuelling instability and hampering development efforts.

On the other hand, vulnerable groups continue to be in urgent need of assistance to survive and mitigate the shortage of food, including 132,000 displaced families in the first five months of the year. That is compounded by restrictions on humanitarian access to vulnerable areas controlled by anti-Government armed groups. The threats posed to humanitarian personnel in those areas are unacceptable. We urge all parties to the conflict to ensure access to those areas and to respect the rights of their inhabitants.

Despite promising advances, many challenges must be addressed before lasting peace can be achieved. Ending the war in Afghanistan will require all parties to make difficult compromises, but ultimately it is up to the Afghans themselves.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); Mr. Fedotov, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as Ambassador Djani, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), for their in-depth analyses of the current situation in Afghanistan.

UNAMA plays an important role in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan. The security situation in the country remains a source of concern. Despite the efforts of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the country remains plagued by brutal terrorist attacks. The countless victims of those

heinous attacks include civilians, above all women and children, as well as military and police personnel. We pay tribute to their courage and to their memory. The situation is further complicated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Afghanistan. Its fighters retain influence in the country. They fill their ranks by adding foreign terrorist fighters with combat experience in Syria and Iraq and by creating so-called sleeper cells. As Mr. Fedotov rightly noted earlier, the drug problem is inextricably linked to terrorism. Narcodollars provide considerable financial support for terrorism. We believe that it is extremely important to continue and strengthen international efforts to counter that scourge.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) always stands ready to provide its assistance in that regard, as it has extensive experience in combating the drug threat, including through Operation Channel. We intend to continue working with our Afghan friends to eliminate the security threats, primarily those posed by ISIL and Al-Qaida, and to build the capacities of civilian, security and counter-narcotics agencies.

The Russian Federation consistently supports the aspirations of the Afghan people for lasting peace in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. We are genuinely eager to promote an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led reconciliation process and subsequent stabilization in the country. We have said time and again that a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is our common goal.

The Russian Federation has already done and continues to do a great deal to establish peace on Afghan soil. Examples of our efforts include inter-Afghan contacts on the Russian platform during the Moscow format of consultations, held on 9 November 2018, and during celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Russian-Afghan diplomatic relations on 28 and 29 May this year. Such steps are based on the understanding that national reconciliation hinges on inclusive dialogue, leaving no social and political forces behind. The intra-Afghan dialogue was launched in Moscow on 5 and 6 February. For the first time, it brought together eminent politicians, women and the Taliban at the same table and confirmed the fact that a broad discussion remains key to achieving peace in Afghanistan. We stand ready to continue to provide our full cooperation in that regard.

Another channel for successful engagement on Afghanistan is the trilateral consultations format on

the Afghan peace process at the level of the special representatives of Russia, the United States and China, with the participation of Pakistan at the meeting of the troika in Beijing on 11 July.

We note the growing awareness of the importance of the regional context of an Afghan settlement and the need to harness the potential of established structures in that regard, in particular the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the renewed SCO Contact Group with Afghanistan, as well as the CSTO. National reconciliation should be the result of an all-encompassing inter-Afghan dialogue and a concerted approach to uniting the entire country and all Afghans, without exception. However, after years of conflict, the path to peace in Afghanistan will be arduous and require the consolidation of the efforts of all actors. In addition, there will be a need for strategic patience to ensure that the blueprint for a final settlement is fully operational.

We deplore the suspension of talks between the United States and the Taliban, a positive outcome to which would have paved the way for further progress in achieving a peaceful settlement, national reconciliation and a comprehensive solution in Afghanistan. We trust that the situation that has arisen will not lead to excessive delays in United States-Taliban dialogue. We call on the parties to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible. The Russian Federation reaffirms its commitment to facilitating the peace process in Afghanistan and its willingness to act as a guarantor of an agreement between the United States and the Taliban, alongside other key States of the region.

Afghanistan is about to hold presidential elections, scheduled for September this year. We trust that the elections will take place in an atmosphere of calm and be a powerful consolidating factor for the people of Afghanistan.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Sinirlioglu** (Turkey): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, Under-Secretary-General Fedotov and the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Djani, for their briefings, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Raz, for her statement. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/703).

Today's meeting is being held at yet another critical juncture for Afghanistan. Only 18 days are left before the presidential elections are held. Those elections are supposed to help consolidate our efforts to achieve security and stability in the country. However, we are once again faced with an increasing number of terror attacks perpetrated by the Taliban. Civilians, especially women and children, are the victims of that alarming, vicious campaign. The weakening of the security situation is likely to derail the election process and put the country into yet another cycle of violence. That approach cannot bring peace or stability to Afghanistan. The future of Afghanistan should be based on democracy and the rule of law, not on violence. The international community must back the Afghan people to ensure that elections are peaceful and successful.

Turkey strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. As a framework nation through NATO's Resolute Support Mission, we continue to support Afghanistan on defence, security and law enforcement matters, including training and assistance to the Afghan national security forces.

While we are only three weeks from the scheduled elections, it is unclear how far we are from achieving truly lasting peace in the country. At this critical moment, we expect all parties to act responsibly and seize the opportunity to bring the 40-year war to an end. We are closely following the information coming from Doha talks and recent announcements by President Trump with regard to calling off the negotiations between the United States and the Taliban.

