

Asia

14. The situation in Afghanistan

During the period under review, the Security Council held six meetings under this item. Except for two meetings which were convened for the adoption of a decision, three meetings took the form of a briefing and one of a debate.⁵³⁴ More information on the meetings, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is provided in table 1 below. Council members held a total of two open videoconferences in connection with the situation in Afghanistan. More information on videoconferences is provided in table 2 below. In addition, in 2021, Council members held informal consultations of the whole to discuss this item.⁵³⁵

During the year 2021, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provided quarterly briefings in meetings and open videoconferences, further to the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.⁵³⁶ Against the backdrop of the takeover of the country by the Taliban in August, the Council also heard additional briefings during extraordinary meetings by the Special Representative, the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission,⁵³⁷ as well as by the Secretary-General.⁵³⁸ In addition, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) briefed Council members in an open videoconference.⁵³⁹ In 2021, Council members heard briefings by five civil society representatives in meetings and open videoconferences.⁵⁴⁰ The representative of Afghanistan also delivered statements in four meetings and two videoconferences.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁴ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II.

⁵³⁵ See [A/76/2](#), part II, chapter 8.

⁵³⁶ For the reports see [S/2021/252](#), [S/2021/570](#) and [S/2021/759](#).

⁵³⁷ See [S/PV.8831](#).

⁵³⁸ See [S/PV.8834](#).

⁵³⁹ See [S/2021/601](#).

⁵⁴⁰ The following representatives provided briefings to the Council: the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, on 23 March 2021 ([S/2021/291](#)); the Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Network on 22 June 2021 ([S/2021/601](#)); the Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organisation and the Co-founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund on 9 September 2021 ([S/PV.8853](#)); and the Director of Charmaghz on 17 November 2021 ([S/PV.8908](#)).

⁵⁴¹ See [S/PV.8831](#), [S/PV.8834](#), [S/PV.8853](#) and [S/PV.8908](#). See also [S/2021/291](#) and [S/2021/601](#).

At the outset of 2021, on 23 March, Council members held an open videoconference. In addition to the Special Representative, Council members heard a briefing by the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

During her briefing at the videoconference, the Special Representative reported that progress at the negotiations in Doha had slowed and that Afghans and their international partners had begun to voice understandable frustration about the lack of real outcomes.⁵⁴² As talks continued, she noted that many stakeholders were increasingly looking to the United Nations to play a more prominent role and welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's new Personal Envoy on Afghanistan and Regional Issues to complement the United Nations' work on regional engagement. She acknowledged that Member States had played a vital role in coming up with new initiatives to reinvigorate the peace process, cautioning that they had to be focused and coherent. In that regard, she emphasized the need to look at the future of the country and to take into account the views of all Afghans, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, and victims of war. She expressed concern about the deepening humanitarian crisis, urging Member States to contribute to the humanitarian response plan. Concerning the security situation, the Special Representative cautioned that developments in Afghanistan did not affect only Afghans but rather the global community giving the examples of the threats posed by the cultivation and trafficking of illegal narcotics and transnational terrorism. In closing, she expressed hope that real progress would be achieved by the time of the following briefing, which would have passed the proposed date for the withdrawal of international troops under the United States-Taliban agreement.

In her briefing, the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission reported that since the talks began, the violence towards Afghans had intensified and the public had lost hope in the process. She urged the Council not to look the other way as members pushed towards a peace deal doomed to fail. She emphasized that building peace took more than a deal among elites and that it had to be an inclusive national endeavour, which would include women, minorities, youth, civil society, victims, Afghan media, religious, regional and ethnic groups. In that regard, she stressed that a minimum of 30 per cent of the participants in the talks should be women. She urged that the talks should address human rights and victims' rights and

⁵⁴² See [S/2021/291](#).

that any peace agreement should include a reparations programme, reconciliation initiatives, truth-seeking processes, memorialization, and victim recognition. In closing, she said that the Council would be fulfilling its historic mandate if it ensured a process that was more likely to end the violence and deliver a just and durable peace in Afghanistan.

