



# United Nations

## Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

**Briefing to the United Nations Security Council  
by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva  
New York, 6 March 2024**

[As delivered]

President,

Security Council resolution 2721 provides a clear goal for the international community's engagement with the de facto authorities. That end state is an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations, which includes the need to ensure the full participation of Afghan women. This is also the objective towards which UNAMA has carried out its own activities in Afghanistan since receiving a mandate for political engagement in March 2022.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for convening the second meeting of Special Envoys in Doha on 18 and 19 February. Despite the decision by the de facto authorities not to attend, the meeting was very important for the following reasons. First, it reiterated the international consensus established at the first Doha meeting in May of last year on the need for continued engagement. Second, it helped key stakeholders of the international community to clarify the way forward based on the Special Coordinator's Independent Assessment. Third, it ensured that the needs of the Afghan people remained high on the international agenda, and established this group of Special Envoys as a standing mechanism for the international community that should meet more frequently to work towards the end state articulated in resolution 2721. Fourth, it allowed Special Envoys to hear the views of Afghan civil society. And fifth, it reiterated the international community's ongoing concerns about human rights in Afghanistan, the lack of inclusive governance, and that Afghanistan should not become a threat to neighbours and other countries.

I want to thank the government of Qatar for generously hosting this meeting a second time, providing facilities, and making logistical arrangements.

This was the second time in a year that the Secretary-General has devoted two days out of his busy schedule to chair a meeting on Afghanistan. This is an important signal to the people of Afghanistan, and especially the women of Afghanistan, that their needs and rights are not being forgotten. Indeed, we are just two days away from International Women's Day, which this year highlights the need to invest in women. What we are seeing in Afghanistan is precisely the opposite: a deliberate disinvestment that is both harsh and unsustainable. The denial of women and girls' access to education and work, and their removal from many aspects of public life, have caused immense harm to mental and physical health, and livelihoods. The recent arbitrary detentions for alleged Islamic dress code violations were a further violation of human rights, and carry enormous stigma for women and girls. This also has a chilling effect among the wider female population, many of whom are now afraid to move in public. I take this opportunity to call again on the de facto authorities to reverse these restrictions. The longer they remain in place, the more damage will be done. I thank the Council and the international community for maintaining its solidarity and focus on this crisis.

An important part of the consensus established at the first Doha meeting was the need to continue consultations with the de facto authorities. In my discussions with them after the Doha meeting, they explained that their decision to not attend was not a rejection of their stated desire to engage with the international community, but a reflection of their concern that they were not being treated as a full stakeholder in discussions about Afghanistan. We will make every effort to encourage their participation at the next meeting in this format.

The de facto authorities welcomed the Secretary-General's statement at Doha on the need for deeper consultations. But they also stressed that consultations should be genuine and not merely a matter of the international community communicating its decisions to them.

President,

The Independent Assessment calls for the full reintegration of Afghanistan into the international system by accepting its international obligations and commitments. Not all of the de facto authorities are convinced about the need for this. Many, however, do understand that Afghanistan stands to benefit from the full implementation of the Independent Assessment's recommendations.

I stress that the conditions for reintegration also reflect the expectations of Afghanistan's population, especially the full respect for the rights of women and girls, the rights of ethnic and religious communities, and the need for greater economic opportunity.

I am concerned at numerous negative trends that we have observed recently, some of which are documented in more detail in the Secretary-General's report. UNAMA's extensive monitoring and advocacy, including on human rights, has highlighted the denial of the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the population, the well-documented policies and actions of repression of women and girls, public displays of violence including of corporal and capital punishment, a lack of inclusive governance, and the marginalization of minorities. It is true that day-to-day security has improved for millions of people since the Taliban takeover, but this has come at an enormous cost.

It is worth recalling what has been done by the international community to support the Afghan people since the collapse of the Republic.

- Donors have provided nearly 8 billion dollars in funding for humanitarian needs and basic human services, ensuring vital assistance to 32 million Afghans so that they have sufficient food and water, adequate shelter, and income opportunities.
- Donors have also responded to specific emergencies such as the earthquakes in Paktika in 2022, and in Herat in 2023 which directly impacted hundreds of thousands of people. More than 500,000 Afghans repatriated from Pakistan were helped to restart their lives, with the international community supporting an effective response strategy put in place by the de facto authorities.
- The international community has enabled the continuation of most primary medical care. Since May 2022 collective donor support through the World Bank has enabled 7.5 million people to receive health and nutrition services.
- Regular UN cash shipments to support these vital humanitarian operations have continued. These shipments have, as a secondary effect, injected liquidity to the local economy that has in large part allowed the private sector to continue to function and

averted a fiscal crisis. Support for printing and shipping banknotes has also helped with liquidity and supported the Afghani currency.

- The Security Council adopted in December 2021 Security Council Resolution 2615 – the ‘humanitarian exception’ – in which it decided that ‘humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs in Afghanistan’ are not a violation of the financial sanctions set out in the 1988 sanctions regime. This decision has enabled everything that I have described so far to take place.
- A number of countries have retained their diplomatic presences in Kabul, engaging regularly with the de facto authorities especially on economic issues, enhancing trade and investment.
- The World Bank board on the 15 February approved an adjusted approach to Afghanistan that unlocks more funding for basic needs and restarts an important regional electricity supply project.

President,

Afghanistan has been a challenge for the international community for decades. It has been the source of instability, terrorism exported to the rest of the world, the source of 85 percent of the world’s opium production, the home of millions of refugees who have been driven to make their home in neighbouring countries, and millions more who have chosen to make their home faraway where their sons and daughters can be educated. The relative stability that exists now should be appreciated, as well as the significant efforts that the de facto authorities have made to reduce the cultivation of opium and to combat Daesh. But if the other issues I have mentioned are not addressed these achievements will not be enough to assure long-term sustainability.

In the region and beyond, there are well-founded concerns over the presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan. These concerns have been reflected in the reports of the sanctions monitoring teams. It is not only Daesh that constitutes a threat, but also TTP, a major concern for Pakistan which has seen an increase in terrorist activity.

What is the way forward? Pending consultations regarding the appointment of a Special Envoy, UNAMA will work within its mandate to implement the substance of the Independent Assessment:

- We will maintain our engagement with the de facto authorities on respect for human rights and ways to increase consultations with local populations, as well as their participation in political decision making, so that all of Afghanistan’s available resources can be deployed for its own well-being.
- We will encourage donors to identify areas where they can provide longer-term sustainable assistance that directly benefits the Afghan people. These include measures to reduce the effects of climate change, to reduce the effects of the opium ban, and to support the ongoing demining of Afghanistan in cooperation with the de facto authorities.
- We will advocate for support for more funding to be directed towards basic human needs to build more social and economic resilience. Assistance in basic services is a lifeline for the most vulnerable Afghans with the majority of the beneficiaries constituting women.
- We will promote measures to support economic stabilization as a foundation for poverty reduction, which will not be possible without the right enabling environment in the financial

sector. Banking and microfinance are only two of the concrete areas that we need to strengthen.

- We will commence preparations for the next meeting in the Doha format. The next meeting should have a practical agenda and should involve the participation of the de facto authorities as well as other Afghan stakeholders.

Mr. President and members of the Council,

This is our workplan, as you consider the renewal of UNAMA's mandate. Our approach is one of patient expectation that ongoing consultations will eventually yield the results we are seeking. And I thank you for the support you continue to show for the efforts of UNAMA and the UN in general in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

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