

Highlighting our efforts to avert humanitarian catastrophe and economic collapse in Afghanistan

Thank you, President.

First, let me join colleagues in conveying our sincere condolences to the people of Afghanistan for the suffering caused by the devastating earthquake. As my Ministers have said, the United Kingdom stands ready to support them at this difficult time. The UK is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, and we are already working with teams on the ground, including the UN, NGO's and the Red Cross to get assistance to those who most need it.

Let me also thank DSRS Alakbarov and USG Griffiths for their briefings – and in particular our civil society briefers, whose testimonies are powerful and moving.

The humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan remains critical. Over 24 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian support and nearly 20 million are facing acute food insecurity. Urgent action is needed to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe and economic collapse.

Strong UN leadership remains crucial for coordinating the international community's support and negotiating effectively with the Taliban to ensure principled humanitarian access across the country.

The UK remains committed to the Afghan people. Our Foreign Secretary co-hosted the UN humanitarian pledging conference on 31 March, raising \$2.4 billion. We have nationally committed \$380 million in aid this financial year to support humanitarian and basic human needs.

We strongly support the 1988 sanctions regime as a key tool to promote the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan. The humanitarian exception ensures the regime poses no obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs.

President,

economic stability and the delivery of basic services are essential to ending the cycle of humanitarian need and suffering. We support the UN's leadership in this respect, and stress the need for the Taliban to stand by their commitments to both the Afghan people and the international community.

As we heard today from Ms Hakim and Ms Royan, women and girls in Afghanistan are facing unacceptable restrictions on their freedom of movement and dress, as well as access to education, jobs and services. Educated women and girls who are able to participate fully in society will contribute to economic development, peace and security.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by serious allegations of extra-judicial killings, detentions and disappearances of Afghans, including civil society activists, former security forces and government officials.

Reports of terror attacks have also increased. Terrorist and narcotic threats from Afghanistan pose a risk, not just to the country, but to regional security.

President, the UN's role remains more important than ever. We pay tribute to the work of Deborah Lyons, and look forward to working with the new leadership team.

The international community must continue to speak with one voice to press the Taliban on their commitments, and to advance shared objectives on human rights, humanitarian access, counter-terrorism, and more inclusive government.

I thank you.