In the subsequent discussion, Council members and participants reaffirmed their support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process,⁵⁴³ and gave their support to recent international and United Nations efforts to reinvigorate the peace process while emphasizing that all support should build upon existing talks in Doha and in a sustained and cohesive way.⁵⁴⁴ In several statements, Council members also welcomed the outcomes of the extended troika held in Moscow prior to the meeting.⁵⁴⁵ Commenting on the international support to the negotiations, Council members also welcomed the Secretary-General's appointment of a new personal envoy on Afghanistan and regional issues the week prior to the meeting.⁵⁴⁶ Many Member States called for an immediate ceasefire.⁵⁴⁷ Some Member States recalled the Council's recent press statement of 12 March which underlined that the targeted killings of civilians could constitute war crimes and had to stop.⁵⁴⁸

On 22 June 2021, Council members held a high-level open videoconference.⁵⁴⁹ In addition to the Special Representative, Council members heard briefings by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) and the Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Network. In her briefing, the Special Representative reported that trends related to security, the peace process, the economy, the humanitarian emergency, and the COVID-19 pandemic were all negative or stagnant.⁵⁵⁰ She expressed regret that actions on the battlefield had been greater than at the negotiating table, contrary to the hope raised by the withdraw of international troops that parties to the conflict could come together and find a path to peace. On

⁵⁴³ China, France, India, Kenya, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan and Qatar.

⁵⁴⁴ Kenya, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United States, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Qatar and Turkey.

⁵⁴⁵ China, Mexico, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Afghanistan.

⁵⁴⁶ Estonia, France, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, United States, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Germany, Italy, Japan, Qatar and Turkey.

⁵⁴⁷ China, Estonia, France, India, Mexico, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey.

⁵⁴⁸ Estonia, France, India, Ireland and Germany.

⁵⁴⁹ See [S/2021/601](#). For more information on high-level meetings and videoconferences, see part II.

⁵⁵⁰ See [S/2021/601](#).

the advances by the Taliban, she noted that they were positioning themselves to try and take the provincial capitals once foreign forces had fully withdrawn, adding that the military campaign ran directly counter to the statements by the head of the Taliban Political Commission. She also reported that civilian casualties had increased by 29 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same period the previous year with increased women and children's casualties. She stressed the need to put victims and their needs at the forefront of negotiations and recalled that increased conflict in Afghanistan meant increased insecurity for many other countries, near and far.

Following the Special Representative, the Executive Director of UNODC focused on the importance of a well-integrated and balanced strategy to counter the illicit drug trade as a cornerstone to achieving an Afghanistan at peace. In that regard, she elaborated on the integrated mandates of UNODC in support of the Government in relation to drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism. She expressed readiness to elevate the assistance by UNODC on a series of key aspects such as enabling more farmers to shift to viable, licit crops, making evidence-based prevention and treatment a priority, urging the Government of Afghanistan and donors to devote greater resources and increase operational capabilities to disrupt drug trafficking, countering-narcotics hand in hand with actions to tackle corruption, strengthening regional cooperation to protect people and advancing the hard-won gains made by women and girls in Afghanistan.

Council members also heard a briefing by the Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Network, who reported that since the release of the report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team that had been shared with the Council in April, violence had increased and had claimed the precious lives of several hundreds, the majority of them being professional women and schoolchildren and youth. In her briefing, she underscored that a ceasefire should not be the goal of the peace talks, but it should pave the way for the peace process. In that context, she underscored that the United Nations at the highest level, including the Security Council, had to compel the Taliban and the Afghan Government to commit to a permanent ceasefire. Finally, she emphasized that a politically stable, economically empowered and self-reliant Afghanistan where rule of law, justice and human rights were respected and citizens' rights were protected and guaranteed, would benefit the region and the world.

Further to the briefings, Council members and participants continued to express concern for the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and condemned the increasing terrorist

attacks and violence against civilians, including children, humanitarian workers, minorities and women.⁵⁵¹ Several speakers also reiterated that it was crucial to ensure that Afghanistan was not used again by terrorist groups or as a center for illicit drug production and trafficking.⁵⁵² A few Council members noted that the situation in Afghanistan had reached a critical juncture as international forces were withdrawing from the country,⁵⁵³ and underscored the importance of international troops withdrawing in a responsible, orderly and coordinated manner.⁵⁵⁴ The representative of the United States stressed that the withdrawal of all United States troops from Afghanistan, announced by its President in April, was not a decision that was taken lightly and was made after close consultation with allies and partners, and that the commitment to the safety and security of Afghanistan endured. On the peace process, many speakers noted that all relevant parties including the Taliban would need to constructively engage in the peace negotiations towards a political settlement and ceasefire,⁵⁵⁵ while reiterating the support for an inclusive process particularly emphasizing the need to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the negotiations.⁵⁵⁶

