

country,⁴¹⁶ as well as the conduct of transparent, free and fair presidential and legislative elections.⁴¹⁷ Council members expressed concern regarding the humanitarian situation, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with several of them also condemning the politicization of humanitarian assistance.⁴¹⁸ Several Council members expressed concern regarding the increase in human rights violations.⁴¹⁹ Several Council members deplored the

humanitarian and socioeconomic impact of sanctions measures imposed on the country,⁴²⁰ while the representatives of France and Germany maintained that the sanctions measures imposed by the European Union did not impede international humanitarian assistance. The representative of Indonesia expressed regret at the lack of unity in the Council to move forward to address the situation in the country, including its already dire humanitarian challenges.

⁴¹⁶ Dominican Republic, Estonia and Germany.

⁴¹⁷ Belgium, Dominican Republic, France and Germany.

⁴¹⁸ Belgium, France and Germany.

⁴¹⁹ Estonia, France and Germany.

⁴²⁰ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Viet Nam.

Videoconference: the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
20 May 2020	S/2020/435	Letter dated 22 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

Asia

16. The situation in Afghanistan

During the period under review, the Council held two meetings under the item entitled “The situation in Afghanistan”. Both were convened to adopt a resolution, namely, resolutions [2513 \(2020\)](#) and [2543 \(2020\)](#), the second of which was adopted to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).⁴²¹ More information on the meetings, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is provided in table 1 below. In addition, Council members held a total of four videoconferences in connection with the situation in Afghanistan.⁴²² More information on the videoconferences is provided in table 2 below.

In 2020, Council members were briefed at quarterly videoconferences⁴²³ by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for

Afghanistan and Officer in Charge of UNAMA in connection with the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.⁴²⁴ The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her Deputy discussed in their briefings the outcome of the presidential election of September 2019, the developments in the peace process further to resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#) and the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members were also briefed⁴²⁵ by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution [1988 \(2011\)](#) and the Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations. In addition, in a videoconference held on 3 September,⁴²⁶ Council members heard a briefing by the Chief Executive of MOBY Group. In addition to the briefers, the representatives of Afghanistan and the Islamic

⁴²¹ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II sect. II.

⁴²² For information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

⁴²³ See [S/2020/274](#), [S/2020/597](#), [S/2020/891](#) and [S/2020/1274](#).

⁴²⁴ See [S/2020/210](#), [S/2020/549](#), [S/2020/809](#) and [S/2020/1182](#).

⁴²⁵ See [S/2020/597](#) and [S/2020/1274](#).

⁴²⁶ See [S/2020/891](#).

Republic of Iran each delivered a statement at one of the videoconferences.⁴²⁷

On 10 March, the Council held a meeting at which it unanimously adopted resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#), in which the Council welcomed the Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan and the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban.⁴²⁸ In the resolution, the Council urged the Government of Afghanistan to advance the peace process, including by participating in intra-Afghan negotiations through a diverse and inclusive negotiating team composed of Afghan political and civil society leaders, including women.⁴²⁹ The Council called on the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to pursue in good faith additional confidence-building measures to create conditions conducive to a swift beginning and the success of intra-Afghan negotiations and a durable peace.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, the Council requested the Secretary-General to include in his quarterly reports on Afghanistan, as requested in paragraph 9 of resolution [2489 \(2019\)](#), developments related to the efforts set out in the resolution.⁴³¹

In statements after the vote,⁴³² the representative of the United States expressed regret that the presidential electoral process and the high levels of violence by the Taliban had delayed the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations. She stated that the United States would carefully monitor and assess whether the Taliban lived up to its commitments and urged the Taliban to also reduce violence against Afghan forces. She also stressed that her country would continue to support the goal of a lasting peace in Afghanistan and hoped that other Council members would join in doing so as well. Germany and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines acknowledged the importance of including language in the resolution in relation to the meaningful and effective participation of women in the peace process. As an expression of the responsibility as co-penholders, together with Indonesia, the representative of Germany affirmed that the two countries were united in their determination to ensure that the Council continued to closely follow and support the peace process in Afghanistan. He also

added that he would have welcomed having clear references in the resolution to the Afghan Constitution, as well as to human rights and the importance of respecting such rights in general, which he said remained the indispensable basis for the future development of the country. The representative of the Russian Federation affirmed that the resolution opened up a window of opportunity for the achievement of national reconciliation in Afghanistan and added that one of the prerequisites for the long-term stabilization of the country was the review of the sanctions decisions taken by the Council vis-à-vis the Taliban movement and their synchronization with the relevant national measures.

