



# General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General  
22 May 2026

Original: English

General Assembly  
Eightieth session  
Agenda item 36  
The situation in Afghanistan

Security Council  
Eighty-first year

## The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [79/317](#) and Security Council resolution [2818 \(2026\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), including at the subnational level.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, dated 27 February 2026 ([A/80/658-S/2026/99](#)).

#### II. Relevant developments

3. The Taliban de facto authorities maintained control over the national territory of Afghanistan and continued to implement governance measures in line with their interpretation of Islam, with an emphasis on centralized authority, the role of religious scholars and the enforcement of policies through administrative and religious structures. The de facto authorities continue to prevent Afghan women personnel of the United Nations from accessing United Nations premises, in line with their version of an Islamic system that restricts the rights of women and girls. The ban on girls' education beyond sixth grade in public schools entered its fifth year on 26 March, when a new school year began with no changes to this restrictive and discriminatory policy of the de facto authorities. Heightened cross-border hostilities with Pakistan, marked by air strikes, drone activity and ground clashes, resulted in civilian casualties, displacement and damage to critical infrastructure. Human rights violations remained widespread, including reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment of former officials, corporal punishment, and severe restrictions on the rights of women and girls. The humanitarian and economic



situation deteriorated amid declining international assistance, rising inflation, trade disruptions, large-scale returns of Afghans and climate-related shocks, compounded by the conflict in the Middle East and the prolonged border closure with Pakistan. As at 30 April, the 2026 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Response Plan remained significantly underfunded at 14 per cent (\$240.9 million of \$1.7 billion required).

## A. Political developments

4. In his messaging, the Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, continued to focus on sharia-based governance, the central role of religious scholars, the consolidation of authority, obedience, and the implementation of religious and administrative functions. On 17 February, during a gathering of religious scholars in Kandahar Province, the Taliban leader emphasized the role of scholars in providing religious guidance, promoting unity and supporting a governance system based on religious principles. Two days later, in his Eid al-Fitr sermon, the Taliban leader emphasized unity, obedience and consolidation of the Islamic system. On 6 April, during a five-day training seminar for *hajj* instructors and religious delegations in Kandahar, he emphasized guidance, organization and care for pilgrims, and called for discipline and the coordinated implementation of administrative procedures. The Taliban leader reportedly travelled to Kajaki District, Helmand Province, on 17 April, where he and the de facto Minister of the Interior, Sirajuddin Haqqani, jointly laid a foundation stone for the launch of a mosque building project and engaged with local de facto officials, emphasizing the importance of unity to preserve their Islamic system through obedience to and implementation of the Taliban leader's decrees.

5. On 18 February, the de facto Minister for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, addressed two coordination meetings in Kabul with de facto inspectors, emphasizing the importance of implementing the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice, calling for disciplined enforcement and reiterating the responsibilities of de facto officials. On 11 April, during a one-day seminar for the de facto Ministry's directors and officials, he stressed that implementing the Islamic sharia, ensuring social justice and strengthening the Islamic system required commitment, coordination and joint efforts from all officials at both the central and provincial levels, adding that officials should take people's complaints seriously, avoid any favouritism in view of principles and law and enforce the law equally.

6. Between 27 March and 4 April, the de facto authorities held a series of meetings with the public across Afghanistan to reinforce narratives of unity and readiness to respond to external threats, which served to disseminate leadership directives and reinforce local governance engagement. For instance, on 3 and 4 April in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces, respectively, the de facto Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs held meetings on the themes "National unity and system sustainability", "Defence of the Islamic system" and "Islamic brotherhood and listening to the problems of the people" with religious scholars, tribal elders, university teachers and youth representatives. During the gatherings, de facto officials praised public unity and support of the authorities' actions in response to recent Pakistani military strikes, expressed appreciation for the Afghan forces and emphasized that the Afghan people had historically resisted external threats and continued to stand collectively in defence of the country.

7. Hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan resumed with intensity in late February. Regional countries engaged with the parties with the aim of finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Following the escalation of hostilities, senior officials of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia,

Türkiye and Uzbekistan held telephone conversations with the de facto Prime Minister, Mohammad Hassan Akhund, and the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi. In late March, China, the Russian Federation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization publicly announced their readiness to provide mediation. From 1 to 7 April, China hosted a meeting between technical-level delegations of the de facto authorities and the Government of Pakistan in Urumqi, China. At the conclusion of the talks, on 8 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China stated that the three sides had agreed to discuss “a comprehensive plan to resolve issues in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and identified the core and priority issues”. Also on 8 April, the Spokesperson of the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the talks had taken place in a constructive atmosphere, expressing hope that “this process will contribute to further strengthening confidence building, sustained relations, understanding and effective cooperation.” On 16 April, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan stated that “any channel for peace remains open”, adding that the Afghan side “need(s) to uphold their commitments (...) not to allow their territory to be used for terrorism against Pakistan” and that Pakistan would “continue to seek written and verifiable assurances from [the] Afghan side on this issue.”