On 6 August 2021, the Council held a meeting at which it heard briefings by the Special Representative and the Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The Special Representative reported that the war in Afghanistan had entered a new, deadlier and more destructive phase and that the Taliban campaign during June and July to capture rural areas had achieved significant territorial gains and had begun to attack the larger cities.⁵⁵⁷ She provided evidence of the human toll and the civilian casualties and noted that threatening large urban areas appeared to be a strategic decision by the Taliban, who had accepted the likely carnage that would ensue. She added that the suffering caused by the war came on top of an already increasing humanitarian crisis. Recalling both the United States-Taliban deal signed in February 2020 and

⁵⁵¹ Estonia, Ireland, United Kingdom, China, France, Kenya, Mexico, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Russian Federation, Viet Nam, Australia, Germany, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Poland and Turkey.

⁵⁵² Ireland, United States, France, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Iran (Islamic Republic of).

⁵⁵³ Norway, China and Tunisia.

⁵⁵⁴ China, Mexico and Pakistan.

⁵⁵⁵ India, China, France, Mexico, Russian Federation, Viet Nam, Australia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Kazakhstan.

⁵⁵⁶ Estonia, Ireland, India, United States, Norway, France, Kenya, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Italy, Japan, Poland and Turkey.

⁵⁵⁷ See [S/PV.8831](#).

the talks between the Afghan Republic and the Taliban in September 2021, she noted that there had been an expectation to see a reduction in violence, which did not happen. In reference to her contacts with the Afghans, she had the impression that the population was waiting apprehensively for a dark shadow to pass over the bright futures they once imagined. In that regard, she said that Afghans expected greater engagement and visible support from the Council, adding that the press statement of 3 August condemning the attack against the United Nations office in Herat and calling again for an end to the violence and a resumption of a meaningful peace process was greatly appreciated.⁵⁵⁸ The Special Representative mentioned that there were several important opportunities in the near future where words and actions could help bring an end to the war. First, she called on the Council to issue an unambiguous statement that attacks against cities had to stop. Secondly, she said that those countries that met with the Taliban Political Commission should insist in those meetings on a general ceasefire and a resumption of the negotiations and that a Government imposed by force in Afghanistan would not be recognized. Thirdly, any extension of the travel ban exemption for the Taliban to travel for peace negotiations should be predicated on real progress on peace. Fourthly, in the absence of a ceasefire, the Council and those States that met with them had to urge the Taliban to grant humanitarian access to areas they controlled and commit to humanitarian ceasefires in contested areas. Fifthly, she emphasized the need to put on notice the architects and perpetrators of the most serious violations of human rights. The Special Representative highlighted the strong support of UNAMA for greater efforts by the United Nations and the regional and international communities to find ways to hold the perpetrators accountable. Finally, she stated that the Council should give serious consideration to providing the United Nations with a mandate that would allow it to play a greater role in facilitating the negotiations.

The Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission provided a briefing about the ongoing conflict and the violations of international humanitarian law in Afghanistan, as the Commission were verifying details of horrific war crimes daily with Taliban advances and an escalation of violence.⁵⁵⁹ In addition to daily violations of the laws of conflict, she reported that human rights gains of Afghanistan were under attack and rapidly shrinking as the conflict expanded. She singled out the deeply concerning example of the rights of women and girls

⁵⁵⁸ See [SC/14592](#).

⁵⁵⁹ See [S/PV.8831](#).

in areas captured by the Taliban. The situation was equally concerning regarding access to information and freedom of expression. Affirming that the violence did not need to continue, she said that the Council and its members still had the leverage to stop the bloodshed of Afghans and prevent catastrophes. In that regard, she urged the Council, the United Nations and international human rights mechanisms to respond with a greater sense of urgency to the Afghan calls for civilian protection, a ceasefire, an end to the violence and a meaningful and inclusive political process. With regards to the call for a fact-finding mission to investigate the targeted killings of civilians in Afghanistan, she stressed that some of the most important things that a fact-finding mission would offer the Afghan people included acting as a preventive mechanism and highlighting the urgency of the threat to civilians. It would also keep victims and civilians centre-stage as Afghanistan headed towards a human rights and humanitarian crisis post-withdrawal, while establishing the facts, identifying perpetrators and preserving evidence with a view to ensuring accountability. A fact-finding mission could also propose remedies for victims, as well as effective prevention mechanisms.

