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The situation in Afghanistan

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## 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 [68/11](#) and Security Council resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#), 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 15 June 2022 ([A/76/862-S/2022/485](#)).

#### II. Relevant developments

3. One year after the takeover on 15 August 2021, the Taliban de facto authorities have consolidated their administrative control over Afghanistan. Severe restrictions continued to be imposed on the fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls, including the ban on the secondary education of girls, making Afghanistan the only country to deny girls their full right to education. The announcement by the United States of America of the death of the leader of Al-Qaida, Aiman al-Zawahiri, in Kabul brought to the fore the continuing ties between the terrorist group and the Taliban, which would be contrary to the latter's counter-terrorism commitments. Meanwhile, humanitarian needs continued to rise owing to the sharp economic decline and the devastating combination of decades of conflict, protracted vulnerability, recent earthquakes and recurring natural hazards, affecting some 24.4 million people, or 59 per cent of the estimated population. Beyond humanitarian assistance, the United Nations continued with coordination efforts to operationalize the new aid architecture for Afghanistan.

\* [A/77/150](#).



## A. Political developments

4. On 15 August, the Taliban de facto authorities marked the first year since their takeover of Kabul. Statements by de facto officials focused on what they described as achievements, such as the establishment of an Islamic government and the victory over foreign troops, while also reflecting critically on continued economic and other challenges. Ahead of the anniversary, de facto authorities announced a series of accountability sessions, during which representatives of ministries and state entities reviewed their annual activities and presented plans for the upcoming year.

5. With the stated aim of fostering national unity, the Taliban organized a three-day gathering in Kabul at the end of June attended by some 4,500 ulama (Muslim scholars) and tribal elders, excluding women, members of civil society and the media. The Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, reportedly addressed the gathering in person, underlining the importance of upholding the values of Islam and the role of the ulama and cautioning against foreign interference in Afghan issues. Reactions by Afghan citizens reflected general discontent with the perceived lack of efforts to address issues such as girls' education, poverty alleviation and improved trade and economic conditions. On 18 August, a second assembly took place, in Kandahar, which was attended predominantly by Taliban members from the south, de facto ministers and representatives of business, academia and young people affiliated with or close to the Taliban. Discussions at the meeting focused on political and economic aspects, including national unity, respect for the ulama and the pursuit of international recognition.

6. Prior to the one-year anniversary of the Taliban takeover, various opposition elements issued statements emphasizing the need to establish an inclusive government and uphold the rights of all Afghans, while questioning the de facto authorities' counter-terrorism commitments and their ability to safeguard minority groups. The National Resistance Front released their "principal guidelines", in which it made an Islamic argument for resistance in any form of a political, military and sociocultural nature. The High Council of National Resistance for the Salvation of Afghanistan adopted its charter, in which it emphasized the importance of elections. With the announcement of two new groups, the Republican Movement and the National League of Afghanistan, opposition remained largely fragmented.

7. One of the areas of focus by the de facto authorities has been facilitating the return from abroad of Afghans, including former government officials. On 20 May, the Commission for Return and Communication with Former Afghan Officials and Political Figures announced its terms of reference, including on the provision of safety guarantees and private sector employment opportunities for returnees. The Commission has since announced the return of over 100 former government officials and political figures. Some returnees have reported encountering limited opportunities for political engagement and a lack of support from the de facto authorities upon their return.

8. The majority of civil servants have now been employed by the de facto authorities. Most female civil servants, except some working in education, health, immigration and certain security functions, such as the police and in detention facilities, have not been allowed to report to work, but continued to receive their salaries. According to the de facto Ministry of Finance, the salaries of civil servants have been paid through to July. Pension payments remained outstanding despite a \$44.4 million allocation in the national budget for fiscal year 1401 (2022). Employees in health facilities continued to be paid directly by international humanitarian partners. The Taliban de facto authorities continued to appoint officials at the national and subnational levels, including ministers, deputy ministers and directors. De facto

ministers continued in an acting capacity. On 26 July, the Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, in the de facto Office of Administrative Affairs, announced that civil service recruitment would be based on “Islamic merit”. The de facto authorities also started implementing changes in the structure of their provincial governors’ offices, abolishing the post of Deputy Provincial Governor for Social Affairs, which had been earmarked for women by the former Government.

9. At the subnational level, the de facto cabinet members increased engagement with local authorities and constituencies, including tribal elders, ulama councils, civil society and the media, with messaging on inter-ethnic unity and cultural ties among communities. To address community-level conflict, the de facto authorities established local conflict resolution and mitigation mechanisms, including for the purpose of addressing disputes over land ownership, seasonal migration between Kuchi nomads and residents, and intratribal tensions. In July, four new provincial shuras were established to replace the abolished provincial councils, meaning that provincial shuras have so far been created in 14 out of 34 provinces (Badghis, Farah, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar, Khost, Nimruz, Paktiya, Paktika, Panjshir, Samangan, Uruzgan, Zabul). Women are excluded from participating in these shuras.