8. On 24 March, the de facto authorities released a United States detainee, explaining this action as part of the Eid prisoner release process, after the de facto Supreme Court had assessed the duration of the detention to have been sufficient for the purported crime. Prior to this development, the United States had, on 9 March, designated Afghanistan as a State sponsor of wrongful detention.

9. The new academic year, which commenced in March, marked the fifth consecutive year of the de facto authorities’ ban on girls and women accessing education beyond sixth grade, contributing to an estimated 2.6 million out-of-school children. The de facto authorities continued their strict enforcement of the restrictions on the access of Afghan women personnel of the United Nations and other Afghan women to United Nations offices, which have been in place across the country since 7 September 2025. The United Nations has consistently called on senior officials within the de facto authorities to remove these restrictions.

10. Between 19 January and 13 April, eight registered religious madrasas were established in Badakhshan, Ghazni, Paktika, Bamyan and Kunar Provinces. In addition, four graduation ceremonies took place in Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab and Paktiya Provinces, and a total of 146 students (131 men and 15 women) graduated after completing religious studies at the bachelor’s level. On 12 February, the de facto Ministry of Higher Education conducted a one-day examination in Kabul for approximately 315 madrasa scholars aimed at providing graduates with credentials equivalent to a bachelor’s degree. The de facto authorities described this as part of their broader efforts to reverse decades of official focus on non-religious, regular education and to confer equal educational credentials on their cadres.

11. The de facto authorities continued to appoint male Taliban loyalists to leadership positions. At the national level, reshuffles resulted in the appointment of, inter alia, one de facto Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, three de facto deputy ministers and six de facto directors. Subnational appointments included three de facto provincial governors, two de facto deputy provincial governors, one de facto district governor, two de facto provincial chiefs of police and at least 12 de facto provincial line department heads.

12. On 30 March, civil service retirees held protests in Kabul over the continued delays by the de facto Ministry of Finance in the disbursement of pensions. According to the protesters, there were delays in the processing of payments to eligible

beneficiaries and many retirees, particularly those who had retired before 2021, remained excluded due to stringent criteria set by the de facto authorities.

13. On 5 April, the de facto Ministry of Justice reported that the Taliban leader had issued decree No. 22 of 8 March 2026 on the evaluation and change of foreign terms in administrative and principal documents. According to the decree, a committee comprised of representatives from the de facto Ministries of Justice, Education, Higher Education, and Information and Culture, the Directorate of the Academy of Science and the Office of Administrative Affairs would compile a list of “foreign” terms used in official documents and recommend replacements with justifications to the de facto Board for the Evaluation and Change of Foreign Terms in Administrative and Principal Documents for onward transmission to the leadership of the de facto authorities.

14. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society based in Afghanistan continued to face challenges such as a lack of funding and the lack of an institutionalized platform for sustained political dialogue with civil society. Between 26 January and 9 April, UNAMA, through its field offices, facilitated 80 outreach activities involving Afghan civil society, tribal elders, journalists, entrepreneurs and women activists. Participants highlighted concerns, including the continued shrinking of civic space following the enactment of the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice, the lack of education and its decreased quality for both men and women, limited employment opportunities and the need for improved socioeconomic livelihoods. During the same period, UNAMA also organized 19 meetings with young people in 10 provinces to discuss, among other issues, Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#); peace and security; civic space, environmental protection; and the provision of services to returnees. Young people expressed concern regarding, inter alia, mental health problems among young people due to socioeconomic, educational and environmental challenges, contracted civic space and their future prospects.

15. The United Nations continues to work with the international community, the de facto authorities and Afghan stakeholders inside and outside of Afghanistan to advance the comprehensive approach of principled and pragmatic engagement with the objective of Afghanistan fully reintegrating into the international community and meeting its international obligations, including on human rights and women’s rights, for the benefit of the Afghan people, as endorsed in Security Council resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#). As part of these efforts, UNAMA conducted a series of consultations with the de facto authorities, Member States, international organizations, Afghan technical experts, private sector representatives and United Nations entities to facilitate activities within the framework of the counter-narcotics and private sector working groups.

## **B. Security**

16. From 1 February to 30 April, the United Nations recorded 3,687 safety and security-related incident reports, marking a 57.7 per cent increase compared with the same period the previous year.

17. From 1 February to 13 April, armed opposition groups posed no significant challenge to the de facto authorities’ control over the national territory. In Badakhshan, Baghlan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Panjshir and Zabul Provinces, the Afghanistan Freedom Front, the National Resistance Front, the National Mobilization Front and the Afghanistan Green Trend movement variously claimed responsibility for 18 incidents, of which 16 could be verified. Those incidents included rocket and hand grenade attacks and shootings at checkpoints and convoys of the de facto security forces. On 18 February, the Afghanistan Freedom Front

announced a conditional unilateral suspension of all of its military operations across Afghanistan from the start of the month of Ramadan until the end of Eid al-Fitr. On 30 March, the Afghanistan Freedom Front announced that it had resumed attacks.