Speaking ahead of the Council members, the representative of Afghanistan, asked the Council and the international community to take preventive measures to avert a catastrophic situation, including the convening of a special session of the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, and further requested the Council and the Secretary-General to provide support to the ongoing peace talks and the regional and international meetings in Doha. Many Council members reiterated that there was no military solution to the situation,⁵⁶⁰ and several other Council members also underscored that the international community would not recognize or support a Taliban Government that came to power by force.⁵⁶¹

On 16 August 2021, the Council held an emergency meeting to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General, who urged all parties – especially the Taliban – to exercise utmost restraint to protect lives and to ensure that humanitarian needs could be met.⁵⁶² He focused on two main aspects. First, on the need to speak with one voice to uphold human rights in Afghanistan.

⁵⁶⁰ Norway, Estonia, United States, Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Russian Federation, Viet Nam, Ireland, United Kingdom and China.

⁵⁶¹ Norway, Estonia, United States and United Kingdom.

⁵⁶² See [S/PV.8834](#).

Secondly, on the need for the international community to make sure that Afghanistan was never again used as a platform or safe haven for terrorist organizations. In that regard, he appealed to the Council and the international community as a whole to stand together, work together, act together and use all tools at their disposal to suppress the global terrorist threat in Afghanistan and to guarantee that basic human rights would be respected. Looking ahead, he called for an immediate end to violence, for the rights of all Afghans to be respected and for Afghanistan to comply with all international agreements to which it was a party.

Speaking ahead of Council members, the representative of Afghanistan emphasized that mass executions of military personnel and targeted killings of civilians by the Taliban could not be allowed to happen in Kabul, which had been the last refuge for many people escaping violence and revenge attacks by the Taliban. He stressed that the Council and the Secretary-General should use every means at their disposal to call for an immediate cessation of violence and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and should not recognize any administration that achieved power through force or any Government that was not inclusive and representative of the diversity of the country. Council members called for an immediate ceasefire and urged all parties to seek a negotiated political settlement as well as national reconciliation.⁵⁶³ Council members also emphasized the need to protect civilians and to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access to continue to provide life-saving assistance to those in need in Afghanistan.⁵⁶⁴ In that context, several members underscored that the Council needed to assume its responsibility and act to address and mitigate the consequences, including presenting a clear message and unified front.⁵⁶⁵

Two weeks later, on 30 August 2021, the Council held a meeting at which it adopted, not unanimously, resolution [2593 \(2021\)](#).⁵⁶⁶ By the resolution, the Council condemned in the strongest terms the deplorable attacks of August 26 near Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.⁵⁶⁷ The Council further demanded that Afghan territory not be used to threaten or attack

⁵⁶³ Estonia, Norway, France, United Kingdom, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, Mexico, Russian Federation, Viet Nam, China.

⁵⁶⁴ Estonia, Norway, United States, Ireland, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Mexico, Viet Nam and China.

⁵⁶⁵ Norway, Ireland, Mexico, India.

⁵⁶⁶ The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour (Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam) and 2 abstentions (China and Russian Federation). Draft resolution [S/2021/762](#) was submitted by France, United Kingdom and United States.

⁵⁶⁷ See resolution [2593\(2021\)](#), para.1. See also [S/PV.8848](#).

any country or to shelter or train terrorists, or to plan or to finance terrorist acts.⁵⁶⁸ The Council also called for strengthened efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, and called on all parties to allow full, safe, and unhindered access for the United Nations and all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian relief activity.⁵⁶⁹ After the vote, the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom focused on the achievements of the resolution adopted.⁵⁷⁰ The representative of France expressed regret that the text could not garner the support of all members of the Council. She said however that she had no doubt that Council members all shared the same primary objective of enabling the Afghan people to regain stability and security. The representative of Ireland acknowledged that her delegation would have preferred stronger language on respect for human rights, particularly given the situation faced by the women and girls of Afghanistan and called on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law. The representative of the Russian Federation explained that his country abstained in the voting because the authors of the text ignored his delegation's principled concerns. First, despite the fact that the resolution was proposed against the backdrop of a terrible terrorist attack, the penholders categorically refused to mention internationally recognized terrorist organizations — the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement – in the paragraph on counterterrorism. Secondly, the unacceptability of the negative impacts of the evacuation of qualified Afghan specialists on the Afghan economy which was not reflected in the text. Thirdly, the authors ignored proposals to include references to the harmful influence of the freezing of Afghan financial assets on the economic and humanitarian situation, and the vital need to provide humanitarian assistance strictly in accordance with the guiding principles of the United Nations as enshrined in General Assembly resolution [46/182](#). Explaining his country's abstention, the representative of China said that his delegation had serious doubts about the necessity and urgency of the adoption of the resolution and about the balance of its content, adding that the important and reasonable amendments put forward together with the Russian Federation were not fully adopted. He added that the recent chaos in Afghanistan was directly related to the hasty