Turkey welcomes all efforts aimed at reducing violence and supporting peace and security in Afghanistan. As we have repeated many times in the Chamber, the Afghan people have made achievements at important costs and those cannot be easily sacrificed. Our efforts to empower vulnerable groups, in particular women and girls, should not be wasted. Peace in Afghanistan can be sustainable only through genuine reconciliation among all segments of Afghan society.

Our efforts and cohesion in our messages will have an immense impact on the way in which the next decade will unfold. Therefore, it is important that we refrain from drawing down the international community's commitment to Afghanistan at an immature stage, which would be incompatible with the situation and requirements on the ground. We cannot afford

to leave Afghanistan until our joint achievements are irreversible.

At a time of transformation, the importance of regional cooperation and commitment becomes all the more relevant. The momentum that has been achieved through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process is worthy of attention. At both the meeting of senior officials in June and the Joint Regional Conference on Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Narcotics in July, the need for a cohesive regional approach to tackling transboundary challenges was underlined. Increasing cooperation in the heart of Asia will benefit Afghanistan. It will also constitute a useful instrument for the region as a whole to realize its full potential in economic development, investments and trade. The Istanbul Process remains the most comprehensive regional platform for dialogue. In close consultation with the Afghan Government, we are planning to hold a ministerial conference of the Istanbul Process by the end of the year. We sincerely hope that this mechanism can be used to contribute to the existing peace efforts.

Negotiations for a resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) have come at a timely moment, when change and transformation are dominating the country's agenda. We believe that the comprehensive role assumed by UNAMA in assisting the Afghan people to achieve a bright future is of the utmost importance. We once again acknowledge its role in the organization of upcoming elections and the strengthening of electoral reform efforts by providing technical assistance and capacity-building. Turkey will continue to support UNAMA's activities and efforts in this regard. We hope that its mandate will be renewed so as to enable the Mission to conduct its activities without any hindrance.

The international community's continuing support remains vital for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan that can effectively serve the needs of its people. We will maintain our solidarity with the Afghan people, as well as our support through regional and international forums.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Serra** (Italy): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. We are deeply grateful to Special Representative Yamamoto,

Executive Director Fedotov and Ambassador Djani for their comprehensive presentations. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for her update on the situation in the country and the electoral process.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

While the situation in Afghanistan remains extremely volatile at present, these uncertainties should not lead us to overlook the significant progress made in recent months in the negotiations to achieve peace. In this challenging context, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan remains an essential point of reference for prospects for stability and development in Afghanistan, and we look forward to the renewal of its mandate in the coming days.

I cannot continue my remarks today, however, without first expressing our firm condemnation of the heinous terrorist attacks that have again struck Afghanistan and its capital in recent weeks. We are horrified by the Taliban's latest attack in Kabul and convey our deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

Italy's sincere hope is that this current phase constitutes an inevitable but necessary moment for the parties to reflect — an opportunity to develop a shared awareness of the deeper significance that lies behind a peace negotiation. Such talks require a great sense of responsibility on the part of all stakeholders, whose behaviour should be in keeping with the spirit of dialogue. Above all, laying the foundations for a successful peace process requires the patient rebuilding of trust, which is impossible in an environment of escalating violence. It is therefore cynical and unacceptable for the Taliban to resort to indiscriminate violence against civilians as a tool to gain leverage.

What the negotiations need to do instead is to reassure all stakeholders — and first and foremost the Afghan people — that the cycle of violence that has prevailed in recent years can indeed be reversed. Efforts made thus far in order to advance peace talks should not be dispersed. On the contrary, they should constitute the basis for reviving debate and dialogue between the parties. We therefore hope that the window of opportunity for peace — pursued so resolutely and tenaciously in recent months — will remain open. Peace is the only guarantee of a stable and prosperous future for Afghanistan.



Italy therefore reiterates its full support for those diplomatic initiatives that can facilitate the start of a reconciliation process in Afghanistan under Afghan leadership and ownership, including a primary role for Afghan women in order to ensure that their constitutional rights and hard-won civil and social gains are adequately safeguarded. In this regard, we also reaffirm the importance of the contribution that the main regional stakeholders can make to the peace process.

Addressing the constant threats to security entails high costs, draining precious resources and energies that are urgently needed for institution-building and for the economic and social development of Afghanistan. Italy continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Afghan partners and, within the framework of the Resolute Support Mission, with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which bravely fight every day against terrorism and violent extremism in order to restore stability and security.

In closing, I wish to refer to the imminent presidential elections scheduled for 28 September, which must be credible, transparent and inclusive. The upcoming election must provide the Afghan people with a tangible demonstration of the progress made towards democratic maturity and a framework for further strengthening Afghanistan's political institutions. Above all, the election will constitute an opportunity for the people to reaffirm their strong desire for peace, which is shared by all Afghans. Building a broad-based consensus for peace through elections can also be a crucial means to improve prospects for intra-Afghan dialogue.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): I congratulate the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and wish them every success with their timely and relevant agenda of critical issues. My delegation conveys its thanks to Poland for its outstanding work as President of the Council last month.

We thank the Russian presidency for convening this important debate on the situation in Afghanistan, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto; the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov; and Ambassador Djani, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution

1988 (2011), for their comprehensive updates. We also appreciate the statement delivered by Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for its insights on the prevailing critical situation.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/703) provides a realistic assessment and important update on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). This debate is also taking place on the eve of important events that will determine the fate of Afghanistan in the immediate and long-term future of the country. The results of the 28 September presidential elections will be crucial and have a profound impact on the dynamics of and prospects for Afghanistan's development. We hope that they will be conducted in a peaceful and transparent way to consolidate Afghan society. We agree with Special Representative Yamamoto that any threat or actual terrorist attack to undermine the process is unacceptable.

