

# Supporting an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace process

Many thanks your Excellency and I would like to start by thanking you, his Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, and their Excellencies the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Finland, Norway, Indonesia, and Germany – for organising this event.

I'd also like to thank His Excellency President Ghani for his keynote address and the other briefers for their remarks.

Your Excellencies,

We are at an historic moment in Afghanistan.

The start of the Afghan peace talks marks an unprecedented opportunity to end decades of war and to build a peaceful future for all Afghans.

Achieving these goals is not easy. Violence continues to take the lives of innocent Afghans, and this is unacceptable.

Peace will mean taking difficult decisions. President Ghani and his government have taken many courageous steps to reach this point. And the next phase will require more difficult decisions and more courage still.

Your Excellencies,

These decisions are for Afghans to take. It is our role to support these efforts.

First, we should support the peace negotiations.

We should remain ready to provide our assistance to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process.

I reiterate here the UK's standing offer of assistance and thank the United Nations as well as the United States, Qatar, Germany, Norway, Indonesia and Uzbekistan for the excellent work they too are doing.

It also involves delivering clear messages to the parties. If the Taliban is serious about peace, the violence must end. Civilians must be able to live in peace.

Second, we should support the aspirations of all Afghans including minority communities and especially Afghan women who are justifiably apprehensive about their future.

As Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan, the UK welcomes Ms Gailani's presence with us here today.

We will continue to advocate for women's participation at every level and at every stage of the peace process.

Third, we should renew our practical support.

The UK is sustaining Afghanistan's security, recently pledging up to \$90m to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces for the next year.

We are responding to Afghanistan's humanitarian needs, contributing over \$75m this year.

And, at this month's pledging conference in Geneva, we will announce our ongoing commitment to Afghanistan's development.

We urge partners here to join us in matching words with deeds.

Your Excellencies,

We face a marathon, not a sprint. We must remain patient, firm, and committed. For the UK, we will play our part.

Many thanks, Your Excellency.