

Allowing Afghans to starve serves no one's interests

Thank you Mr President and I would like to thank SRSg Lyons and Ms Karim for their powerful briefings. This situation in Afghanistan they described today is of deep concern. The risks of a humanitarian catastrophe are real, and are exacerbated by the onset of winter and an economy in sharp recession. 19 million people are already facing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity. Allowing Afghans to starve serves no one's interests. Urgent action is needed.

But as SRSg Lyons said, this humanitarian crisis is preventable. The work of UNAMA and UN leadership will be crucial. We need to ensure an adequately resourced, prioritised and coordinated international response led by the UN. The United Kingdom will continue to be one of the foremost supporters of the humanitarian response. Total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million. £50 million of this funding will provide lifesaving humanitarian support to over 2.5 million vulnerable Afghans.

But the international community needs to do more and to act quickly to find creative solutions to address the liquidity crisis and to establish principles and mechanisms for providing assistance beyond basic humanitarian aid. We hope the World Bank and donors will find a way to repurpose quickly the \$1.5bn in the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, in order to support health and other basic services.

For its part, the Taliban should address the concerns of the international community regarding terrorism, humanitarian access, safe passage, inclusive government and human rights, particularly those of women and girls.

On terrorism, we urge the Taliban to make clear in public that Foreign Terrorist Fighters are not welcome, and not to allow Al Qa'eda, Islamic State and other terrorist groups to organise, raise funds or plan attacks from Afghan territory.

We welcome SRSg Lyons' report that the Taliban are taking positive steps to provide unimpeded and safe humanitarian access for male and female aid workers. We're also encouraged by the re-opening of secondary schools to girls in at least eight provinces.

However, all children, including girls of all ages, should be able to go to school. All women should be able to work, access services and participate in public life. Educated healthy women and girls will contribute to peace, stability and development. We hope that leaders from across the Islamic world will continue to reinforce this message.

While the number of conflict related deaths may be falling, the human rights situation in Afghanistan remains of deep concern, with credible reports of serious human rights abuses and violations, including extra-judicial

killings, restrictions on civil society, and attacks on minority groups.
International coordination

Mr President, our approach to the Taliban will continue to be calibrated according to their actions, not their words. This Council clearly set out its minimum expectations in Security Council resolution 2593. The best way for these expectations to be met, and to avoid the worst humanitarian outcome, is for the international community to be united, including in its engagement with the Taliban.

Thank you Mr President.