10. Ambiguity as to the applicable legal frameworks as well as capacity constraints have been key challenges in the justice sector. Taliban courts continued to operate in a non-transparent manner. There have been reports of judges refusing to consider women’s complaints, with instructions to resolve family law issues through mediation or other traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. On 25 June, the de facto Ministry of Justice commenced a process of licensing male defence lawyers. As at 13 August, the qualifications and experience of 610 male applicants had been evaluated and 554 had received licences. Women were excluded from the process. Most former justice personnel, although not formally dismissed, continued to be excluded from the justice sector, without salary payments. There were reports – especially by female former justice personnel – of threats, intimidation and economic hardship.

11. Efforts towards the professionalization of the de facto security forces continued. On 9 June, the de facto Ministry of Defence announced that the recruitment of 130,000 national army personnel had been completed. The de facto Ministry commenced military training courses at the Kabul Joint Training Centre and opened registration for the military academy. Police training also continued. In mid-June, the de facto Ministry of Interior stated that some 35,000 de facto police personnel had been trained in the previous six months, denying claims that female police officers had been dismissed and noting that new female graduates would be recruited as needed. It also began the distribution of new police uniforms, starting in Kabul and Kandahar. The majority of de facto army personnel received only irregular stipend payments, with the exception of a small number of mostly technical security personnel retained from the previous Government, new recruits added to the official personnel list (*tashkil*) and police personnel, all of whom were paid regular salaries.

12. United Nations officials and the UNAMA leadership continued to engage with the de facto authorities, emphasizing the importance of protecting fundamental rights and freedoms, including women’s rights and the right of girls to education; promoting inclusive, participatory and responsive governance; and taking concrete action to counter terrorism. UNAMA, through its field office presence across the country, continued to facilitate engagements between the de facto authorities, community leaders, religious groups and civil society. Civil society organizations, in particular women-led entities, continued to face a shrinking civic space, gender-specific restrictions related to mobility and a significant decrease in donor funding. Following the good offices of UNAMA, the Kabul de facto provincial authorities included young people alongside community leaders and the ulama in the provincial consultative mechanism for local administration and services delivery. Similarly, in Badakhshan,

Kabul and Bamyan Provinces, the de facto authorities established consultative mechanisms with women representatives.

## **B. Security**

13. The reporting period was marked by high-profile targeted killings, the emergence of new anti-Taliban groups, a continuation of security-related incidents concerning anti-Taliban groups and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K), intra-Taliban fighting and border security incidents. The findings of the thirtieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, which was submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#) ([S/2022/547](#)), indicated the continuing presence and activities of foreign groups in Afghanistan and its border areas. In the report, it is noted that Al-Qaida continues to have ties with the Taliban and that it enjoys freedom of movement in the country. The de facto authorities rejected the report's findings. On 1 August, the United States announced the death of the leader of Al-Qaida, Aiman al-Zawahiri. Denying any knowledge of the presence of the Al-Qaida leader in Kabul, the Taliban criticized the United States for violating the territorial integrity of Afghanistan and mobilized thousands of people to protest against the strike in country-wide demonstrations, held on 5 and 6 August. On 7 August, Abdul Wali Rakhib (also known as Omar Khalid Khurasani), a senior member of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, and three group members were killed by an improvised explosive device in an unclaimed attack in the Barmal district of Paktika Province.

14. Between 22 May and 16 August, the overall number of conflict-related security incidents and civilian casualties decreased significantly compared with the same period in 2021 – at the peak of the Taliban offensive. The United Nations recorded 1,642 security-related incidents, a 77.5 per cent decrease from the 7,314 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021. Available data indicate that armed clashes decreased by 97 per cent, from 4,620 to 129 incidents; air strikes fell by 99.5 per cent, from 564 to 3; detonations from improvised explosive devices decreased by 87 per cent, from 590 to 76; and assassinations decreased by 70 per cent, from 294 to 88. There has been a steady rise in security-related incidents during the first seven months of 2022, with 547 incidents recorded in July, the highest number so far in 2022, representing an increase of 33.7 per cent and 7.3 per cent compared with the incidents recorded in January and June, respectively. As a result of the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation, crime-related security incidents remained consistently high, with 373 such incidents reported between 22 May and 16 August, compared with 300 reported during the same period in 2021. The western, southern, eastern and north-eastern regions accounted for 62 per cent of all recorded incidents, with Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Nangarhar the most affected provinces.

15. Armed opposition attacks and armed clashes with the Taliban intensified. New armed groups opposed to the Taliban announced their presence in Afghanistan. The membership and capabilities of these groups remain difficult to assess. UNAMA is aware of at least 22 groups claiming to operate in at least 26 provinces, none having taken control of significant territory. The National Resistance Front and the National Liberation Front claimed responsibility for attacks in several provinces, including Panjshir, Baghlan, Takhar and Kapisa. The National Resistance Front engaged in fighting with the Taliban, in particular in Panjshir and Baghlan Provinces, and claimed to have captured the Andarab and Khost districts of Baghlan Province on 19 July, as well as seven valleys in six districts of Panjshir in mid-August.