We welcome the efforts of the various stakeholders to advance the peace process and conduct relevant negotiations with the Taliban. At the same time, we strongly believe that only successful direct dialogue between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban could ensure a long-term viable settlement of the devastating conflict. Terrorist attacks should cease and must not be used as a political tool.

Despite the effective measures taken by the international community and the Government, the security situation continues to be complex. We are particularly concerned that Da'esh in Afghanistan remains combat-capable and continues to step up its presence in various provinces of the country. Increased terrorist activity in the north of Afghanistan, near its borders with the Central Asian States, is of special concern to us. In that regard, the effective implementation of the third phase of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia is vital.

We also see the need to prevent violence against women and children in Afghanistan, as well as the growing number of deaths caused by terrorist attacks and massive air strikes conducted by the army. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, women and children accounted for approximately 42 per cent of the overall number of victims.

Kazakhstan attaches particular importance to the role of women in conflict resolution. In that regard, we

organized a regional conference, entitled “Empowering women in Afghanistan” in September 2018 in our capital. The conference focused on sustainable economic growth by empowering Afghan women, including in the business sector, reinforced by regional cooperation, with an increased focus on education.

The role of regional and international organizations — such as INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and its Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors — are even more relevant in the light of the fact that drug production in Afghanistan is one of the main sources for financing terrorism.

In his report, the Secretary-General underlines that securing Afghanistan’s economic future will require the incremental development of its private sector, accompanied by improved investor confidence and enhanced trade and infrastructure connectivity with regional partners. We therefore call on donors to increase their contribution to peace and development in and around Afghanistan.

To that end, Kazakhstan is continuing to work on establishing, in Almaty, an interregional hub for the Sustainable Development Goals under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that that structure will contribute to better connectivity and coordinated support for Afghanistan and other countries in the region and beyond, with a view to accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Finally, my country is pleased that the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and the international community have continued to maintain a close partnership, which is vital to ensuring sustainable peace and stability in the country. Kazakhstan will continue to support the brotherly people of Afghanistan in fulfilling their aspirations for peace, prosperity and security.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Blanchard** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President and your team, and all of today’s briefers.

Canada was pleased to welcome Special Representative Yamamoto at the meeting of the Group of Friends of Afghanistan yesterday. As always,

we welcome his comments and are grateful for his leadership role in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Canada believes that a lasting solution to the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be achieved through military means alone. At this critical juncture, the international community must continue to show its support, including through the Security Council, which will renew UNAMA’s mandate later this month.

My statement today will focus on two important issues: the peace talks and the upcoming presidential elections.

The Afghan people and the international community look forward to a political settlement as the necessary first step towards achieving lasting peace. The recent devastating attacks in Afghanistan have prevented building the necessary trust for realizing those efforts to bring about peace and have intensified the urgent need to achieve an inclusive and lasting political settlement that protects civilians and strengthens economic security in Afghanistan.

(*spoke in English*)

We have listened to the voices of Afghan women, who are not willing to settle for a political agreement with the Taliban that sacrifices the hard-earned gains made with regard to their rights; nor are we. Canada welcomes the fact that Afghan women were able to attend the Doha talks. We strongly encourage Afghan leaders to formally include women in any future negotiating team and intra-Afghan peace talks.

Canada and the international community have supported Afghanistan through military and police deployments, development and humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction and stabilization efforts. In partnership with Afghanistan, our collective efforts have contributed to the foundations of a stable and inclusive society in Afghanistan, and those gains must be protected. An agreement that does not bring peace to all members of society — men and women, all ethnicities and all religions — is not a durable peace. Men need to stand in solidarity with women to reach a settlement that benefits all Afghans.

Canada is working together with partners to build the capacity of women’s organizations to take their seat at the table and engage meaningfully in peacebuilding and peace talks. For example, through its Women’s Voice and Leadership project in Afghanistan, Canada

is providing \$8.4 million to help women's organizations provide services and strengthening networks among women's rights organizations.

With regard to my second point, concerning the upcoming presidential elections, Canada welcomes the efforts of the Independent Election Commission to ensure that the elections are held fairly and transparently. Providing sufficient security so that women are able to safely participate is a critical step in ensuring that women's voices are a permanent part of Afghan political life.

Finally, with those political processes under way, it is now more important than ever to redouble our efforts to build Afghanistan's economic security and empower UNAMA to support that work. I really believe that it is also important that the UNAMA mandate also focus on leveraging the economic integration already happening in the region. When the poverty level rises from year to year, when more than half of the Afghan population lives below the national poverty line and when more than 40 per cent of young adults have no occupation, the narcotics trade and terrorism will remain attractive.

There will be no peace in Afghanistan without minimal economic security, and I believe that one of the most promising pillars for Afghanistan's peace and development that I have heard about since I have been here at the United Nations and that I have seen in recent years is through the enhanced regional integration that is already under way.