At a videoconference on 31 March,⁴³³ the Deputy Special Representative reported that while the Independent Election Commission had declared the current President, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, as the winner of the presidential election, his runner-up, Abdullah Abdullah, had rejected the outcome and unilaterally claimed victory, prompting serious concern over the future of the country. Despite the political impasse, the Deputy Special Representative reported that the Afghan establishment had been able to agree on a diverse negotiating team for potential intra-Afghan talks. Notwithstanding the logistical challenges imposed by COVID-19, representatives of Afghanistan and the Taliban had held three videoconferences to discuss prisoner releases, which was an important confidence-building measure to start the peace process. The Deputy Special Representative further briefed the Council on the signing of the agreement between the United States and the Taliban on 29 February 2020, which provided for a conditions-based, full withdrawal of international military forces from Afghanistan and a commitment for the Taliban to reduce violence against international military forces. Regarding the security situation, the Deputy Special Representative noted an increased level of violence and expressed concern about the ongoing threat to civilians posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan. On the humanitarian situation, she highlighted the Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire so that the necessary resources could be provided to combating COVID-19, which was of particular concern given Afghanistan's fragile health system, its highly vulnerable population and the economic and social impact of the loss of livelihoods.

During her first briefing to Council members, on 25 June,⁴³⁴ the new Special Representative of the

⁴²⁷ See [S/2020/1274](#) (Islamic Republic of Iran); and the statement to the press dated 17 December 2020 ([SC/14391](#)) (Afghanistan).

⁴²⁸ Resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#), para. 1. See also [S/2020/184](#) and [S/2020/185](#).

⁴²⁹ Resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#), para. 4.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, para. 9.

⁴³² See [S/PV.8742](#).

⁴³³ See [S/2020/274](#).

⁴³⁴ See [S/2020/597](#).

Secretary-General welcomed the political agreement between Mr. Ghani and Mr. Abdullah. She expressed cautious optimism on the start of the talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban, noting that both sides had agreed that talks could start within a week of the completion of prisoner releases. The Special Representative welcomed brief respites from the spiralling levels of violence following the United States-Taliban agreement and a three-day ceasefire for Eid al-Fitr by the Taliban and the Government, and stressed the importance of a reduction in violence to create an environment conducive for peace talks. Regarding the humanitarian situation, the Special Representative noted that the humanitarian response plan had been updated to incorporate the COVID-19 requirements for 2020, reflecting a total of \$1.1 billion to provide immediate humanitarian assistance. Following the Special Representative's briefing, the Executive Director of UNODC reported on the findings of the UNODC *World Drug Report 2020*, which showed that Afghanistan remained the world's biggest producer of opium despite the COVID-19 pandemic and that drug use in the country was exacerbated by the availability of trafficked weapons supporting the drug trade and terrorism. The Executive Director described synthetic drugs as a new danger to the country and the region and highlighted that COVID-19 could further drive illicit opium poppy cultivation. During the same videoconference, the Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission briefed the Council on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and on the role of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in the Afghan peace process. The Chair described the Commission's work on the peace process, which was focused on contributing to an inclusive process, a durable outcome and mechanisms for the preservation and expansion of human rights.

On 3 September, Council members held a videoconference⁴³⁵ at which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported that pre-talks had started between representatives of Afghanistan and representatives of the Taliban. She called that a historic moment and expressed hope that the following days would bring the formal launch of the intra-Afghan negotiations. Noting the continuing high level of violence in the country, she hoped that a humanitarian ceasefire would be one of the first items on the agenda of those negotiations. She added that one of the flagship issues for the United Nations in achieving a sustainable peace would be the role of human rights and stressed the importance of women's representation

⁴³⁵ See [S/2020/891](#).

at the peace table. Noting the importance of strong and trusted public institutions, the Special Representative welcomed the Government's announcement of the formation of its cabinet and of appointments to the High Council for National Reconciliation. On the humanitarian front, the Special Representative reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had hit Afghanistan hard, with millions of Afghans having suffered lost income and livelihoods. Council members also heard a briefing by the Chief Executive of MOBY Group, who spoke about the media and news sector, freedom of the press and the safety of journalists in Afghanistan. He presented his views on how the Council and the international community could support the peace process.

In addition to resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#), on 15 September the Council adopted resolution [2543 \(2020\)](#), by which it extended the mandate of UNAMA for 12 months until 17 September 2021.⁴³⁶ In the same resolution, the Council welcomed the ongoing efforts by UNAMA in the implementation of the mandated tasks, priorities and related resources of UNAMA, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴³⁷ Specifically, the Council decided that UNAMA and the Special Representative would continue to lead and coordinate the international civilian efforts with a particular focus on a series of priorities, including good offices in support of the peace process, elections support, governance, regional cooperation, human rights and accountability and the protection of civilians, especially women, children, displaced persons and minorities.⁴³⁸ Welcoming the start of intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha on 12 September 2020, the Council also strongly encouraged the negotiating parties to continue pursuing confidence-building measures, including additional reductions in violence, and encouraged them to engage in good faith. The Council also called for the implementation of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire as supported in resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#) and emphasized the importance of the implementation of resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#).⁴³⁹

Following the vote,⁴⁴⁰ Council members welcomed the unanimous adoption of the resolution given the initiation of intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha on 12 September 2020. The representatives of Germany and Indonesia as co-penholders emphasized

⁴³⁶ Resolution [2543 \(2020\)](#), para. 5.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 3.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 6. For more information on the mandate of UNAMA, see part X, sect. II.