16. Attacks claimed or attributed to ISIL-K decreased. Between 22 May and 16 August, the United Nations recorded 48 attacks by the group in 11 provinces, compared with 113 attacks in 8 provinces during the same period in 2021. The group continued to target civilians, in particular the Shia Hazara, as well as Hindus, Sikhs, Sufis and the Taliban. ISIL-K claimed attacks on a ceremony marking the anniversary of the death of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, in Kabul on 22 May; three minibuses carrying civilians in Mazar-e Sharif, on 25 May; a Sikh temple in Kabul, on 18 June; a bus carrying de facto security forces in Herat, on 4 July; and a Taliban cleric in a madrasa in Kabul, on 13 August. Unclaimed attacks with the possible involvement of ISIL-K included explosions near a Sikh-owned shop in Kabul, on 27 July, and at the Kabul International Cricket Stadium, on 29 July. The attacks of 30 June and 1 July on the grand gathering of the ulama were claimed separately by the National Resistance Front and ISIL-K. ISIL-K escalated attacks targeting the Shia Hazara in Kabul city ahead of the Shia Ashura' commemoration of 8 August, resulting in multiple casualties. The attacks included an explosion during an Ashura' mourning ceremony, on 5 August; an explosion in a Shia majority area, on 6 August; and an explosion targeting a minibus, on 7 August.

17. There have been several incidents of intra-Taliban fighting between Pashtun and non-Pashtun Taliban members, including in Badakhshan, Bamyán, Sari Pul and Takhar Provinces. The most significant infighting took place between de facto security forces and Hazara Taliban fighters led by Mawlawi Mehdi Mujahid. Tensions escalated following differences over revenue collection and the representation of the Hazara and Shias minorities within the de facto authorities. From 23 to 25 June, the de facto security forces launched an operation that led to armed clashes, in Balkhab district, with Mawlawi Mehdi, who reportedly retreated to the mountains, and resulted in the displacement of civilians. On 17 August, the de facto authorities announced the killing of Mawlawi Mehdi on the border between Herat Province and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

18. Border tensions and security incidents continued along the border of Afghanistan, mainly with Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Uzbekistan. Sporadic security incidents were reported on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, including an alleged armed clash between the de facto security forces and the Pakistan army at the border in the Bin Shahi area of the Dangam district of Kunar Province, on 8 August. A number of security incidents, including armed clashes between de facto security forces and Iranian forces, were reported along the Afghanistan-Islamic Republic of Iran border, including on 22 and 28 June, 11 and 31 July and 10 August. Meanwhile, on 5 July, rockets fired from Afghanistan, with the possible involvement of ISIL-K, hit houses in Uzbekistan in and around the city of Termiz. Uzbekistan confirmed the incident.

19. In July, UNAMA commenced discussions on small arms and light weapons with concerned de facto authorities and Member States in the region. The challenge of the illicit circulation of weapons, ammunition and explosive material continued to present safety and security concerns both within Afghanistan and for regional countries. The de facto security forces expressed awareness of the issue and have made efforts to seize unauthorized material through search operations and seizures.

20. Between 22 May and 16 August, the United Nations documented 58 incidents directly affecting its personnel, including 30 cases of intimidation, 10 crime-related incidents, 2 arrests and 9 incidents affecting United Nations compounds, offices and property. The total represents an increase from the 34 incidents recorded during the same period in 2021.

## C. Regional cooperation

21. The Taliban de facto authorities continued diplomatic and economic engagement with regional countries, whose representatives stated publicly that formal recognition of the de facto authorities as a government was not imminent. Regional and border security, counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, women's rights, girls' education and inclusive governance remained a consistent focus of discussions. On 26 and 27 May, Tajikistan hosted a meeting of national security advisers from China, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. Participants encouraged the de facto authorities to create inclusive political structures, pursue a sustainable domestic and foreign policy, ensure compliance with the norms of international law and take steps to eradicate terrorist elements. On 31 May, special representatives for Afghanistan of the European Union and Central Asian countries met in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to discuss challenges to regional security, including the risk that a potential security vacuum in Afghanistan could turn the country into a haven for terrorist groups.

22. On 26 July, Uzbekistan hosted an international conference on Afghanistan in Tashkent, with the participation of a high-ranking Taliban delegation led by the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Motaqi. International participants emphasized the importance of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics efforts, economic and infrastructure development, inclusive governance and respect for human rights, especially the rights of women, including girls' right to education. The Taliban delegation stressed what it described as its achievements, including widespread security and a government funded entirely by local revenues, while downplaying the concerns of the international community. On the margins of the meeting of foreign ministers of States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, held on 28 July, Mr. Motaqi held meetings with Uzbek senior officials, the foreign ministers of China and Pakistan and the Special Representative for Afghanistan of the United States.

23. Economic development, trade and transit remained another priority for the interaction of the de facto authorities with the region. High-level Taliban delegations visited the Russian Federation, from 15 to 18 June and from 13 to 21 August, and Uzbekistan, from 2 to 4 July, to discuss related issues. Companies from regional countries have shown interest in investing in the extractive industries sector in Afghanistan. On 18 July, a trade delegation from Pakistan visited Kabul and discussed increased exports of coal and other products. On 28 July, the Government of Pakistan approved a multimodal air to road corridor in Pakistan to facilitate the movement of Afghan imports and Afghan transit cargo exports through international airports in Pakistan. On 28 July, China announced its readiness to align the Belt and Road Initiative with the development strategies of Afghanistan and to extend, in conjunction with Pakistan, the China-Pakistan economic corridor to Afghanistan.

