

UNAMA will support the rights of all Afghans: explanation of vote

Thank you Madam President, and can I start by thanking Norway for their hard work as penholder on this text.

Today, the Council spoke with one voice in support of a robust UN Mission in Afghanistan:

- to lead and coordinate urgent humanitarian efforts
- to support the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls
- and to hold the Taliban account on its commitments

It's disappointing that one Council member decided to abstain, just when UNAMA's work is more important than ever.

Over 20 million Afghan people need urgent assistance. For our part, the UK has doubled aid for Afghanistan this financial year to \$370 million. And on 31 March, the UK, Qatar, Germany and OCHA will co-host a pledging conference to raise funds for the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan. We encourage Member States to respond generously.

Today's adoption ensures UNAMA will continue to play a key role in coordinating the UN's response as it scales up across the board.

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, we are particularly concerned by reports of reprisals against former government officials, as well as attacks and intimidation against minority groups and civil society.

We are also concerned about detentions and enforced disappearances in breach of international norms. And although there has been a reduction in civilian casualties, the Taliban need to demonstrate that extremist groups are no longer able to flourish in the country.

Let me be clear – the Taliban have a choice.

The international community has made its expectations clear. We will base our approach on the actions the Taliban now take.

UNAMA will play a key role in supporting the rights of all Afghans, promoting an inclusive society in which women and girls participate fully. We are watching closely to see if the Taliban meets its commitments that girls return to secondary school at the end of March.

And in closing, I'd like to pay tribute to Special Representative Lyons and her team, and reaffirm the UK's solidarity with the Afghan people.

Thank you.