

UK pledges £155 million aid to support peace and stability in Afghanistan

- New UK aid pledge will reduce child mortality rates, and improve access to education and vital infrastructure
- Additional £15 million emergency support will help the most vulnerable cope with the cold winter and Covid-19
- UK remains the third largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan

A £155 million package of support for next year, was announced today by Lord Ahmad, UK Minister for South Asia, via virtual remarks to the 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva. The UK's aid commitment will strengthen infrastructure and government systems, improve health and education services and create the jobs and investment needed for greater economic independence.

The UK's pledge, alongside those of other international donors, also takes into account the start of negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban and progress toward a peace process. Continued UK development funding to Afghanistan beyond 2021 will be closely-linked to both the peace negotiations and further progress on poverty reduction, rule of law, protection of women and minorities rights, human rights more broadly, and democratic governance.

On top of this pledge, the UK is also committing £15 million to the UN's World Food Programme, to help around 100,000 families facing immediate food shortages through the harsh Afghan winter in conditions exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UK's military and diplomatic efforts have been critical in supporting Afghanistan over the past 19 years. Our UK's aid expertise has helped millions of children go to school and provided life-saving food to those in need.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK's support has enabled important progress to be made in Afghanistan on education, access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation, and women's participation in politics.

Our renewed commitment at this crucial time will help deliver a more stable Afghanistan, important both for the Afghan people, but also for the safety of the UK and the world.

UK aid funding will continue to be delivered predominantly through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), with some funding also delivered through the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund.

The aid pledge complements UK support to Afghanistan through diplomacy and

security commitments and comes on top of the £70 million security pledge for Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in 2021, which was announced last month. The UK is working hard to support efforts on the peace process and the urgent need for a reduction of violence in Afghanistan.

Previous UK aid in Afghanistan has helped:

- 749,000 children to gain a decent education, of which 290,000 were girls (from 2015 to 2020)
- Provide 385,000 people with sustainable access to clean water and/or sanitation, of which 188,000 were female (from 2015 to 2020)
- Make sure 94% of children under five suffering from severe malnutrition are treated, up from 24% in 2011
- Reduce the new-born mortality rate from 53 to 23 per 1,000 live births (from 2003 to 2018)
- Provide 6.2 million people with access to electricity since 2004

The UK remains the third-largest international donor to Afghanistan, after the US and Germany. The support the UK provides on improving Afghanistan's security, development and governance is crucial to building a stable state and reducing the terrorist threat to the UK.

Notes to editors:

1. UK aid to Afghanistan is predominantly delivered through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), with some funding also delivered through the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund
2. The UK pledged £750 million for 2016-2020 at the Brussels conference. Actual aid spend over the period was £825 million
3. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world but dependence on aid is falling – according to the World Bank International grants have fallen from more than 100 percent of GDP in 2012 to around 40 percent of GDP today.