⁵⁶⁸ See resolution [2593\(2021\)](#), para. 2.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 3.

⁵⁷⁰ See [S/PV.8848](#).

and disorderly withdrawal of foreign troops and expressed hope that the countries concerned would realize that the withdrawal did not mean an end of their responsibility but the beginning of a process of reflection and correction.

On 9 September 2021, the Council held a meeting further to the report of the Secretary-General.⁵⁷¹ In addition to the Special Representative, the Council heard briefing by the Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organization and by Ms. Yousafzai, the Co-Founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund. In her briefing, the Special Representative reported that the population of Kabul and the people of Afghanistan were confronted with a new and worrisome reality with the fall of the capital city on 15 August, which was followed by scenes of panic and chaos at Kabul airport.⁵⁷² Since many names listed in a de facto Administration announced by the Taliban were on the United Nations sanctions list, the Special Representative emphasized that all Council members would need to decide which steps to take regarding the sanctions list and the impact on future engagement. She further underscored that addressing the pre-existing humanitarian crisis could not wait for political decisions regarding the removal of sanctions, and that relevant mechanisms had to be found quickly to allow for the United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide the necessary humanitarian relief. She also drew attention to an additional looming crisis where billions of assets and donor funds had been frozen by members of the international community, of which the inevitable effect would be a severe economic downturn. She expressed disappointment at the lack of inclusivity of the so-called caretaker cabinet, and concern for the growing number of incidents of harassment and intimidation against the national staff of the Mission, credible allegations of reprisal killings of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces personnel as well as the detention of officials who worked for previous Administrations, and the increasing violence used against Afghans protesting Taliban rule. With reference to the impact of the recent developments beyond the Afghan borders, the Special Representative noted the importance of the wider international community not becoming irrevocably divided with a more urgent agenda for regional and international cooperation around Afghanistan.

⁵⁷¹ See [S/2021/759](#).

⁵⁷² See [S/PV.8853](#).

The Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organization explained that she, along with her local women peacebuilders network, had been working for local peace and conflict resolution for over a decade, including working for the ceasefire and a national peace process. She reported that women's lives had been flipped around since 15 August, and thousands of women workers in non-governmental organizations were in hiding. She said that she still believed that the Council had the power, the ability, and the responsibility to mitigate this damage and put forward four immediate requests. First, she asked that the Council members engaging with the Taliban caretaker Government to remember that there were some 16 or 17 million women and girls in Afghanistan, and therefore to include them in Council members' own mediation team and to facilitate meetings of delegations of women across different professions — peacebuilders, judges, security officers, educators, doctors, businesswomen — with the Taliban. Secondly, noting that thousands of women and men from civil society, media, former Government employees, judges and prosecutors, artists, musicians were at risk of reprisal, she asked Council members to welcome them, grant them visas, give them a chance for a productive life. Thirdly, in light of the looming humanitarian crisis and the the gender-segregated ideology of the Taliban regime, she said that it was imperative that the United Nations ensured the protection of Afghan female aid workers and other civic professionals and community organizers, adding that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies had to put in place a practical and clear gender-responsive aid plan. Finally, while the Taliban had asked for the world to be patient as they took charge, she encouraged Council members to ask the Taliban to fulfil their responsibility to protect and respect all Afghans regardless of their age or sex or ethnicity. She concluded asking Council members to put aside their political differences and act as one voice in support of the people and the women of Afghanistan.