⁴³⁹ Resolution [2543 \(2020\)](#), paras. 3 and 4.

⁴⁴⁰ See [S/PV.8759](#).

that the resolution sent a strong signal of international unity. Council members offered their views on the necessary elements to achieve peace and stability, such as human rights,⁴⁴¹ including women's participation, a reduction of violence and improved security⁴⁴² and socioeconomic development.⁴⁴³ In that regard, the representative of China added that through his country's promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative, China remained committed to helping Afghanistan forge closer trade and economic ties with countries of the region, especially its neighbours. The representative of the United States commended the penholders for their cooperative spirit, but clarified that the United States would have serious concerns if, contrary to their understanding, UNAMA were to interpret resolution 2543 (2020) as mandating UNAMA to support illegitimate investigations of the International Criminal Court against United States personnel. In that regard, he reiterated that the United States was not a party to the Rome Statute and had consistently rejected assertions by the Court of jurisdiction over United States personnel, affirming that his country would not tolerate any attempts to subject Americans to the Court's jurisdiction.

During her last briefing of the year, in a videoconference held on 17 December,⁴⁴⁴ the Special Representative welcomed progress in the talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban. She had met with women negotiators on her recent trips to Doha and again underlined the importance of including women, young people, minorities, victims of the conflict and religious leaders in the peace process. Taking note of the recent formation of the High Council for National Reconciliation, which allowed Afghanistan to establish a broad base for consolidating its negotiating positions, she invited the Taliban to also broaden its consultations with Afghan constituencies. The Special Representative reiterated the importance of stability and cooperation in the region and highlighted regional efforts on counter-narcotics and transnational organized crime, including discussions within the UNODC regional steering committee. Reporting on the security situation, the Special Representative shared a sense that violence and insecurity were higher than ever in Afghanistan. She called upon the Government of Afghanistan to take effective measures to protect the media and journalists and upon the Taliban to refrain from attacking civilian targets. In closing, the Special Representative reported on the devastating humanitarian effects of COVID-19, including hunger and malnutrition and the erosion of

livelihoods, with women and children being particularly affected. She shared that the larger United Nations family had scaled up its efforts to ensure that work was getting done to respond to the pandemic, in coordination with the Government and civil society. She noted that 2020 had brought a profound shift in the country with the United States-Taliban agreement, the United States-Afghan Government joint declaration, three months of intra-Afghan negotiations, the renewal of pledges from international donors and a revitalized regional cooperation effort. Following the Special Representative's briefing, Council members heard briefings from the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and the Afghan Youth Representative to the United Nations. While expressing optimism about the ongoing negotiations in Doha, the Chair of the Committee highlighted two key challenges reflected in the latest report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team,⁴⁴⁵ namely, the continuous close relations between the Taliban and Al-Qaida and the Taliban's ongoing profiting from narcotics.

In her briefing,⁴⁴⁶ the Afghan Youth Representative told the Council about the young students, journalists, human rights activists and security forces who had lost their lives to terrorism and called for an end to the "daily slaughter of young Afghans". She also called for the inclusion of young Afghans in an Afghan-owned peace process taking place in Afghanistan without the interference of foreigners.

In 2020, Council members' discussions focused on the outcome of the presidential election, the peace process and the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Council members specifically reiterated their support for an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process⁴⁴⁷ and welcomed the launch of the intra-Afghan negotiations⁴⁴⁸ and the first agreements on the rules and procedures for the negotiations thereunder.⁴⁴⁹ Council members also urged that the progress made in guaranteeing fundamental

⁴⁴⁵ See [S/2020/415](#).

⁴⁴⁶ See [S/2020/1274](#).

⁴⁴⁷ See [S/2020/274](#) (China, Germany, Indonesia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Viet Nam); and [S/2020/597](#) (Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United States and Viet Nam).

⁴⁴⁸ See [S/PV.8759](#) (Germany, Indonesia, Estonia, China and Belgium); and [S/2020/1274](#) (China, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom and Viet Nam).

⁴⁴⁹ See [S/2020/1274](#) (China, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States and Viet Nam).

⁴⁴¹ Indonesia, France, Estonia and Dominican Republic.

⁴⁴² France and Estonia.

⁴⁴³ Estonia and China.