18. During the reporting period, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) did not claim any significant attack against the de facto authorities. However, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) assessed the group as retaining operational and combat capability (see S/2026/44).

19. On 10 April, four unidentified armed men on motorcycles opened fire on civilians gathered in a recreational area near the Sayed Mohammad Agha shrine in Deh Mehri village, Injil District, Herat Province, a predominantly Shia-populated area. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, which resulted in civilian casualties.

20. On 21 and 22 February, Pakistan conducted multiple air strikes in Nangarhar (Bihsud, Ghani Khil and Khogyani Districts) and Paktika (Barmal and Urgun Districts) Provinces, which it stated were targeting the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and ISIL-K, in retaliation for attacks in Pakistan, including a suicide attack on a Shia mosque in Islamabad on 6 February, and accused the de facto authorities of not taking action against “anti-Pakistan terrorist groups”. The strikes allegedly resulted in the killing of an operational commander of Al-Qaida, together with other casualties. On 26 February, the de facto authorities announced the operation “Reject Oppression” (*Rad al-zulm*) against Pakistani positions along the border in Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktika and Paktiya Provinces, claiming the capture of military outposts and casualties among Pakistani forces, with Afghan drones allegedly targeting military facilities inside Pakistan. The Pakistani operation “Righteous Fury” (*Ghazab lil-haq*), launched later the same day, targeted military installations and ammunition and weapons depots in Kabul and Kandahar Cities, as well as Khost, Laghman, Paktika and Paktiya Provinces. Hostilities between the two countries continued with high intensity through mid-March, including air strikes in Kabul City, the Bagram Airbase in Parwan Province and several locations in Kandahar City. On 16 March, in Kabul City, an air strike impacted the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital.

21. On 18 March, at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, a temporary ceasefire was announced between the de facto authorities and Pakistan during the Eid al-Fitr period (19–24 March). However, reports indicated there were multiple incidents of cross-border artillery shelling in the border districts of Kunar and Nuristan Provinces, as well as a drone strike in Balkh Province. On 26 March, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan announced that the temporary pause had come to an end and that the military operation would continue until it had achieved its objectives. Cross-border clashes and shelling, as well as air strikes, continued in multiple border districts in Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktika and Paktiya Provinces.

22. From 1 February to 30 April, the United Nations documented 92 safety and security incidents directly affecting its personnel, compared with 62 incidents documented during the same period the previous year.

### C. Regional cooperation

23. On 16 February, a meeting of the Central Asian Contact Group on Afghanistan, comprised of special representatives and envoys of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, took place in Astana, at which they discussed the current

situation in Afghanistan and a structured framework for regional cooperation with Afghanistan. On 5 April, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs hosted a meeting entitled “Afghanistan-Central Asia consultative dialogue” with the participation of the Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the Ambassadors to Afghanistan of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, at which they discussed strengthening dialogue and cooperation among the countries.

24. From 8 to 16 February, the Deputy Adviser to the President of Uzbekistan, Javlon Vahobov, visited Kabul, where he met with the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs and other de facto officials and discussed enhancing bilateral trade and other areas of mutual interest. On 11 February, the Deputy Minister of Oil of the Islamic Republic of Iran visited Kabul, holding meetings with the de facto Minister of Industry and Commerce and officials from the de facto Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, the de facto Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation and the Afghanistan Oil and Gas Corporation to advance bilateral ties in energy. On 23 February, the National Leader and Head of the Upper Chamber of Parliament of Turkmenistan highlighted the progress made in the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and pledged that its extension to Herat City, Afghanistan, would be finalized by the end of 2026. On 26 February, a delegation headed by the de facto Minister of Industry and Commerce, Noorudin Azizi, visited Uzbekistan for negotiations on enhancing economic and investment ties between the two nations. The delegation also participated in the fourth International Investment Conference. On 10 March, the President of Uzbekistan signed a preferential trade agreement with Afghanistan that abolishes customs tariffs on 14 types of goods of both countries and provides phytosanitary facilities for Afghan agricultural products. On 28 March, a delegation from Namangan Oblast in Uzbekistan visited Afghanistan, where it held meetings with the de facto Minister of Industry and Commerce and other de facto officials and signed agreements estimated at \$514 million. On 21 April, during a visit by the de facto Minister of Industry and Commerce to Tashkent to attend an international industrial exhibition, a trilateral meeting was held with the Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan, Laziz Kudratov, and the Deputy Minister of Economy and Commerce of Kyrgyzstan, Iskender Asylkulov, at which they reportedly agreed to form a joint trade and transit working group.

25. UNAMA continued its engagement with regional stakeholders, arranging monthly meetings of Kabul-based ambassadors and holding exchanges with visiting delegations of regional countries to Afghanistan.