24. Infrastructure projects continued to feature in regional discussions. On 7 June, a Turkmen delegation visited Kabul to discuss the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, including issues such as taxation and the allocation of land plots along the proposed route. Earlier, the Taliban announced the formation of a special unit to provide security for the project. In early August, the Government of Uzbekistan and the de facto authorities announced that the survey and mapping for the proposed Termiz-Mazar-Kabul-Peshawar railway project had started.

25. Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to discuss transboundary water rights on the Helmand River. On 15 June, the twenty-fifth meeting of the Joint Committee of Commissioners for implementing the Helmand River Water Treaty of 1973 was held in Tehran. On 5 August, the de facto authorities

released Helmand River water from the Kamal Khan dam in Nimruz Province towards the Sistan va Baluchestan Province of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 10 August, the Minister of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Akbar Mehrabian, and the Special Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, met de facto authorities in Kabul to further discuss their country's share of water from the Helmand River under the Treaty.

26. Pursuant to its regional cooperation mandate, UNAMA interacted with relevant de facto authorities, including on regional cooperation, and hosted regular meetings for Kabul-based ambassadors of regional countries to coordinate efforts. UNAMA participated in the meeting of special representatives for Afghanistan of the European Union and Central Asian countries, held in Almaty on 31 May, and in the international conference on Afghanistan, held in Tashkent on 26 July. Within the framework of ongoing collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, UNAMA representatives attended a meeting hosted by the Regional Centre and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from 27 to 30 June, to discuss the establishment of a counter-terrorism early warning network for Central Asia in the context of the changing environment in Afghanistan.

### III. Human rights

27. On 20 July, UNAMA released a report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, covering the 10-month period since the Taliban takeover of 15 August 2021.<sup>1</sup> UNAMA provided an advance draft of the report to the de facto authorities for factual review. Comments received were annexed to the report. On social media the de facto authorities' spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, called the report "inaccurate", "based on false information" and "propaganda". UNAMA interaction with the de facto authorities regarding human rights standards and accountability for alleged human rights violations has continued since the release of the report, at both the central and provincial levels.

28. The general amnesty announced by the Taliban in August 2021 notwithstanding, UNAMA continued to receive credible allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, ill-treatment and other human rights violations against former government officials and members of the former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Individuals accused by the de facto authorities of affiliation with armed groups, including the National Resistance Front and ISIL-K, have also been targeted by the de facto authorities. During the reporting period, UNAMA documented at least 46 extrajudicial killings, at least 15 cases of torture and ill-treatment and at least 73 arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals in those categories.

29. During the reporting period, UNAMA recorded 37 instances of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments carried out by the de facto authorities on individuals accused of moral or religious infractions. These commonly included individuals accused of zina offences (unlawful sexual relations) and women accused of failing to wear a face-covering Islamic hijab or be accompanied by a *mahram* (close male relative). For example, on 7 August, in Zabul, three men and two women were lashed in the provincial stadium, having reportedly been convicted of adultery and robbery. The punishment was publicly confirmed by the de facto authorities through national media.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Human Rights in Afghanistan: 15 August 2021–15 June 2022*, July 2022. Available at: <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting>.

30. Towards the end of June, allegations emerged of widespread human rights violations carried out by de facto security forces in the context of armed clashes between de facto security forces and armed individuals supportive of Mawlawi Mehdi in the Balkhab district of Sari Pul Province. UNAMA documented 16 extrajudicial killings attributed to de facto security forces and two killings attributed to armed individuals supportive of Mawlawi Mehdi.

31. UNAMA documented incidents in which a total of 119 civilians were killed and 440 were wounded. Harm caused to civilians during the reporting period was mostly attributed to ISIL-K attacks on civilian targets, often ethnic and religious minorities. On 25 May, in Mazar-e Sharif, improvised explosive devices placed in three passenger vehicles killed 9 people and wounded 38. On 5 and 6 August, two attacks employing improvised explosive devices occurred in a Shia majority area of Kabul city, killing at least 20 people and wounding at least 110. On 7 August, another attack in Kabul city killed at least 2 people and wounded at least 22. These attacks were claimed by ISIL-K. On 17 August, an unclaimed attack in a Sunni Sufi mosque in Kabul city killed 20 people and wounded 57.

32. Between 1 April and 30 June 2022, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children verified 450 grave violations affecting 334 children (280 boys and 54 girls), 25 incidents of attacks against schools, 10 incidents of attacks against hospitals and 79 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access. In addition, the task force verified the recruitment and use of 28 boys aged between 14 and 17 years, all of whom served in mixed combat and supporting roles. In total, 308 children were killed or maimed, two thirds (232) of them as a result of various types of improvised explosive devices, mines and explosive remnants of war.

33. Human rights violations against human rights defenders, journalists and media workers – such as threats, arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as torture and ill-treatment – combined with the impact of broader policy measures, have curtailed the freedom of the media and civic activism. Since 23 May, UNAMA has documented 12 cases of arbitrary arrests and three cases of threats against human rights defenders, as well as 23 cases of arbitrary arrests and eight instances of ill-treatment or threats against journalists and media workers (including one woman), all attributed to the de facto authorities.