In her briefing, Ms. Yousafzai, the Co-Founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund focused on the experience of girls living under extremism and terrorism and on the impact of the most recent developments on their right to education. She called on the Security Council to protect Afghan girls and women and the future of the nation in four ways. First, she called on the Council to send a clear and unequivocal message to the Taliban that a fundamental condition of any working relationship was upholding girls' right to education. Secondly, she said that the Council had to build on resolution [2593 \(2021\)](#) by supporting a robust monitoring mechanism to track and

monitor abuses of human rights. Thirdly, the international community needed to put that same resolution into action, with a significant increase in humanitarian and development assistance to the United Nations and international organizations so as to ensure that all schools could operate safely. Lastly, she emphasized that the United Nations presence was needed in every region of Afghanistan more than ever before. In that regard, she said that a strengthened mandate and resources for UNAMA and other United Nations agencies in Afghanistan were essential.

In the subsequent discussion, Council members reiterated their call on all parties to allow safe and unhindered departure of Afghans and foreign nationals who wished to leave the country, noting the Taliban's commitment, and humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and other actors providing assistance.⁵⁷³ With regard to governance, several Council members expressed concern about the lack of inclusivity in the composition of the new interim Government announced by the Taliban.⁵⁷⁴ Other Council members called on the Taliban to pursue inclusive politics and an inclusive society, while bearing in mind the interests of all segments of Afghan society.⁵⁷⁵ The representative of Afghanistan asked the Council to withhold any recognition of any Government in Afghanistan unless it was truly inclusive and formed on the basis of the free will of the people, and urged Council members to draw a fundamental red line regarding the Taliban's treatment of women and girls and respect for the rights of all Afghans.

On 17 September 2021, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2596 \(2021\)](#), extending the mandate of UNAMA as defined in its resolution [2543 \(2020\)](#) for six months.⁵⁷⁶ The Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a written report by 31 January 2022 on strategic and operational recommendations for the mandate of UNAMA in light of the recent political, security and social developments, and to brief the Council on the situation in Afghanistan and the work of the Mission every other month until 17 March 2022.⁵⁷⁷ Following the adoption of the resolution, several Council members provided explanations of their vote.⁵⁷⁸ While noting that the collaborative effort resulted in the renewal of the mandate of the Mission,

⁵⁷³ Ireland, Estonia, Norway, United Kingdom, India, France, Mexico, Viet Nam and United States.

⁵⁷⁴ Ireland, Norway, Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), France and Mexico.

⁵⁷⁵ Ireland, Estonia, Norway, United Kingdom, India, Russian Federation, Viet Nam and China.

⁵⁷⁶ See resolution [2596 \(2021\)](#), para. 3.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 5. For more information on the mandate of UNAMA, see part X, sect. II.

⁵⁷⁸ See [S/PV.8862](#). The draft resolution [S/2021/804](#) was submitted by Estonia and Norway.

the representative of the Russian Federation expressed regret that the final version of the resolution did not take into account an objective assessment of the threats in Afghanistan from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or the long-standing drug problem, in which she expected would be objectively reflected in the Secretary-General's report due in January 2022. The representative of Mexico underscored that unrestricted respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians, was essential and inescapable given the serious security situation that had taken shape in Afghanistan. That was why Mexico insisted on an explicit mention of that subject. He expressed surprise that one was not included.

Acknowledging that the text of the resolution did not capture all of the issues facing Afghanistan at the time of upheaval, the representative of Ireland reiterated the central importance of the upholding of Afghanistan's obligations under international, humanitarian, refugee and human rights laws.

On 17 November 2022, the Council held the last meeting of the year. In addition to the Special Representative, the Council heard the briefing of the Director of Charmaghz, a non-profit educational organization dedicated to children in Afghanistan.⁵⁷⁹ In her briefing, the Special Representative provided a general assessment of the de facto Taliban Administration based on the engagement with them over the previous three months, and highlighted that formal interactions had been generally useful and constructive. However, she highlighted that they made clear that there were limits to concessions on certain issues at the time, and that they needed more time to clarify the policy on the right to girls' education and its implementation. While the overall security situation had improved as the conflict had largely ended, UNAMA regularly received credible reports of incidents impacting the right to life and physical integrity of Afghans. She reported that the Taliban's inability to curb the expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province was another major negative development. The Special Representative further underscored that humanitarian assistance was not enough, and that the international community needed urgently to find a way to provide financial support to health care workers in state hospitals, staff in food security programmes and eventually to teachers. She stated that the reality of the situation threatened to heighten the risk of extremism with the

⁵⁷⁹ See [S/PV.8908](#).

continued deterioration of the formal economy providing impetus to the informal economy including illicit drugs, arms flows and human trafficking. She suggested that the best way to promote stability and future international support was for the Taliban to avoid the isolation that had characterized their previous experience in power, which would require a sustained and structured policy dialogue among the Taliban de facto authorities, other Afghan stakeholders and the wider region as well as the international community.