### **III. Human rights**

26. The hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan caused 764 civilian casualties (372 killed and 392 injured) between 26 January and 31 March. Most civilian casualties in Afghanistan were attributed to air strikes, with the remainder to indirect cross-border firing. The air strike that impacted the Omid Drug Rehabilitation Hospital in Kabul on 16 March killed at least 269 people and injured a further 122, mostly patients. The Embassy of Pakistan to Afghanistan informed UNAMA that “Pakistan’s actions on the night of 16 March were directed solely against terrorist and military infrastructure”. The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed UNAMA that the de facto authorities “strongly condemn any form of violence by Pakistan against civilians”.

27. Cross-border shelling in Kunar Province on 27 April caused at least 88 civilian casualties (7 killed and 81 wounded), which mostly occurred in Asadabad City as well as Dangam, Marawara, Sarkani and Shultan Districts. Among the casualties were students and professors of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University in Asadabad City.

The de facto Deputy Spokesperson stated that Pakistan had targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure while the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Pakistan dismissed media reports of civilian casualties as false.

28. UNAMA documented 11 civilians killed and 11 wounded, among them women and children, in the incident of 10 April in which gunmen opened fire on civilians picnicking in front of the Sayed Mohammad Agha shrine (a Shia shrine) in Herat Province.

29. Human rights violations against former government officials and members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to be reported. Between 26 January and 31 March, UNAMA documented at least 5 killings, 20 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 8 instances of torture and ill-treatment against them.

30. UNAMA documented 228 instances of corporal punishment carried out by the de facto authorities (against 29 women, 196 men and 3 boys) for offences that included adultery, running away from home, homosexuality, alcohol consumption and gambling.

31. Between 1 January and 31 March, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan verified some 300 grave violations affecting at least 200 children, including 67 girls. The most prevalent violations included killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access, which together accounted for at least 96 per cent of all verified violations.

32. The media sector continued to face restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities. On 26 January, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture announced a decision to revoke the licences of all but three media support organizations due to their alleged inactivity and unprofessionalism. On 28 February, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture suspended Rah-e-Farda television and radio channel due to a statement made by its owner that was deemed by the de facto authorities to be justifying military action by Pakistan against Afghan civilians. The station remained suspended as at the end of the reporting period. In Ghazni Province, a committee of local department officials of the de facto authorities suspended Khushal Radio, a private radio station, between 3 and 10 March, reportedly because of a female caller's conversation with a male host during a programme.

33. The de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice prevented the observance of Nowruz (Persian New Year). The de facto authorities stopped members of the Shia religious community in at least eight provinces from observing Eid al-Fitr on a different day from the Sunnis in accordance with their religious calendar. Those found in violation of this instruction were allegedly subjected to verbal reprimands, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

34. The lives of Afghan women and girls continued to be severely constrained, with restrictions on mobility, dress, access to education and work and engagement in religious and public life. Dress requirements appeared to be enforced more strictly in some provinces than others, with the chador or burqa often treated as mandatory in Herat and Kandahar, respectively, and enforcement involving public reprimands or verbal abuse. In addition to the more general restriction preventing women from travelling alone beyond 78 km, in some places, women were also required to be accompanied by a *mahram* while shopping, visiting shrines or moving between districts. Women were also forbidden to perform Tarawih (night prayers performed during Ramadan) despite designated women's spaces in mosques. Shopkeepers were on occasion threatened with closure for not enforcing the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice. On 2 April, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality

and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) published a legal review that assessed compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 16 measures introduced by the de facto authorities since August 2021 that impact the rights of women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

35. According to an assessment by UN-Women, published on 8 March, decree No. 12 concerning the “criminal rules of courts”, circulated on 8 January 2026, formalized gender-based discrimination and hierarchy within the legal framework.<sup>2</sup> The decree redefines women’s legal status – predominantly referring to them as “wives” rather than as independent legal persons – and introduces a system in which women are likely to fall into lower tiers of social stratification and face comparatively harsher penalties. The decree further authorizes and legitimizes violence against women by delegating elements of State enforcement authority to private individuals – implicitly male – including through corporal punishment.

36. Further to a de facto Supreme Court instruction dated 9 February 2026 to all courts, including military courts, to identify prisoners eligible for pardon or sentence reduction due to Eid al-Fitr, on 18 March, the de facto Supreme Court announced that 4,596 prisoners had been released, and 4,407 persons had received sentence reductions, the highest number since August 2021. The de facto Office of Prison Administration reported that, as at 20 April, its overall prison population stood at around 27,000 detainees, including 14,700 convicted individuals (54.6 per cent) and 12,250 individuals in pretrial detention (45.3 per cent). The de facto Office continued seeking support for detainees in relation to nutrition, health and vocational and educational training, including from other de facto institutions. On 2 March, the de facto Office signed an agreement with the de facto Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to facilitate finding job opportunities for detainees upon their release.