34. Reports of limitations on the operations of television and radio stations across the country continued, compounded by the acute financial challenges faced by media outlets. Reports were received that the de facto authorities had closed at least two television stations in Kabul, allegedly owing to unpaid utility bills and taxes. On 19 May, female television presenters were specifically instructed by the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture to cover their faces while on air. Reports were received of multiple arrests and detentions of journalists. On 21 July, the Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, issued instructions prohibiting “false accusations” against de facto officials.

35. Afghan women and girls continued to be particularly affected by the uneven implementation of directives issued by the de facto authorities. Taken in combination, these decrees create a restrictive environment for women and girls across all spheres of life. The majority of secondary school-aged girls still do not have access to education owing to the combination of the ban on girls’ access to secondary schools, poverty and the imposition of the *mahram* and hijab directives. In particular, these directives restrict their freedom of movement, including their ability to use public transport. In some provinces, such as Bamyan, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif and Takhar, the harsh implementation of these directives have led to: the physical and verbal abuse of women for non-compliance when accessing public transport; the establishment of snap checkpoints to verify women’s compliance with the hijab directive; threats to

unilaterally deregister female university students for non-compliance with the hijab directive; female university students leaving their degree programmes because of campus prohibitions introduced following the imposition of the hijab; and women being prevented from gaining access to health and other State services on account of being unaccompanied by a *mahram*. Overall, women reported an increase in the informal policing of women by families, communities and employers, who often acted out of fear of potential consequences for not adhering to gender-specific directives.

36. Incidents of violence against women and girls continued to be reported and, while the de facto authorities have stated that they are receiving complaints through the Criminal Investigation Division of the de facto police, most cases were mediated, mainly through traditional mechanisms, with unsuccessful cases reportedly referred to the police or prosecution for further investigation. Women's organizations that provide services related to gender-based violence continued to report facing barriers to carrying out their operations. Such barriers have an impact on the ability of women and girls to flee situations of violence and report cases. Reports indicate that, among the de facto authorities, several entities, such as the de facto police, prosecution offices, the Ulama Council and the de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, are mandated to address women's civil and criminal complaints, including incidents of domestic violence.

37. Regarding incarceration, individuals remain in extended pretrial detention owing to delays in the completion of investigations by the de facto police and in the processing of cases by the de facto courts. As at 10 August, of the overall prison population of 9,962 persons, 85 per cent of the adult prison population (7,990 persons, including over 7,000 men and 600 women) and 80 per cent of the juvenile prison population (approximately 500 juveniles, including 20 girls) were reportedly pretrial detainees, most of whom were awaiting a first court appearance. To manage the overall prison population, the de facto Office of Prison Administration has taken steps to decongest prisons, including a request in early June for the de facto Supreme Court to expedite the consideration of cases concerning pretrial detainees. As a result, court delegations visited prisons to review and decide cases. On the occasion of Eid al-Adha, over 900 individuals were released, including detainees suspected of petty crimes, such as minor theft, or whose cases lacked sufficient evidence, as well as convicted persons and drug users who had little time remaining to complete their term of imprisonment.

38. The de facto Office of Prison Administration has also taken concrete steps to strengthen the oversight of prison conditions and the protection of detainee rights with the creation of a monitoring committee in June. In June and July, the committee conducted visits to over 15 provincial prisons around the country so as to assess conditions and hear from detainees. In mid-July, a representative for Human Rights Enforcement and Monitoring in Prisons was appointed. UNAMA has continued to support the de facto Office of Prison Administration with technical advice so as to enable it to fulfil the human rights obligations of Afghanistan.

39. Financial constraints and the discontinuation of previous donor funding continued to significantly impact the ability of the de facto Office of Prison Administration to meet international standards. In mid-May, the de facto Office advised that it had ensured that the total detained population did not exceed 10,000 persons. Challenges persisted with the provision of adequate food and hygiene supplies, vocational education and training, and health needs in prisons for adults and juveniles alike. Children continued to be held with adults in provincial prisons, except in Kunduz Province, owing to a lack of funds to maintain separate juvenile facilities, although they were often held in a separate wing or portion of the provincial prison to maintain a minimum level of separation. In some instances, girls were held with women detainees.

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

40. The Afghan economy remained greatly weakened by the severe economic contraction and the banking and financial crisis that followed the Taliban takeover. Available data suggest that six-month revenue collection through June, driven by customs and non-tax sources, is on par with the level recorded for the same period last year, and exports, driven by coal and fruits, surpassed past performance. The sudden stop of aid inflows, however, accompanied by political uncertainty, inadequate access to services and women's exclusion from economic participation, continued to lead to slow growth. The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that in the current environment, depriving girls of secondary education translated to a loss of at least \$500 million for the Afghan economy in the past 12 months. The World Bank projects a contraction of gross domestic product by one third between end-2020 and end-2022. The de facto authorities have declared private sector-led economic recovery a priority and convened meetings with line ministries, business chambers and private investors to attract investments in the extractive, agriculture, dairy and livestock sectors and to promote exports. The United Nations Development Programme, together with the Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development, hosted a workshop in Istanbul from 4 to 7 July, followed by national stakeholder consultations in Kabul on 26 July to inform the design of an inter-agency project that could help stimulate a private sector-led economic recovery in Afghanistan.