UNAMA therefore needs to be better equipped to leverage the economic integration that is happening in the region, to ensure the coordination of the United Nations-Afghan country team and to ensure the latter's coordination with the neighbouring country team. UNAMA is the best place for acting as that coordinator, and Canada submits that Council members should think about that as they discuss the renewal of the UNAMA mandate this month.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I thank you, Sir, for convening this debate on Afghanistan. I also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his informative briefing and his tireless efforts, as well as those of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Let me further express my appreciation to all the

briefers for their remarks, as well as to Ambassador Adela Raz of Afghanistan for her valuable input.

Achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan is a long-cherished desire not only of the Afghan people but of the whole international community. An Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is crucial, and Japan supports the determination and efforts of the Afghan Government towards its realization.

We also commend the dedication of Afghanistan's international partners to that end, including Germany and Qatar, for their efforts in bringing to fruition the intra-Afghan peace dialogue in July; United States Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad for his negotiations with the Taliban; and the United States, Russia, China and Pakistan for convening the four-party meeting on the Afghan peace process, held in Beijing on 10 and 11 July. Japan hopes that those endeavours will eventually lead to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, and we would like to continue our cooperation with international partners to help achieve peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

With the presidential elections coming up at the end of this month, Japan welcomes the news that relevant preparations are on track, including the full voter-registration process that took place in Ghazni province, where the 2018 parliamentary elections were not held owing to political tensions and insecurity. It is important that the people of Afghanistan be able to cast their vote and decide their own future. UNAMA plays a critical role in the electoral process, and Japan commends and supports the efforts made by Mr. Yamamoto and his team.

The participation of Afghan women is fundamental in both the peace and electoral processes. Japan welcomes the recent visit to Afghanistan by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and lauds her clear focus on women, peace and security.

Meanwhile, Japan expresses its deep concern about, and strong condemnation of, the continuing terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, which are aimed at disrupting the peace efforts and electoral preparations. We stress that the only way to end the conflict in Afghanistan is by a peaceful settlement achieved through dialogue.

Japan remains committed to supporting a self-reliant and stable Afghanistan. We are steadily implementing the \$96 million in assistance that we committed to in

March, and, later this year, we intend to provide further support to Afghanistan in its efforts in education, in particular its efforts to increase the adult literacy rate.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan):** Let me begin by conveying our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/703) and to our good friend, Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his very insightful briefing.

The situation in Afghanistan remains a source of concern for the international community, especially for my country as a neighbour. Persisting conflict, instability and turmoil and a fragile economy continue to exacerbate the suffering of the Afghan people. We share the Secretary-General's concern at the continued fighting and its heavy toll on the civilian population. We are also concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. We agree with his assessment that the war in Afghanistan has been long and brutal and that the path to peace will be challenging, but we share his optimism about the progress achieved in the peace talks.

That, of course, was before last weekend. After decades of conflict, the framework for an eventual peace agreement seemed within grasp. There were sufficient grounds to be hopeful that the parties appeared closer to that goal than at any other time in the past 18 years. Nine rounds of direct talks between the United States and the Taliban over nearly a year had brightened prospects for putting in place, at least in principle, an agreement for a settlement that could lead to intra-Afghan negotiations and a negotiated end to the long drawn-out conflict.

As history is our witness, the path to peace, especially in protracted conflicts, is never linear or easy. Challenges have to be overcome and hurdles crossed before a comprehensive agreement is reached. Therefore, the recent setback should not set back our hopes or the resolve to persist. We hope the suspension of the peace talks is only a pause and that they will resume sooner rather than later, as the alternative is far worse, namely, a surge in violence that could push Afghanistan into an even more turbulent and uncertain phase than has been witnessed in the past.

Pakistan has always condemned violence and called on all sides to exercise restraint and a commitment to

pursue the process. Let me reiterate that message today. We have been facilitating the peace and reconciliation process in good faith, as a shared responsibility, and have encouraged all sides to remain engaged with sincerity and patience. Pakistan will continue to monitor the developments. We reiterate our principled policy position that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. We urge all sides to re-engage, and look forward to an early resumption of the talks.

Apart from Afghanistan itself, there is no country that has suffered more than Pakistan from the four decades of war and foreign interventions in Afghanistan. There is no other country that will gain more from peace in Afghanistan. In his recent visit to Washington, D.C., Prime Minister Imran Khan assured President Trump of Pakistan's full support in bringing the conflict in Afghanistan to a negotiated conclusion. But Pakistan, at best, can be only a facilitator. It is up to the parties to the conflict to resolve their differences with patience, trust and continued, sustained engagement. Tough decisions will eventually have to be taken by the Afghans themselves. It is equally critical for the international community to recommit to supporting a negotiated peace in Afghanistan.

On the bilateral front, during the visit of President Ashraf Ghani to Pakistan in June, the leadership of the two countries committed to adopt the framework for a forward-looking approach and to move away from the mistrust of the past. The need for enhanced trade and economic relations and cooperation for regional connectivity was re-emphasized. Pakistan has provided significant development aid to Afghanistan in the education, health, reconstruction and infrastructure development sectors.

In addition, my country has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for four decades, opening our homes and hearts to our brothers and sisters in their time of travail and tragedy. Even as I speak, we are host to the largest protracted presence of refugees anywhere in the world. We remain committed to their safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation. My Government recently extended the tripartite agreement and the validity of their stay in Pakistan to 30 June 2020.