#### **IV. Economic development, donor coordination and aid effectiveness**

37. The economic outlook of Afghanistan in the first quarter of 2026 was shaped by multiple external and domestic pressures. Declining aid flows, large-scale population movements, trade disruptions and climate-related shocks continued to constrain economic activity and heighten risks to livelihoods and food security. Inflationary pressures intensified early in the year, driven primarily by higher food prices, according to the World Bank. Overall economic growth remained insufficient to keep pace with population increases, with per capita gross domestic product (GDP) projected to decline amid weak investment and limited productivity gains. These dynamics further eroded household purchasing power and contributed to rising vulnerability, particularly among women-headed households and returnee populations.

38. External dynamics continued to affect economic performance. Since the closure of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in October 2025, trade volumes through the Pakistan corridor have declined by over 90 per cent. An initial pivot to increased reliance on alternative routes through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Central Asia contributed to higher transaction costs and supply chain inefficiencies. Since late February, the conflict in the Middle East has affected the trade flows between

---

<sup>1</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/en/documents/research-papers/cedaw-based-legal-review-convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination](http://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/research-papers/cedaw-based-legal-review-convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination).

<sup>2</sup> UN-Women, “Gender Alert – Afghan women’s and girls’ rights under Decree No. 12 on Criminal Rules of Courts”, March 2026. See <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/03/gender-alert-decree-no-12>.

Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Oil and gas prices increased by approximately 10 per cent, linked to global price increases. Rerouting costs increased by up to \$3,000 per container, and transport costs rose by 30 per cent, contributing to an acceleration in inflation from 6.4 per cent in February 2026 to 7.6 per cent in March 2026. In addition, as at 21 April, the cost of the food basket is up by 6.8 per cent, logistics costs have increased by around 20 per cent and aid supplies face a growing risk of disruption.

39. Population movements remained a significant driver of economic pressure. From 1 January to 30 April 2026, approximately 548,603 Afghans returned from neighbouring countries, primarily from Pakistan (328,094) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (220,509). These returns added to large-scale movements observed in 2025, when approximately 2.9 million Afghans returned, placing additional strain on labour markets, housing, basic services and local economies. Given that many returnees sought job or livelihood opportunities in urban or peri-urban areas, this rapid influx increased the number of people in informal settlements and left the most vulnerable in inadequate living conditions. Returnees, especially women and girls, continued to face limited livelihood opportunities, barriers to reintegration, diminished access to health and protection services and increasing risks of poverty and vulnerability.

40. International assistance remained critical to sustaining economic stability and basic services. Under the basic human needs assistance framework, the United Nations and partners continued to preserve essential services, support livelihoods and reinforce community resilience, while advancing coordinated humanitarian development approaches. Efforts to strengthen aid effectiveness continued, with an emphasis on risk management, due diligence and monitoring. Donor coordination remained active through the biweekly policy calls and monthly sectoral forum meetings of the Afghanistan Coordination Group, supporting the alignment of assistance and information-sharing.

41. From February to April, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) trained 23,300 teachers, rehabilitated 232 schools and provided learning materials that benefited 4 million children.

42. The Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan held its regular Steering Committee meeting in March 2026, at which Committee members approved a resource allocation of \$2.82 million for a joint initiative in Bamyan Province to promote the social and economic integration of returnees, internally displaced persons and women through climate-resilient infrastructure, livelihood skills development and the economic empowerment of women.

43. The United Nations continued to operate a physical cash shipment facility to support operations in Afghanistan. In the first quarter of 2026, the United Nations imported \$80 million for United Nations entities and approved NGOs. A total of \$200 million was imported during the same period in 2025. This decline reflected decreased aid flows as well as an increased use of correspondent banking by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

44. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), continued to develop an Islamic finance-compliant credit guarantee facility designed to expand access to finance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Afghanistan. The facility is supported by UNDP as part of the Afghanistan Access to Finance (A2F) project, with UNCDF providing technical expertise and counter-guarantee support, and is operationally managed by the Afghanistan Credit Guarantee Foundation, a national institution responsible for issuing and administering loan guarantees to participating financial institutions. By sharing credit risk with banks and microfinance institutions,

the facility enables continued lending to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly women-led enterprises, in a highly constrained financial environment.

## V. Humanitarian assistance

45. In 2026, an estimated 21.9 million people, or approximately 45 per cent of the population of Afghanistan, require humanitarian assistance. Needs are compounded by hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan, large-scale returns from neighbouring countries and persistent restrictions affecting women and girls. Priority needs remain food assistance, the treatment of acute malnutrition, essential health services, access to safe water and protection services.

46. Humanitarian partners continue to deliver assistance to millions of people despite increasingly constrained operating conditions. Between January and March, partners provided 4.7 million people with at least one form of assistance, including 435,000 people who received three or more types of support. This included 3 million people who received food security and livelihoods assistance, 1.4 million people who received healthcare, 870,800 people who received water, sanitation and hygiene services, 1 million people who received protection support, 946,000 people who received nutrition assistance, 31,000 people who received education support and approximately 80,000 people who received emergency shelter and non-food items.