41. UNAMA coordination efforts continued to focus on banking and liquidity challenges. UNAMA coordinated with Afghan commercial banks, the Central Bank of Afghanistan, international correspondent banks, the United States Treasury and State Department and the private sector to identify options for international transfers in compliance with sanctions. UNAMA also engaged with the de facto authorities and relevant stakeholders on priority needs such as the printing of bank notes, passports and payments for electricity. UNAMA continues to engage with the United States and other relevant stakeholders, including de facto authorities, on conditions for unfreezing Central Bank reserves.

42. The pipeline established by the United Nations to import cash into Afghanistan for humanitarian operations and to meet salary payments of United Nations staff and contractors continued to function. Between 1 December 2021, when the first banknotes were flown in, and 22 August, the United Nations transferred \$1.03 billion in cash. These funds were distributed directly to 19 different United Nations agencies, funds or programmes, the World Bank and 21 international non-governmental organizations. The cash delivery has helped to stabilize the Afghani currency and served as an economic stimulus without directly supporting the de facto administration. UNAMA also used its good offices, including by coordinating with ambassadors of electricity-supplying countries and with Afghan banks which could make international transfers, to facilitate some arrears payments from the Afghan electricity company to electricity suppliers in Central Asia so as to prevent a power shutdown.

43. The United Nations inter-agency special trust fund for Afghanistan remains a critical financing platform for the Transitional Engagement Framework, with \$125.64 million in funding received thus far, thereby supporting 1 million people in Afghanistan. Implementation activities, which began on 1 January 2022, address basic human needs in support of local communities in the areas of essential services, livelihoods, community resilience, planning and social cohesion, and complement humanitarian activities. A total of eight regional joint programmes and one joint

project on health have been developed in collaboration with 17 United Nations entities, delivering as one.

44. A new aid architecture for Afghanistan was finalized in May after extensive consultation with the Afghanistan Coordination Group comprising representatives from the donor community, United Nations entities and international financial institutions. The aid architecture is operationalized through strategic thematic working groups on health and nutrition, education, agriculture and livelihoods, human rights and gender, and economic stabilization. These working groups contribute towards sectoral planning, programming and reviews for greater efficiencies and better coordination across current financing platforms, including the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, special trust fund for Afghanistan, Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund, Afghanistan infrastructure trust fund and Afghanistan humanitarian trust fund.

45. UNAMA has initiated the establishment of a dedicated risk management unit to align and augment all risk management and mitigation systems and measures currently deployed by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Afghanistan.

## V. Humanitarian assistance

46. Humanitarian needs were compounded by the sharp economic decline and the devastating combination of decades of conflict, recent earthquakes, recurring natural hazards and protracted vulnerability. Some 24.4 million people, or 59 per cent of the estimated population, of whom 11.8 million are women and girls, need humanitarian assistance in 2022, up from 18.4 million at the beginning of 2021.

47. Between January and the end of June 2022, humanitarian partners reached 22.9 million people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance. At least 20.7 million people were provided with food, 7.7 million people with health care, 3.6 million children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women with treatment for acute malnutrition, 7.6 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance, 453,000 children with education support, 1.4 million people with shelter and household items and 3.2 million people with protection assistance. As of 20 August, the humanitarian response plan was only 41.8 per cent funded, with a shortfall of some \$2.59 billion.

48. Humanitarian response efforts are ongoing following the 5.9 magnitude earthquake that struck the south-eastern region of Afghanistan on 22 June. To date, 1.2 million people have been reached with at least one form of assistance, including 1.2 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance, 121,000 people with food and agriculture support, 83,000 people with emergency shelter and household items, 112,000 people with health care, and 66,000 people with protection assistance. An additional 67,000 people have received multi-purpose cash assistance. The Mine Action Service coordinated the humanitarian mine action sector to provide assessments of the explosive threats in affected areas and to enable access for humanitarian personnel.

49. Acute food insecurity and malnutrition conditions are expected to remain. Between June and November 2022 (the post-harvest season), a slight improvement in food security is projected, with the number of people facing acute food insecurity likely decreasing to 18.9 million. However, this represents a nearly 98 per cent increase from the same period last year (9.5 million people). Out of 18.9 million people, 6 million are assessed as likely to face “emergency” levels of food insecurity. The combination of the steep economic decline and income loss, crippling effects of

the drought, spikes in food prices and the impact on grain imports have deepened people's food and livelihoods insecurity.

50. Between 1 January and 13 August, there were 65,470 suspected cases of measles, approximately 78 per cent of which were in children under 5 years of age, and 367 associated deaths. The United Nations vaccinated over 1.83 million children against measles between 16 May and 20 August. During the same period, 118,797 cases of acute watery diarrhoea with dehydration were reported in 130 districts across 34 provinces, with a case fatality rate of 0.03 per cent. Around 55 per cent of the total cases were reported in children under the age of 5. Thus far in 2022, Afghanistan recorded one case of wild poliovirus type 1 and no cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2. Five nationwide polio vaccination campaigns were conducted in 2022, each targeting 9.9 million children and using both house-to-house and mosque-to-mosque vaccination approaches.