At the regional level, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan concluded the third round of the trilateral Foreign Ministers dialogue in Islamabad only this past weekend. The Ministers reiterated their support for a politically negotiated settlement of the conflict

and underlined the need for an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process leading to a comprehensive agreement for durable peace and stability. We are working with Afghanistan and our regional partners on many regional economic and energy corridors, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline, the CASA-1000 power project and others.

In conclusion, let me say that peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan are intertwined and interdependent. Pakistan has a vital interest in a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous Afghanistan. My country stands ready to support the Government of Afghanistan in addressing the multiple challenges it faces today and will assist in whatever way it is asked when it transitions from war to a peaceful future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan.

**Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan):** First of all, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this quarterly debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tadamichi Yamamoto, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Executive Director Yury Fedotov, Ambassador Djani of Indonesia and Ambassador Raz of Afghanistan, for their informative briefings.

Today it is obvious that the prospects for stable and sustainable development in Central Asia are inextricably linked with the achievement of durable peace in neighbouring Afghanistan. Therefore, Uzbekistan has significantly expanded its bilateral relations with Afghanistan over the past years and is actively participating in the international community's efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the Afghan problem. In Uzbekistan, we consider Afghanistan to be a close and fraternal nation, with which we have been connected for centuries by the bonds of friendship and common history, religion, customs and traditions. Uzbekistan pursues with regard to Afghanistan a policy based on the principles of mutual respect and equality that takes into account shared interests, and supports a Government elected by the people of Afghanistan.

It should be underlined that a holistic, deeply thought-out and strategically substantiated vision of the President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, regarding the situation in Afghanistan served as a solid foundation for the development

by Tashkent of a completely new, practical and far-sighted policy with regard to Afghanistan. In that regard, Uzbekistan is firmly committed to continuing to support all efforts conducive to making a practical contribution to stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and returning that country to peaceful development. The Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, convened in March 2018 at the initiative of the Presidents of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, became the political basis to that end. The Tashkent declaration adopted at the end of the Conference demonstrated a consolidated position at the regional and global levels on the need for the early start of direct negotiations between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban movement.

In order to further advance the peace process and ensure its inclusiveness, Uzbekistan has held a number of important negotiations with the Government in Kabul and representatives of the leading political forces in Afghanistan, including the Taliban movement. In particular, the Uzbek side over the past year met with representatives of the Qatar-based Taliban Political Commission. The most recent meeting took place a month ago in Tashkent, when the Taliban movement welcomed Uzbekistan's efforts on Afghanistan. I would like to emphasize that Uzbekistan closely coordinates all of its contacts with the Taliban with the Government of Afghanistan. In particular, we conduct prior consultations with the Afghan authorities on our upcoming meetings with the Taliban and brief them on the outcomes.

Uzbekistan does not claim the right to be the main negotiating platform on Afghanistan. Our ultimate goal is to help launch peace talks and facilitate the achievement of a general stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. From our perspective, the durability of any peace agreement in Afghanistan will depend upon, first and foremost, the involvement of all domestic political forces. Therefore, the Government of Afghanistan should be a party to any negotiation process. This is the most important aspect without which it will be impossible to achieve tangible progress in launching peace talks.

We cannot postpone an intra-afghan political process any longer: delaying it any longer will cost the lives of many more innocent people. We also consider it crucial to maintain the role of State institutions in the negotiating process in such important areas as law enforcement, fully functioning civil society institutions and respect for the rights of women in

Afghanistan — in short, all the achievements made over the past 18 years. In addition, we must also invest in the future social stability of Afghanistan through its younger generations. In that regard, Uzbekistan is today providing comprehensive assistance to the economic recovery of Afghanistan and its participation in regional initiatives. We support such projects as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and the Central Asia-South Asia power project, as well as the practical implementation of initiatives vital to Afghanistan in the areas of transportation, energy, trade and education. Among those are the construction by Uzbekistan of the Surkhan-Puli-Humri power line, the opening of an educational centre in Termez city to train Afghan citizens and the Termez-Cargo logistics centre with a customs terminal, the development of projects for the construction of railway lines from Mazari-e-Sharif to Herat and Mazari-e-Sharif to Kabul and Peshawar.

In addition, a ministerial meeting of the eighth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan will be convened this year in Tashkent. We expect the main result of that forum to be the development of a strategy for further forging partnership between the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan in the name of the common goals of peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that today the future of peaceful development in Afghanistan depends on consolidating the efforts of the international community as a whole towards the soonest possible start to direct negotiations among all parties to the conflict. In that connection, I underscore once again that only an Afghan-led and -owned political process can lead to a durable peaceful settlement to the ongoing conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Edrees** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and the Russian Federation for having convened this meeting. I also wish to convey my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Yamamoto, to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Fedotov, and to my dear colleagues Mrs. Adela Raz, Ambassador of Afghanistan, and Ambassador Djani of Indonesia, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established

pursuant to resolution 1888 (2011). I thank them for their detailed and informative briefings following the periodic report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/703), in particular since this meeting is being held in advance of the extension of the UNAMA mandate, to be considered later next week.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to the Afghan people and Government in the wake of the recent terrorist attack in Kabul.