⁴⁴⁴ See [S/2020/1274](#).

rights under the Afghan Constitution, especially for women, be protected.⁴⁵⁰ Council members also expressed concern about the compounding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing and escalating violence in Afghanistan and called for all parties to heed the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian ceasefire in the light of the pandemic.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ See [S/2020/274](#) (Belgium, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Niger, South Africa and United States); [S/2020/597](#) (Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Indonesia and Tunisia); and [S/2020/1274](#) (Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Niger, South Africa and United Kingdom).

⁴⁵¹ See [S/2020/274](#) (Belgium, France, Germany, Indonesia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, United Kingdom and Viet Nam); [S/2020/597](#) (France, Germany, South Africa, Tunisia and Viet Nam); [S/2020/1274](#) (China, Estonia, France, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia).

They called for the international community to increase their support for Afghanistan, including through UNAMA, to ensure continued delivery of humanitarian aid to the population facing the impact of the pandemic.⁴⁵²

Developments in Afghanistan were also considered under the item entitled "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts".⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² See [S/2020/274](#) (France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, United Kingdom, United States and Viet Nam); [S/2020/597](#) (Dominican Republic, Germany, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam); and [S/2020/1274](#) (China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, United States and Viet Nam).

⁴⁵³ See part I, sect. 29.

Table 1
Meetings: the situation in Afghanistan

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8742 10 March 2020		Draft resolution submitted by the United States (S/2020/191)			13 Council members ^a	Resolution 2513 (2020) 15-0-0
S/PV.8759 15 September 2020	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security (S/2020/809)	Draft resolution submitted by Germany and Indonesia (S/2020/903)	Afghanistan		9 Council members, ^b all invitees	Resolution 2543 (2020) 15-0-0

^a Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and Viet Nam.

^b Belgium, China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Tunisia and United States.

Table 2
Videoconferences: the situation in Afghanistan

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
31 March 2020	S/2020/274	Letter dated 31 March 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
25 June 2020	S/2020/597	Letter dated 29 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
3 September 2020	S/2020/891	Letter dated 8 September 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
17 December 2020	S/2020/1274	Letter dated 22 December 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

Europe

17. The situation in Cyprus

In 2020, the Council held three meetings, adopted two resolutions and issued one presidential statement concerning the situation in Cyprus. All three meetings were held for the adoption of a decision.⁴⁵⁴ More information on the meetings, including on outcomes, is given in the table below. Council members also held a private meeting and a closed videoconference with countries contributing troops and police to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) pursuant to resolution [1353 \(2001\)](#).⁴⁵⁵ In addition to meetings and videoconferences, Council members also held informal consultations of the whole to discuss the situation in Cyprus.⁴⁵⁶

On 30 January, in connection with the reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus,⁴⁵⁷ the Council held a meeting at which it unanimously adopted resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#), extending the mandate of UNFICYP for a period of six months until 31 July 2020.⁴⁵⁸ In that resolution, the Council expressed concern at the deterioration of the

law and order situation in Pyla, and urged both sides to continue to work with UNFICYP to establish effective measures to tackle criminal activities.⁴⁵⁹ The Council welcomed the trilateral meeting of the leaders and the Secretary-General held on 25 November 2019 in Berlin, at which both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality.⁴⁶⁰

Recalling its resolution [2483 \(2019\)](#), the Council called upon the two leaders to, inter alia, reaffirm their political support for all the technical committees and improve the Committees' performance.⁴⁶¹ The Council also called for the establishment of an effective mechanism for direct military contacts between the sides and the relevant involved parties and urged UNFICYP, as a facilitator through its liaison role, to submit proposals in that regard.⁴⁶² In addition, the Council expressed serious concern at the increased number of violations of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines and called on the sides and all involved parties to respect the mandated authority of UNFICYP in the buffer zone.⁴⁶³ The Council also requested the Secretary-General to submit by 10 July 2020 a report on his good offices, in particular on progress towards reaching a consensus starting point for meaningful results-oriented negotiations leading to

⁴⁵⁴ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

⁴⁵⁵ The private meeting was held on 16 January and the closed videoconference was held on 16 July in connection with the item entitled "Meeting of the Security Council with the troop- and police-contributing countries pursuant to resolution [1353 \(2001\)](#), annex II, sections A and B"; see [S/PV.8705](#) and [S/2021/9](#).

⁴⁵⁶ See [A/75/2](#), part II, chap. 1. See also [S/2020/258](#).

⁴⁵⁷ See [S/2019/883](#) and [S/2020/23](#).

⁴⁵⁸ Resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#), para. 10. For more information on the mandate of UNFICYP, see part X, sect. I.

⁴⁵⁹ Resolution [2506 \(2020\)](#), eighth preambular paragraph.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 1.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, para. 6.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, para. 11.