51. Conflict-related trauma cases decreased by 87 per cent between 16 May and 20 August compared with the same period in 2021. Between June and mid-August, over 3,700 people received trauma care. Mobile health and nutrition teams continue to reach populations in remote and relatively remote areas of the country, providing over 350,000 consultations every month. Between January and 20 August, 26,317 severe acute malnourished children with medical complications were admitted and treated in 123 in-patient departments for severe acute malnutrition.

52. While the significant decrease in military operations and kinetic activities since September 2021 has enabled partners to reach previously inaccessible areas, other forms of access impediments, including meaningful access to women and girls owing to movement restrictions imposed on female humanitarian staff, have remained during the reporting period. Incidents of interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities remained high, with 135 incidents reported between 24 May and 20 August, compared with 97 during the same period last year. Since the start of 2022, there were 203 recorded incidents of violence and threats against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities. This is a decrease compared with the same period last year, when 311 incidents were recorded. In 2022, there have been 12 incidents of female aid workers being threatened and intimidated by local de facto authorities. During the reporting period, three attacks on health-care personnel were reported.

53. Between 22 May and 20 August, a total of 197,851 people were recorded to have crossed into Afghanistan, 90,686 of whom were deported and 107,165 of whom made spontaneous returns. During this period, 179,584 undocumented Afghan migrants returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 18,267 from Pakistan. A total of 1,533 Afghan refugees – from Pakistan (1,298), the Islamic Republic of Iran (230) and other countries (5) – returned to Afghanistan under the voluntary repatriation programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the vast majority (1,338) returning between 1 May and 7 August. Since 2012, some 5.8 million people have been displaced owing to conflict and natural disasters. In 2021 alone, more than 866,000 people were displaced owing to conflict, with the vast majority (85 per cent) displaced prior to 15 August 2021. Between January and 20 August 2022, close to 30,000 people were newly displaced owing to conflict.

54. Explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices continue to pose a threat to civilians and humanitarian personnel. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service coordinated and enabled the survey and clearance of over 8.39 square kilometres of contaminated land, safely removing thousands of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. A total of 9 million people received explosive ordnance risk awareness messaging through mass media outreach, while 214,949 people, including 80,712 women and girls, received explosive ordnance risk

education in communities. As of 20 August, 100 per cent of mine action teams are operational, employing 3,946 people.

## **VI. Counter-narcotics**

55. In line with the decree prohibiting the cultivation of poppy and all types of narcotics, issued on 3 April by the de facto authorities, and following the lapse of the two-month grace period granted to enable farmers to harvest the opium gum and sell their 2022 harvest, the de facto authorities carried out eradication actions on the second opium crop in Helmand and Uruzgan Provinces. Following the announcement of the decree, narcotic prices, particularly for opium, increased significantly. By the end of June 2022, the national average farm-gate prices for 1 kilogram of dry and fresh opium were \$198 and \$126, respectively. The former is more than double the price of opium in June 2021, which stood at \$79 per kilogram. Citing the possible negative effects of the poppy ban on the social and economic well-being of Afghan farmers, and notwithstanding the relatively lesser quantities involved in the second (or summer season) harvest, compared with the main cropping, the de facto authorities requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to assist with alternative livelihoods. UNODC extended essential medical supplies to support the prison population, which includes drug users.

## **VII. Mission support**

56. As at 31 July, vacancy rates in UNAMA were 14 per cent for international staff, 12 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 12 per cent for National Professional Officers and 10 per cent for national staff, compared with approved rates of 8 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. The proportion of female staff was 32 per cent for international staff, 37 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 12 per cent for National Professional Officers and 9 per cent for national staff. The office of UNAMA within the United Nations common premises facility in Almaty remains available for use, while the majority of Afghanistan-based international staff have returned to their duty stations within the mission area.

## **VIII. Observations**

57. The United Nations presence in Afghanistan has remained dedicated to providing support to the Afghan people. Through its efforts with respect to scaling up the humanitarian response, working to halt the economic crisis and promoting respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms for all Afghans, UNAMA has engaged with the de facto authorities to address the basic needs and promote and protect the rights of the Afghan people. UNAMA has facilitated dialogue between Afghan communities and the de facto authorities, especially at the subnational level, to promote inclusive, participatory and responsive governance. The response of the Taliban remains ambiguous as to the extent to which they would wish to engage externally, absent formal recognition and predicated on being in accordance with their interpretation of the sharia.

58. The lack of mechanisms for inclusivity, consultation and representation in the de facto administration continues to raise concern. Measures to encourage former government officials to return to Afghanistan and the formally stated amnesty for former opponents could constitute a potential basis for a wider national reconciliation, particularly if these figures and others are allowed to contribute their skills to the development of their country.

59. It is vital to move beyond an exchange of hardened positions towards a dialogue that places Afghan citizens at its centre. The current policy direction of the Taliban may sow the seeds of future instability, especially if the needs of the Afghan people are not addressed, their rights are curtailed, and the country's diversity is not adequately reflected in governance structures.