Egypt always stresses the importance of bolstering the role of the Security Council and recalls the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan by providing it with political, security and developmental support for a better present and future for the Afghan people and the whole of Central Asia. We must all be partners in order to link security to development and peace in Afghanistan and its region. We all believe in one desired international objective that leads to strengthening Afghanistan's capabilities after the country has suffered a great deal for decades while striving to address difficult challenges since the last quarter of the twentieth century. The future goal is to achieve peace, stability, security and sustainable development by strengthening the United Nations role concerning this vital issue and shedding light on the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia, along with reminding various international parties of the need to shoulder their responsibility towards Afghanistan,

As there is a correlation between the interests and reasons for stability in Central Asia and the Middle East, Egypt always supports the Afghan Government in its war against terrorism and its tireless efforts at control and sovereignty over all of its territories. At the same time, we look forward to the resumption of peace talks between the United States of America and the Taliban. We also welcome the support from neighbouring countries to this vital negotiating path. We also support Afghan authorities in their political and social endeavours to establish security and development for all the people of Afghanistan. Based on that, when we, as the international community, seek practical solutions in that regard, we need to shed light on the following aspects.

First, the security aspect has at its core the collective commitment to fight terrorism everywhere under the international strategic framework and to address the extremist ideologies, especially fighting Da'esh in Afghanistan, in particular the Khorasan

Province branch), amid an escalation in security incidents recently and terrorist attacks in a manner that is unprecedented in Afghanistan. In that regard, we stress the importance of close cooperation regionally and internationally with the relevant Afghan authorities involved in fighting drugs, while also stressing the importance of countering opium trafficking, as reported by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its recent reports. It is impossible to disassociate this from counter-terrorism efforts given the fact that drug trafficking is among the main sources of financing terrorists organizations and armed groups.

Secondly, the development aspect should be considered in the light of economic and investment initiatives of neighbouring countries as well as regional projects that have a strategic dimension. At the forefront of those endeavours are the decisions taken by the Heart of Asia ministerial conferences, along with the efforts undertaken by the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. In that regard, Egypt pledges to continue its contribution through specialized training offered by programmes of the Egyptian Agency for Partnership for Development that target Afghan army and police elements. In addition, Egypt continues to provide support in the areas of the judiciary, culture, health care, nursing, agriculture, irrigation and the banking sector, as part of contributing to building an integrated architecture for Afghan national institutions. Egypt believes in the desired international unity of purpose with a view to strengthening the capabilities of the Afghan Government to achieve peace, stability, security and sustainable development. In that context, Egypt calls on the international partners to continue meeting their commitments to Afghanistan.

Thirdly, the political aspect requires that we support the Afghan Government in order to promote the possibilities of succeeding in the internal peace process, national dialogue and reconciliation, especially in the context of the quartet mechanism. We welcome the efforts of the Afghan Government to prepare for the upcoming elections.

Fourth is the international aspect, which is represented by UNAMA and the means to strengthen the activities and effectiveness of that important United Nations mission in the light of its role and significance in Afghanistan. In that regard, we also value the vital tasks undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

Fifthly and lastly is the regional aspect, where we emphasize the important role of regional organizations, as well as subregional bodies in Central Asia, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is also important to build upon the positive outcomes of the Brussels Ministerial Conference and to ensure that pledges made there be met. It is necessary to strengthen cooperation and coordination to counter threats, overcome challenges and bolster communication in this strategically important part of the world.

In conclusion, I reiterate the importance of making progress towards an integrated United Nations vision that includes the above-mentioned elements. That should be accompanied by a clear Afghan-owned and Afghan-led road map in order to establish peace and security and, ultimately, to achieve development and prosperity in Afghanistan and Central Asia given that this is a model example for implementing the concept of global peacebuilding called for by the United Nations.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Mr. Yardley** (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I also thank all today's briefers.

Afghanistan continues to experience unacceptable levels of violence. With 3,804 reported civilian deaths in 2018, that is more than any other year on record. Since then scores more lives have been lost to the conflict, including civilians and Afghan security forces trying to protect their country against terror and insurgency.

Australia remains firm in its support of all efforts to achieve peace in Afghanistan. We appreciate the efforts made by United States Special Representative Khalilzad to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Taliban. The past year has seen significant diplomatic investment to end the long-running conflict in Afghanistan. In recent days, many hoped such efforts would result in a historic deal to de-escalate the conflict and lay the foundations for direct intra-Afghan peace talks.

We call on the Taliban to immediately halt the violence against civilians and to agree to a comprehensive ceasefire as the basis for intra-Afghan negotiations. We must continue to prioritize diplomacy and other peaceful means to end the conflict.

Afghan and international human rights advocates have called for the full protection of the rights of

Afghan women. That must include access to health care, education, employment and freedom of movement and addressing gender-based violence. Many Afghan women are calling for transitional justice, basic services and room to continue the long journey to equality.

We applaud all those who stand up for these rights. Australia will continue to advocate strongly for the full protection of Afghan women and girls.

We know that the most durable peace agreements are inclusive and are able to address the root causes of conflict by engaging all citizens in a process of change. That is a long-term endeavour and will require the support of the international community.

The inclusion of women in the intra-Afghan peace dialogue is an important moment, including for resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Women must have the right to speak for themselves at home and in international forums, including in peace discussions. Ensuring the representation of Afghan women in negotiations would be the beginning of a truly inclusive peace process.

Despite the ongoing challenges, Australia welcomes the significant gains that Afghanistan has made over the past 18 years, such as the tenfold increase in school enrolment, the 20-year increase in life expectancy and the fivefold increase in gross domestic product per capita.

