

Welcoming the progress made by UNAMA in Afghanistan

Thank you very much, Madam President. And thank you to the Special Representative and Ms Khurram for their really helpful briefings and nice to see Ms Khurram here again. And thank you to my colleague, the Afghan Ambassador. We're very pleased to be part of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan and it's very heartening to hear so much support from colleagues around the table. So thank you very much for that. And also, big thank you to the Indonesian Foreign Minister for her guidance as well.

First of all, I think for the Special Representative, it's a huge thank you once again for what you're doing and for the work of UNAMA in incredibly challenging circumstances. So thank you for that. And I'd like to come on in a minute to the three main issues of today: the peace process, the elections and economic development.

But at first, I just wanted to add the United Kingdom's voice to all those condemning the attack on the UN vehicle in Kabul last month and the recent attack that killed Dr. Nakamura. We join all those who lament the loss of these fine colleagues. We send our sympathies and our condolences to their families and to all those who knew them. There is absolutely no justification for these disgraceful acts of violence. The Taliban claim to speak for the people of Afghanistan and yet if they do not take part directly in such attacks, they certainly create an environment where such attacks become possible. And in that connection, I would like to mention the Taliban attack on Bagram last Tuesday, which killed two civilians and injured many more. And the United Kingdom calls on the Taliban to end such attacks in order to give Afghans a chance for the stable and just peace that they so much deserve.

Turning to the peace process, we share the view of other members that only a political process can deliver a lasting and just peace. And a deal between the US and Taliban is crucial to unlocking intra-Afghan talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The United Kingdom also hopes talks can resume soon, but it's clear the Taliban need to firmly commit to a concrete reduction in violence as a matter of urgency. The Taliban needs to show it's serious about peace, the Afghan people need respite from the awful violence, and we need to create a conducive environment for these crucial intra-Afghan talks to succeed.

Madam President, I've mentioned the vital role that women have to play in the peace process and I join my colleagues in once again underscoring that. I wanted to commend you now on the opening of the Nationwide Global Open Days on women, peace and security with the symposium in Kabul in October.

My second point concerns the Afghan presidential elections. Madam President, we join others in calling on all stakeholders to respect and uphold the integrity of the electoral management bodies as they work to complete the process and deliver the results in a timely manner.

We welcome UNAMA's continued engagement around the elections with national and international partners. And we likewise support UNAMA's call for transparency, impartiality and independence as the results of process. It was good to see that the Independent Electoral Commission will be able to move forward with recounts in the remaining provinces. We hope this process can move forward expeditiously and transparently and we look forward to preliminary results.

My last point, Madam President, is on Afghanistan's economic development needs, regardless of what happens in the months ahead. Afghanistan will continue to have considerable economic development and humanitarian needs, as the Indonesian representative so clearly set out. Financial commitments made at the Brussels Summit in 2016 will run out next year. The UK supports the holding of a pledging conference in 2020 to address the financing gap and identify development priorities for the remainder of the transformation decade. And we therefore welcome, Madam President, the work that UNAMA is doing with the Afghan government in preparation for the 2020 Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan and the initiation of discussions with potential hosts for that event.

Thank you.