In her briefing, the Director of Charmaghz called on the United Nations to work with all stakeholders in the creation of a political structure which would allow for co-existence and an end to the cycle of war that Afghanistan had been trapped in for decades. She explained that exclusion and lack of power-sharing did not work in Afghanistan, and pointed out that Afghanistan had an overly centralized political structure and system which the Taliban inherited from the previous Government. Expressing that a new political system in which all could coexist could be created only through non-violent means and negotiations involving all groups, she stressed the need for a genuine global effort to turn the current moment into a window of opportunity for long-lasting peace. To that end, she urged the United Nations and friendly neutral Governments to play a leading role in bringing all stakeholders back under a Bonn Conference model, with the aim to ensure transitional justice through the model to create a political system acceptable to all and inclusive. She also urged all rival regional Powers, including India and Pakistan, but not limited to them, to bring the best versions of themselves, setting aside their regional rivalries, to genuinely work for peace. Lastly, she urged the global community to support local actors, non-governmental organizations and associations working in Afghanistan.

Following the briefings, several Council members underscored that the re-establishment of basic services, especially health care and education was vital, and highlighted in particular the importance of the access and rights of girls to education.⁵⁸⁰ Furthermore, Council members and participants drew attention to the economic situation in Afghanistan and expressed concern about the economic challenges including the liquidity shortage and other economic factors hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.⁵⁸¹ A few speakers also highlighted the

⁵⁸⁰ Norway, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), France, Ireland, United States and Mexico.

⁵⁸¹ Viet Nam, United Kingdom, United States, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan.

need to release Afghan frozen assets which should not be politicized or made conditional.⁵⁸² Council members also condemned the increasing number of terrorist attacks,⁵⁸³ and expected the Taliban and all parties in Afghanistan to make a clean break from terrorist groups and to do its utmost in countering those groups.⁵⁸⁴

Developments in Afghanistan were also considered elsewhere under the item entitled “Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts”.⁵⁸⁵

Table 1
Meetings: The situation in Afghanistan

<i>Meeting 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.8831 6 August 2021			Afghanistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission ^a	All Council members, ^b all invitees	
S/PV.8834 16 August 2021			Afghanistan	Secretary-General	All Council members, ^c invitee	
S/PV.8848 30 August 2021		Draft resolution submitted by France, United Kingdom and United States (S/2021/762)			Seven Council members ^d	Resolution 2593 (2021) 13-0-2 ^e

⁵⁸² China and Iran (Islamic Republic of).

⁵⁸³ Norway, Estonia, Viet Nam, Kenya (also on behalf of the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, and Mexico.

⁵⁸⁴ Norway, China, France, and United Kingdom.

⁵⁸⁵ For more information, see part I, sect. 28.

S/PV.8853 9 September 2021	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security (S/2021/759)	Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organisation, Co-founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund ^f	All Council members, ^g all invitees
S/PV.8862 17 September 2021	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security (S/2021/759)	Draft resolution submitted by Estonia and Norway (S/2021/804)		Seven Council members ^h Resolution 2596 (2021) 15-0-0
S/PV.8908 17 November 2021		Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, Tajikistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Director of Charmaghz ⁱ	All Council members, ^g all invitees

^a Special Representative and Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission participated in the meeting via videoconference.

^b Niger also spoke on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

^c Kenya also spoke on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

^d China, Estonia, France, Ireland, Russian Federation, United States and United Kingdom. The meeting was presided over by the Foreign Secretary of India.

^e *For:* Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States and Viet Nam. *Against:* None. *Abstaining:* China, Russian Federation.

^f Special Representative, Founder of the Women and Peace Studies Organisation and Co-founder and Board Chair of the Malala Fund participated in the meeting via videoconference.

^g The meeting was presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Ireland. Niger spoke on behalf of Kenya, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

^h China, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States.

ⁱ Special Representative and the Director of Charmaghz participated in the meeting via videoconference.

^c Kenya also spoke on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

Table 2
Videoconferences: The situation in Afghanistan

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
23 March 2021	S/2021/291	Letter dated 25 March 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
22 June 2021	S/2021/601	Letter dated 24 June 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	