47. The Operational Gender Coordination Group and the Humanitarian Access Working Group continue to monitor the impacts of bans and restrictions on Afghan women working in the humanitarian and basic human needs sectors. As of February 2026, 14 per cent of female staff are working from home, a 12 per cent decrease from October 2025. At the same time, organizations report increased financial pressures that are contributing to salary cuts and staffing reductions, with women disproportionately affected. Eighty per cent of organizations are impacted and are managing these constraints in various ways: 39 per cent are cutting salaries and benefits; 35 per cent are shrinking or closing their field presence; and 28 per cent are planning staffing or field reductions in 2026.

48. Ongoing large-scale population return movements place significant pressure on border systems and local absorption capacity, while accounts of increased rates of potential refoulement of recognized refugees from neighbouring Tajikistan have raised protection concerns. Humanitarian partners provided immediate assistance at key crossing points, including protection services, cash assistance and in-kind support. Reception facilities remain operational, though capacity is under strain due to security considerations and potential unexploded ordnance contamination.

49. As at 1 April, hostilities along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border have internally displaced an estimated 94,000 people since February, more than half of whom are women and children. Damage to critical infrastructure, including health facilities and humanitarian service points, has disrupted service delivery and, in some areas, led to temporary suspensions. Protection risks have increased significantly in conflict-affected areas, particularly those associated with displacement, psychosocial distress and gender-based violence. Women and girls face compounded vulnerabilities due to movement restrictions, limited access to services and the reduced availability of female humanitarian staff. Many households report feeling unsafe, with displacement and economic hardship driving negative coping strategies, including child labour and early marriage.

50. Humanitarian operations are significantly constrained by rising costs and severe supply chain disruptions linked to prolonged border closures and regional instability. The closure of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border since October 2025 has disrupted

established logistics corridors, rendering traditional supply routes largely unviable. These disruptions, compounded by increased costs, are affecting the timely delivery and availability of critical supplies, including food, health and nutrition commodities, and are placing additional pressure on already constrained humanitarian resources. The border has opened only sporadically for population returns to Afghanistan.

51. Environmental pressures continue to have multidimensional impacts. After four consecutive years of drought, precipitation levels remained below average in the first quarter of 2026, with reports of livelihoods impacts, displacement and intercommunal conflicts over scarce water resources. Increasingly unpredictable spring rainfall and flooding, combined with limited coping capacity and damaged protective infrastructure, further compounded humanitarian needs. Between 26 March and 16 April, heavy rainfall and flash floods affected most of Afghanistan, with 73,300 people initially estimated to have been affected across 31 of 34 provinces and subsequent assessments confirming that more than 31,600 people were in urgent need of assistance. The eastern region, particularly Nangarhar Province, was among the hardest hit, along with the southern and western regions. Across the affected provinces, thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed, while roads, bridges, agricultural land and livelihoods sustained significant losses.

52. Approximately 17.4 million people face acute food insecurity, including populations in emergency conditions, and this number is expected to increase further due to the above factors. Funding shortfalls have significantly reduced food assistance coverage, thus increasing the reliance on negative coping mechanisms and deepening vulnerability.

53. Malnutrition levels remain critically high. An estimated 4.9 million children under 5 and pregnant and breastfeeding women require treatment for acute malnutrition. While treatment for severe cases continues, preventive and supplementary programmes have been significantly affected by funding and supply constraints.

54. The public health situation remains concerning. Service delivery is increasingly constrained by funding shortfalls, insecurity, facility closures and shortages of essential medicines and supplies. The Afghanistan-Pakistan military escalation disrupted more than 25 health facilities, including 10 damaged by shelling and air strikes across Kabul, Khost, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktika and Paktiya Provinces, reducing access to essential services for an estimated 90,000 people. Recent floods also affected 61 health facilities across Badghis, Kandahar, Logar, Nangarhar and Zabul Provinces, most of them partially damaged. Communicable disease outbreaks continue, along with high levels of respiratory infections. Critical gaps persist in trauma care, emergency medical supplies, primary healthcare and maternal, newborn and child health services, while access to sexual and reproductive health services remains severely constrained, affecting an estimated 1,200 women of reproductive age each day.

55. Afghanistan reports one of the highest casualty rates from explosive ordnance globally, and new contamination is predicted in 40 districts due to the ongoing hostilities with Pakistan. Notwithstanding this serious situation, mine action capacity has declined due to funding shortfalls. Funding has been secured to enable the United Nations-led Mine Action Technical Cell to continue providing technical and coordination support only until 31 March 2027. Between February and April, the Mine Action Technical Cell conducted 310 quality assurance visits to implementing partners, processed 665 hotline calls and provided 14 responses to requests for mine action advice.

