

On top of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the human rights situation is stark

Thank you President. Let me thank USG Griffiths, DSRS G Potzel and Dr Morgan Edwards for their briefings.

Let me start by offering condolences to Pakistan following the devastating flooding in their country this week. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. As my Minister Lord Ahmad has said, we are working with the Pakistani authorities to establish the support and assistance they need. The United Kingdom stands with the people of Pakistan at this time of need.

President, Russia has called for this meeting one year after the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. As we reflect on that anniversary, we should also recall the Soviet Union's ten year occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 until 1989 that created the conditions for devastating civil war and the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s.

Today, it is clear that the situation in Afghanistan remains critical and the needs of the Afghan people acute.

As we have heard, over 24 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian support and nearly 20 million are facing acute food insecurity. Economic stability and the delivery of basic services are essential to end the cycle of suffering in Afghanistan. There remains a vital need to inject liquidity into the country to avoid economic collapse.

While UK personnel have left Afghanistan, our commitment to the Afghan people remains resolute.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 the UK has committed \$676 million in aid to Afghanistan and our Foreign Secretary co-hosted the UN humanitarian pledging conference earlier this year, raising \$2.4 billion.

By contrast, Russia contributed nothing to the UN Humanitarian Response Plan, and China pledged \$2m.

On top of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the human rights situation is stark. There are credible allegations of extra-judicial killings and detentions and disappearances, including civil society activists and former security forces and government officials.

The last few months have also seen the imposition of deplorable restrictions on the rights and freedoms of women and girls, including on access to education, jobs and services and on their freedom of movement and dress. It is clear to all but the Taliban that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in society is a pre-requisite for a stable, prosperous Afghanistan.

The Taliban have also been repeating other mistakes from the past – not least the harbouring of the leader of Al Qaida, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, in downtown Kabul in breach of their international commitments.

We again call on the Taliban to meet its commitments:

- To ensure principled, unhindered humanitarian access across the country
- To uphold basic human rights, most pressingly for women and girls.
- And to ensure Afghanistan is never again a permissive environment for terrorist groups.

Strong and consistent UN leadership remains crucial to ensuring a well-coordinated and prioritised response and UNAMA has our full support in delivering its mandate provided by this Council.

President,

One year ago, this Council adopted resolution 2593 which set out our shared expectations of the Taliban. We hope the Council can continue to speak with one voice to press the Taliban on its commitments, and to support the Afghan people in overcoming the challenges ahead. We thank the UN for their ongoing and tireless efforts.