



UN in Afghanistan calls for urgent collective climate action in the country

KABUL – The Afghan people stand on the precipice of devastating climate projections. As COP27 opens today, the UN in Afghanistan calls for urgent collective action to halt the destructive impact of the altering climate in the country that is one of the least prepared against climate shocks but is ranked the sixth most affected in the world to climate-related threats.

Afghanistan is already prone to frequent natural disasters that cause loss and damage to lives, livelihoods, homes and infrastructure. These existing threats coupled with Afghans’ high dependence on agricultural livelihoods, Afghanistan’s fragile ecosystem, acute environmental degradation, poor socio-economic development and the impact of more than four decades of war have laid the foundation for extreme climate vulnerability.

Droughts in many parts of the country are becoming the norm, and episodic heavy precipitation result in flash floods and landslides. The consequences we are witnessing are severe for not only Afghan lives, but for economic development, food insecurity and migration.

“It is ordinary Afghans who suffer the most when these shocks occur,” said Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Humanitarian Coordinator. “It is devastating to see the most vulnerable Afghans bear the brunt of environmental disasters, and it is increasingly challenging to build long term resilience and adaptation when we are constantly managing short term crises and in the absence of sufficient adaptation funding.”

Afghanistan has already witnessed several years of drought ravage communities across rural areas and the intense flooding earlier this year provided a snapshot of what is likely to come.

The challenges to building environmental resilience and climate adaptation in Afghanistan are multiple and diverse, complicated by political and governance issues as well as the availability of financial resources.

“In a world of wars, crises and fragmentation – and in the wake of conflict in Afghanistan, all must come together to find concrete solutions to the climate emergency. I encourage Afghanistan’s current de facto administration to take the threat of climate change and environmental degradation seriously, and to harness the great diversity of Afghanistan to bring together all corners of Afghan society to cooperatively address these threats. It will take every Afghan – religious and community leaders, women and men, businesses and farmers, the youth and elders – to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.”

“And still, the Afghan people cannot face this challenge alone. I equally encourage the international community and donors to think boldly and creatively on long-term climate adaptation support for Afghanistan. Regardless of political hurdles, Afghanistan cannot not be left out of climate financing. We will continue to respond to short-term humanitarian shocks, but we must lay a path towards adaptation. Adaptation will save lives and livelihoods.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for COP27 to lay the foundation for faster, bolder climate action in the “crucial decade” ahead, “when the global climate fight will be won or lost.”

“Action for Afghanistan is needed now,” Dr. Alakbarov said. “We cannot wait. Afghans do not have time to wait. It will take all sides finding common ground and common cause to work towards a sustainable future for Afghanistan. We also have to be clear, this problem is not specific to Afghanistan, it is a larger regional issue and not acting in Afghanistan now will create considerable setback in climate action for the entire region.”