56. Humanitarian access is hampered by insecurity, administrative barriers and restrictions affecting women humanitarian workers. Humanitarian partners reported 307 access incidents across Afghanistan between January and the end of March, which resulted in the temporary suspension of 242 humanitarian activities. The incidents included the detention of 12 staff, including 1 United Nations staff member. The number of incidents reported increased compared with the last three months of 2025, when 283 incidents were reported, further impacting an already reduced operational presence due to funding shortfalls.

## **VI. Counter-narcotics**

57. Following the 2022 ban on narcotics, the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan has sharply declined. The loss of livelihoods among former poppy farmers and the wider effects on rural communities have had significant economic consequences. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is conducting a nationwide study to assess the socioeconomic impact of the ban on farmers and rural communities, for publication in September. In parallel, UNODC has commenced the roll-out of the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2026 to estimate opium cultivation, production and trafficking in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, seizure data continue to indicate a shift towards synthetic drugs, particularly methamphetamine, suggesting that the ban has had less of an impact on synthetic drug markets, which are less tied to agricultural seasons and fixed cultivation areas than opiate production.

58. United Nations counter-narcotics project beneficiary numbers decreased from 283,586 in 2024 to a target of 133,863 in 2026 due to declining resources and the absence of multi-year interventions. From March to May, UNODC supported 4,069 households, including 1,160 women-headed households, through alternative livelihood initiatives. UNODC also assisted 27 drug treatment facilities, where 11,028 beneficiaries – 29 per cent of them women – received treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration services across 12 provinces.

59. Under the framework of the Counter-Narcotics Working Group established under the Doha process, UNODC facilitated exposure visits to Indonesia in February and to Uzbekistan in April/May for representatives of the de facto authorities and international and national experts, promoting knowledge exchange with national counterparts on drug demand reduction, harm reduction practices and legal crop development.

## **VII. Mission support**

60. As at 31 March, vacancy rates in UNAMA were 14 per cent for international staff, 8 per cent for international United Nations Volunteers, 19 per cent for national United Nations Volunteers, 15 per cent for National Professional Officers and 9 per cent for national General Service staff, compared with approved rates of 10.4 per cent, 4.3 per cent, 5 per cent, 14.8 per cent and 10.7 per cent, respectively. The proportion of women staff was 35 per cent among international staff, 38 per cent among international United Nations Volunteers, 11 per cent among National Professional Officers and 11 per cent among national General Service staff.

## **VIII. Observations**

61. Following a period of relative stability, Afghanistan is facing mounting social, economic and security pressures. While the de facto authorities control the national

territory and pursue centralized governance, humanitarian, economic and social conditions are worsening and the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. Declining international assistance, large-scale population movements, the hostilities with Pakistan, trade disruptions, including those due to the conflict in the Middle East, and climate-related shocks are placing increasing strain on Afghan communities.

62. Hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan have had significant human, humanitarian, economic, political and security consequences, including civilian casualties, significant displacement, damage to civilian infrastructure, and disruption to essential services caused by border closures since October 2025. The violence has further strained already fragile livelihoods and supply chains, curtailed trade flows, increased transport costs and impeded access to humanitarian assistance, exacerbating food insecurity and inflationary pressures. I urge all parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including the protection of civilians, and to resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue. This should include sustained efforts towards de-escalation, agreement on open, predictable and secure border crossings, and pursuit of a durable ceasefire. I welcome the mediation efforts by countries in the region, including most recently by China, to seek a lasting solution to the disputed issues.

63. The economic outlook of Afghanistan remains fragile. While some signs of macroeconomic stabilization persist, including relative exchange-rate stability, improved domestic revenue collection and contained fiscal deficits, these have yet to translate into sustainable economic growth and improvements in living conditions. Inflationary pressures, rising food prices and trade disruptions have eroded purchasing power, while weak investments and structural constraints limit the prospects for sustained recovery. The mass returns of Afghans from neighbouring countries have intensified pressure on overstretched services, labour markets and host communities, particularly in urban areas. Without adequate support for the reintegration of returnees, these dynamics risk deepening poverty, exacerbating social tensions and driving negative coping mechanisms. I reiterate the need for sustained and flexible international support, together with support for continued strong coordination across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, to address immediate needs and prevent further deterioration of living conditions.

64. Afghan women and girls remain severely impacted by the discriminatory restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities that affect every aspect of their lives, including their freedom of movement, expression and peaceful association. Their systematic exclusion from public life, education and work is a critical impediment to the development and economic recovery of Afghanistan. Decree No. 12 gives rise to significant due process concerns, including the expansion of discretionary authority, the removal of intent as a requirement for liability and the possibility of punishment based on association or perceived non-compliance. These provisions may further restrict women's access to protection and justice, and contribute to a shrinking civic space, including by deterring their participation in public life. I again urge the de facto authorities to lift all restrictions against women and girls and allow them to fully exercise their rights to employment and education, suspended now for the fifth year.