We must work together to protect those gains. It is not for the sake of a diplomatic agreement but for the gains made by ordinary Afghans that we must collectively pursue peace in Afghanistan.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

**Mr. Akbaruddin** (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. We also thank Ambassador Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General; Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Ambassador Djani, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011); and Ambassador Adela Raz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for their insights into recent developments in Afghanistan.

We meet at a time when the Afghan people mark a century of their independence this year and their country stands at yet another transformational juncture. Preparations are under way for the presidential elections,

scheduled to be held in a few weeks. Afghanistan is poised to renew its commitment to an order ensuring that a democratically elected Government is at the heart of any process to determine a peaceful settlement of its issues. We should all join in support of the solution that will best suit the country and can be implemented in a sustainable and dignified manner.

Notwithstanding the unforeseen shifts and challenges to which we are accustomed, we note the cautious optimism in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/703). Even though the journey ahead may not be easy or predictable, we welcome the opportunities for peace and reconciliation emerging from the various efforts.

It is the Afghan people who will implement and bear the consequences of any agreements reached. Hence, outcomes that have constitutional legitimacy and a political mandate and are arrived at in an inclusive and democratic way alone can ensure stability. We therefore support the Secretary-General's call for direct talks.

Peace and reconciliation cannot go forward in an atmosphere of terror. There has been a surge in violence in Afghanistan in recent days, including threats to the election process itself. That has deepened apprehensions that acts of terror are being used to compete for a place of advantage in the negotiating process.

The international community needs to continue its support by fulfilling the commitments made to the Afghan security forces in their fight against the scourge of terrorism. The support and safe havens enjoyed from beyond Afghanistan's borders by groups such as the Taliban, the Haqqani Network and Da'esh, as well as Al-Qaida and its proscribed affiliates, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaysh al-Mujahidin, must be addressed. Having been victims of terrorism, we understand and empathize with our Afghan friends over the suffering and pain that they are undergoing.

Amid the clouds of uncertainty of the present, we should not forget the precious gains that the Afghan people have made in the past 18 years. They have strengthened and embraced democracy; established a constitutional order; promoted the welfare and rights of minorities and young people; built a strong and increasingly capable security force; and forged deeper regional links. They have done all that while confronting the most brutal threats posed by terrorism.



Even in the most difficult times, the famed Afghan resilience and strength of character shine through in their homes, schools, colleges, theatres, markets and factories and, indeed, on their sports grounds. Lest anyone doubt that, less than 48 hours ago, Afghan cricketers secured their second victory in three cricket test matches played thus far. The last time such a feat was accomplished by any country was way back in the 19th century. That is only one instance and is symbolic of the many gains that the Afghan people are making, unknown to many. Another accomplishment is the remarkable reclamation by Afghanistan's women of their rightful place in all parts of society. Those hard-won achievements need to be nurtured, not nullified.

India's support for the Afghan people is well known, and I reiterate it here. We believe that there is hope on the horizon. We remain willing to work with all countries in the region and beyond, keeping Afghanistan's sovereignty and its ownership of the peace process at the forefront.

We hope that the international community, through the Council and its various instruments, can finally do right by the people of Afghanistan and support an inclusive peace that will ensure that the destiny of the country will be steered by the Afghan people.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Gonzato**: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2019/703). I would also like to thank Special Representative Yamamoto and Executive Director Fedotov for their briefings, as well as Ambassador Raz for her statement. They all brought important elements to our attention.

The EU strongly acknowledges the crucial role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all the United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people, encouraging peace and reconciliation, monitoring and promoting human rights and implementing the commitments

from the November 2018 Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan. The EU wishes to have the closest possible relationship with UNAMA, in a spirit of transparent and open cooperation on the ground and in international formats, for the ultimate benefit of Afghanistan.

The European Union remains a steadfast supporter of the current efforts to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan. In the light of the current momentum in the peace process, for the EU it is more important than ever to preserve the political, economic and social achievements of the past 18 years, for which Afghans and the international community have made enormous sacrifices — particularly the rights of women, children and minorities. It is crucial to continue to enhance and build on those achievements.

That approach has been clearly expressed by the EU and its member States, notably through EU Council conclusions in November 2018 and April 2019 and the EU five-point offer to support the peace process, as announced by Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, at the Geneva Ministerial Conference in November 2018. The five points are helping the Government making the peace process more inclusive; supporting post-conflict reforms, including security sector reform; reintegrating ex-combatants; contemplating a possible EU role as guarantor of the peace process; and supporting cross-border trade and infrastructure, as well as regional connectivity.

While political will and strong leadership are needed, a peace deal can be lasting only if it is owned by all parts of Afghan society and not perceived as being imposed on the population. All Afghans need to feel included in the peace process. Nothing could demonstrate Afghan ownership more than achieving a nationwide ceasefire that puts an end to violence by the time inter-Afghan reconciliation talks are launched. The EU is ready to play an active role in supporting the peace efforts and to facilitate consultation processes and dialogues that will contribute to inclusivity by involving all segments of Afghan civil society. Particular attention should be given to the full involvement of women, in line with resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, as well as to the protection of their constitutional rights.

The EU strongly believes that peace must not be pursued at the expense of Afghanistan's democratic

development. We therefore fully support the holding of fair and transparent presidential elections to strengthen the legitimacy of State institutions, and promote the democratization and political stability of Afghanistan. To that end, the EU will continue providing financial support — over €18 million — to address some of the technical difficulties of the previous parliamentary elections in October 2018.

