

# Afghanistan: UK statement on historic talks

News story

Foreign Secretary urges parties to 'seize opportunity' in historic Afghan peace talks.



- Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab says talks starting today could lead to “real, positive change”
- He urges Afghan leaders and the Taliban to work towards an inclusive and sustainable peace
- UK military, diplomatic and development support has improved countless lives in Afghanistan

The Foreign Secretary welcomed the start of Afghan peace talks in Doha today (Saturday 12 September) and called for both sides to seize the opportunity to end decades of conflict in Afghanistan.

The UK's military and diplomatic efforts have been critical in supporting Afghanistan over the past 19 years, as it strives to become more stable and prosperous.

In addition, the UK's world-leading aid expertise has helped millions of children go to school and provided life-saving food to those in need.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Today is a moment that I hope leads to real, positive change in Afghanistan. All sides need to seize this opportunity to work towards an inclusive and sustainable peace.

A comprehensive ceasefire should be agreed quickly for the sake of the Afghan people who have suffered for too long.

The UK, as the third largest troop contributor to the NATO mission, plays a vital role in Afghanistan, most recently supporting the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) with training, mentoring and financial assistance.

Over the last three years the UK has pledged up to £750 million of humanitarian and development support, which has:

- Helped more than 6.4 million children attend school, including over 300,000 girls who can now go to primary school through the Girls' Education Challenge Fund. The second phase of this programme, which launched last year, is supporting more than 70,000 marginalised girls access primary and secondary education and skills training.
- Provided life-saving assistance to hundreds of thousands of people during one of the worst droughts the country ever faced in 2018.
- Given over six million people access to electricity over the last 15 years.

Earlier this month the Foreign Secretary announced a new aid package to tackle the combined threat of coronavirus and famine in developing countries and protect the poorest people. Part of this funding will help vulnerable Afghans – who have faced shortages because of conflict, drought and the economic impacts of coronavirus – have enough money to be able to buy food for their families.

#### **Notes to editors:**

1. Today's talks follow earlier announcements in February by the US and Taliban, and the US and the Government of Afghanistan respectively. The UK response to those announcements can be found [here](#).
2. Britain's contribution to the international mission in Afghanistan began in 2001 to prevent terrorist groups using Afghanistan as a safe-haven to launch terrorist attacks.
3. The UK combat mission ended in 2014, but since then the UK has been working, in partnership with NATO allies, to support Afghanistan's security, development and governance. This effort has been crucial to tackling threats to the UK, including from serious organised crime, including drugs, and international terrorism.