

The fundamental building blocks for stability in Afghanistan: UK statement at UN Security Council

Thank you President,

I join others in thanking Deputy Special Representative Potzel, Ghada Waly, Executive Director, and Ms Fawzia Koofi for their sobering briefings and also UNAMA and the Secretary-General for his quarterly report.

As we've heard, nearly 60% of the population of Afghanistan officially requires humanitarian assistance, but the true need is much higher.

The World Bank predicts GDP will have contracted by one third by the end of this year, and the Taliban continues increased restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I cannot speak more eloquently than Fawzia Koofi did about the restrictions on freedom of movement that women and girls face – the political, economic, educational and social exclusion that they face.

UNICEF estimates the ban on schooling for girls has cost the Afghan economy at least \$500 million during the last year. But the human cost for each of these Afghan girls is immeasurable.

President,

Some Council Members appear determined to politicise the crisis in Afghanistan, and I think their assertions are neither accurate nor helpful.

The UK disbursed \$306 million in humanitarian and development assistance for Afghanistan last financial year, and we have committed a further \$306 million this financial year.

We are the second largest donor to the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund, and we continue to work with the World Bank, IMF and others on economic stabilisation.

We recognise the importance of restoring liquidity to the banking system, including a functioning Central Bank able to access Afghanistan's overseas reserves. But this requires an independent Central Bank operating transparently with professional leadership and proper controls in place to prevent funds being diverted to terrorism.

Calling for reserves simply to be returned before these essential steps are in place is neither responsible nor compatible with a genuine commitment to stopping terrorist financing.

President,

Humanitarian and financial support can help, but it will not resolve Afghanistan's problems unless the fundamental building blocks for stability are put in place. To do this, the Taliban must uphold, rather than repress human rights, allow unhindered humanitarian access, meet counter-terrorism commitments made in the Doha Agreement, and they must take responsibility for stabilizing the economy.

This means creating an enabling environment for greater investment, including ensuring transparency on revenue and budget, and enabling women – half of the population – to contribute to economic activity.

Finally President,

I take the opportunity to welcome the appointment of Special Representative Otunbayeva. It is vital for Afghanistan's future that the Taliban cooperate with her and the UN, and we urge all members of the Council to support her as she implements UNAMA's critical mandate.

Thank you.