The cessation of violence and achieving lasting peace are key. The EU stands ready to renew its long-term commitment to Afghanistan after a peace agreement has been signed. As we have said before, if there are expectations for the EU to provide substantial financial, political, diplomatic and development support after a successful conclusion of a peace agreement, the EU needs to be involved at all stages of the peace process.

This year has been important for EU-Afghanistan bilateral relations, with High Representative Mogherini's visit to Kabul and several bilateral meetings in the framework of the EU-Afghanistan cooperation agreement on partnership and development. The EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Roland Kobia, continues to visit Kabul and the region to support the peace process.

As progress towards a political settlement continues, the coordination among development, security and political actors is crucial. The EU maintains close cooperation with key international partners. In that regard, we reiterate our support to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission efforts to provide further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions.

The EU is a strong development partner for Afghanistan, and our development cooperation responds to the officially defined and presented Afghan Government's priorities. The EU will continue its strong commitment to on-budget support, based on Afghan progress in the implementation of its policies and their impact. The EU is currently starting to work on the next programming cycle for Afghanistan, which will cover the period from 2021 to 2027, and the potential priorities in the context of a peace agreement.

The EU continues its structured dialogue with Afghanistan under the cooperation agreement on partnership and development. We are also following up on the outcome of the EU-Afghanistan Special Working Group on Human Rights, Good Governance

and Migration, held on 5 May in Kabul. In particular, we encourage the Afghan authorities to continue to implement the relevant legislation, with particular focus on areas such as the elimination of violence against women, the use of the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the protection of children and the prevention of torture and ill treatment. Promoting the rule of law and ending impunity for corruption will also be core elements of a future sustainable peace.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the high level of civilian casualties and the increasing number of displaced people, and reiterates the need to protect the civilian population, especially women and children. We need to continue to protect the vital role of humanitarian agencies and respect their impartiality and humanitarian space in addressing the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable.

In conclusion, this is a very important moment for Afghanistan. However, all peace negotiations and agreements will be viable and accepted by the population only if they support and maintain the values and achievements of the past two decades. The democratization of Afghanistan should continue, along with better protection of the rights of all Afghans and safeguarding the country's democratic institutions. For peace to be enduring, the full support of all States of the region is needed.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iran.

**Mr. Takht Ravanchi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank the Russian presidency of the Council for organizing this meeting. We also thank the briefers for their valuable input.

Afghanistan is passing through a critical juncture, and there are alarming trends in its political and security domains. Numerous efforts are being made to hold a successful presidential election on 28 September. However, there are attempts to undermine that important event.

Holding free and fair presidential elections can further enhance the democratic institutions of the country. We call upon the United Nations and the international community to support holding the elections as scheduled. Iran also urges all Afghan parties and political groups, as well as all Afghans eligible to vote, to actively participate in the elections,

as that is essential for the improvement of the security and socioeconomic conditions of Afghanistan.

In the security domain, the high number of incidents, as referred to in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/703), serves to indicate that the security situation remains volatile. The increase attacks by Da'esh is a source of grave concern and underlines the need to combat it seriously and resolutely. It is evident that its elements, aided by certain countries, including in transferring them from Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan, have significantly increased the offensive capability of Da'esh. Those countries are therefore also responsible for the crimes committed by Da'esh.

After almost two decades of United States invasion of Afghanistan, it is quite clear that the United States has no choice but to leave that country, and the sooner, the better. As we have stated time and again, the time-bound and responsible withdrawal of all foreign forces is a strong national demand of the people of Afghanistan. We urge the Government of Afghanistan and all Afghan parties to be vigilant and cooperate closely in successfully passing through the current critical security situation. Any conflict and fratricide will help those who do not wish to see a secure and stable Afghanistan.

We urge all parties, pending national reconciliation and a permanent ceasefire agreement, to exercise maximum restraint and avoid deteriorating the security conditions and targeting civilians. Neither Afghanistan nor our region can afford a new round of conflict. Peace is the strongest demand of the people of Afghanistan, and it must be heard by all Afghan groups, who, instead of confrontation, should cooperate for peace.

Any peace process must be facilitated by the United Nations and Afghan-led, -owned and -controlled.

We call on regional and international players to support such a peace process and allow the future of Afghanistan to be determined exclusively by Afghans themselves. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan must have the central role in all peace efforts, and any peace agreement must be concluded with its participation.

Furthermore, any peace process shall preserve the achievements of the International Conference on Afghanistan held in Bonn in 2001, including the Constitution and the institutions derived from it. At the same time, in case of an agreement to amend the Constitution, it shall be conducted according to the procedure foreseen in the Constitution itself and under the supervision of the legitimate Government of Afghanistan. No country has the right to decide the future of Afghanistan, and any peace negotiation in the absence of Afghanistan's Government and the political factions of the country, or in a unilateral, exclusive and non-transparent manner, is doomed to fail.

While respecting the sovereignty of Afghanistan and underlining the need for the ownership and leadership of any peace process by the people of the country, Iran stands ready, within a regional initiative, along with its neighbouring countries, as well as Afghanistan's Government and all groups, to enter into consultations and negotiations with all parties in the conflict in order to prevent more bloodshed and facilitate the conclusion of a durable agreement.

As a neighbouring country that has always wholeheartedly supported the Afghan-led and -owned initiatives for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, Iran will spare no genuine or impartial effort to that end

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*