65. The restrictions on access to United Nations premises for Afghan women continue to undermine the capacity of the United Nations in Afghanistan to assist the Afghan people at a time of escalating needs. Unhindered, non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive access for all humanitarian actors and United Nations personnel is critical to reaching vulnerable people and maintaining the impartiality of the United Nations and its partners. The restrictions contravene the Charter of the United Nations. I urge the de facto authorities to lift them and allow United Nations national female personnel to resume their duties at their places of work.

66. The protection environment for children continues to deteriorate owing to the enactment of restrictive legislation that undermines due process, permits corporal punishment and fails to adequately safeguard children from abuse. These challenges are exacerbated by cross-border conflict, which resulted in the killing and maiming of children, as well as damage to civilian infrastructure, further disrupting access to essential services. I urge the de facto authorities to consider the best interests of children in all their policies and actions, and to protect their safety and well-being.

67. The arbitrary suspension of media outlets and organizations by different de facto authorities, implemented without an official decision-making process or avenue for appeal, further constrains media freedom. An enabling environment for an independent media sector is essential to ensure that the people of Afghanistan have access to reliable, diverse and fact-checked information.

68. The significant sustained reduction in opium poppy cultivation represents an important development with global implications. Its economic consequences for rural communities remain severe in the absence of viable alternative livelihoods, and affected households face vulnerability and loss of income. Simultaneously, the growing concern over synthetic drug production highlights the need for comprehensive, balanced and sustained counter-narcotics strategies, including prevention, treatment and livelihood support. I reiterate my call for increased investments in and donations for alternative livelihoods, rural infrastructure, access to markets and harm reduction programmes to ensure durable and effective counter-narcotics efforts.

69. The humanitarian situation remains severe, with millions of Afghans in need of assistance. Regional hostilities, large-scale returns and environmental shocks – including flooding and prolonged drought conditions – continue to drive displacement, deepen food insecurity and heighten protection risks. Humanitarian operations face increasing constraints due to funding shortfalls, rising costs and supply chain disruptions. I urge the international community and the de facto authorities to provide urgent and sustained support so that humanitarian actors can deliver principled, needs-based assistance.

70. Restrictions affecting humanitarian operations, including on the participation of Afghan women humanitarian workers, undermine the reach, effectiveness and impartiality of assistance. The risk of gender-based violence has increased in conflict-affected and displacement settings, where women and girls face restricted movement, limited access to services and heightened psychosocial distress. I call for the establishment of safe spaces and movement pathways, along with the scaling up of psychosocial support services and the removal of restrictions that impede inclusive humanitarian delivery.

71. The scale and pace of largely involuntary returns from neighbouring countries continue to pose a major challenge. Many returnees lack adequate shelter, livelihoods and documentation, while host communities face pressure on housing, land and basic services. Without sustained reintegration and livelihood support, large-scale returns risk exacerbating poverty, social tensions and protection risks, particularly in urban areas. I call upon Member States to uphold their international obligations in relation to protection, including the principle of non-refoulement, and to ensure that returns are voluntary, safe, dignified and accompanied by sustained support for returnees' reintegration.

72. The United Nations and its partners continue to adapt their response within an increasingly constrained operating environment. Platforms such as the Afghanistan Coordination Group play a critical role in aligning international support and promoting aid effectiveness. Ongoing efforts to strengthen risk management, improve

targeting and support local economic activity remain important. Efficiency gains within the United Nations system, alongside sustained local procurement, have contributed to supporting domestic markets; however, these efforts cannot compensate for declining international assistance.

73. As I noted in my previous report, and as affirmed by the Security Council in its resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#), the objective of the international community regarding Afghanistan is an end state in which Afghanistan is fully reintegrated into the international community, meeting its international obligations and ensuring the rights and well-being of all of its people. The United Nations remains central to facilitating dialogue, supporting the Afghan people, advancing a coherent, coordinated international approach and helping to preserve channels for addressing key concerns, including in relation to human rights, women's participation and counter-terrorism. In the context of regional instability, economic fragility and the continued isolation of Afghanistan from the international system, UNAMA continues to play an indispensable role in sustaining efforts towards reintegration, stability and a coherent international approach to Afghanistan. Sustaining dialogue between the de facto authorities, the international community and the Afghan people, while upholding United Nations core principles, remains a priority for the Mission. Its coordinating function plays an essential role in delivering critical humanitarian and basic human needs assistance and supports resilience amid compounding crises. Field offices also play a crucial role in implementing the mandate at the subnational level in all of the above areas.

74. I reiterate my call on the participants of the Doha process to sustain their engagement in a comprehensive approach that serves the Afghan people and supports the eventual reintegration of Afghanistan. The de facto authorities are encouraged to establish a structured mechanism for engagement with UNAMA on this approach.

75. Lastly, I extend my appreciation to United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of the Officer-in-Charge of UNAMA and Deputy Special Representative (Political), Georgette Gagnon, for their continued service to the people of Afghanistan in an extremely challenging environment.

---