60. The security situation reveals a worrisome trend in recent months, particularly the series of attacks by ISIL-K, recurring armed opposition clashes with Taliban de facto security forces and the continuing presence of foreign terrorist groups in Afghanistan. The Taliban's commitment to ensuring that no group or individual will use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of other countries must be sustained through concrete actions. The Taliban leadership is urged to engage in a serious counter-terrorism dialogue to strengthen international cooperation in countering these threats, while complying with obligations under international law.

61. I call upon the de facto authorities and the international community to take concrete steps to implement the recommendations contained in the report by UNAMA on the human rights situation in Afghanistan for the period 15 August 2021 to 15 June 2022. They provide detailed actions to improve the human rights situation in the country. The practical norms- and case-based human rights dialogue between de facto authorities and UNAMA can lay the groundwork for fostering accountability and preventing human rights violations and abuses, including those of human rights defenders, women and girls.

62. Of serious concern is the apparent impunity with which members of the de facto authorities continue to carry out extrajudicial killings, torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary arrests and detentions of former government officials and former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members, and individuals accused of affiliation with ISIL-K and the National Resistance Front. The de facto authorities must uphold their public commitments regarding respect for human rights, in particular the general amnesty, and hold those responsible for human rights violations to account, while taking the necessary steps to prevent their reoccurrence.

63. Continuing restrictions on Afghan women and girls' full enjoyment of their rights will have lasting detrimental consequences for the recovery and stability of Afghanistan. Reliance on codes and directives to curtail women's rights adds to an environment of intimidation, which is furthered by the implementation of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments by the de facto authorities against individuals for real or perceived failures to adhere to them. Women are disproportionately targeted for reported "infractions". The de facto authorities must take steps to hold personnel responsible for such actions accountable and to prevent their recurrence.

64. The de facto authorities must deliver on Afghanistan's commitment, as a State party, to international principles, norms and standards on non-discrimination and equality. I urge the de facto authorities to review the *mahram* and Islamic *hijab* directives and to clarify their recommendatory, non-mandatory nature, so as to facilitate women and girls' participation in education, employment and all other areas of daily life. Facilitating and advancing women and girls' access to quality education is crucial for Afghanistan's recovery and future development.

65. Shrinking civic space as a result of the continued pressure placed by the de facto authorities on journalists and civil society activists is cause for alarm. The de facto authorities are urged to ensure the safety of journalists and civil society members and to respect and promote fundamental freedoms of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association for all Afghans, women and men.

66. The Afghan population continues to experience significant levels of harm as a result of improvised explosive device attacks and explosive remnants of war, the latter

disproportionately affecting children. Mine clearance and awareness-raising activities to address the risk posed by explosive remnants of war must be a priority to ensure that civilians – especially children – are no longer harmed by them.

67. Despite the efforts of the de facto prison authorities to satisfy minimum standards on the treatment of prisoners in accordance with international norms, there are significant shortfalls in respecting the rights of Afghan people deprived of their liberty. Regional and international organizations, as well as the international community, are encouraged to consider scaling up financial support to meet basic needs for the detainee population such as for the provision of food, medical and clothing needs, educational and vocational training, and to support the deployment of health and education personnel in detention facilities.

68. UNAMA will, at the same time, continue advocating with the de facto authorities to clarify the applicable legal framework and involve qualified former justice personnel, including women, in the justice sector to reduce arbitrariness, promote the fulfilment of human rights, including women's rights, and enhance the independence of courts and their compliance with fair trial standards. UNAMA will also encourage lawyers' involvement in promoting legal awareness and people's access to their rights as a key pillar in the justice system. The absence of female lawyers continues to jeopardize women's awareness of their rights and effective redress through judicial and non-judicial remedies, especially for cases related to violence against women.

69. While efforts by the United Nations and humanitarian partners have offered some relief in terms of the basic needs of many of Afghanistan's most vulnerable, according to current estimates, poverty, food insecurity levels and the approaching harsh winter season will stretch Afghan resilience to its limit. The humanitarian response plan remains only 41.8 per cent funded, with a shortfall of some \$2.59 billion, despite pledges of about \$2.4 billion that were made in March. I call upon donors to renew their support so that the life-saving response is scaled up and delivered ahead of the winter season. I also urge donors to extend continued support for essential services and for preserving community systems through which humanitarian assistance is delivered. Effective humanitarian support equally depends on unimpeded access to the people affected and on the full safety of all humanitarian staff, especially female staff. Humanitarian workers must be operationally independent in all their activities, including movement without armed escorts.

70. Poverty reduction and the delivery of basic goods and services ultimately rely on sustained economic growth. The de facto authorities have declared private sector-led growth a priority. Effective private sector-led economic recovery requires monetary policy tools, normalized international banking relations and investments in employment-generating productive sectors of the economy such as agriculture, mining, small and medium-sized enterprises, and trade facilities. The economy is a sphere in which the de facto authorities, economic actors and international stakeholders can identify joint objectives – such as employment generation, improved poverty outcomes and human capital, environmental resilience and regional connectivity. Effective economic policies will require the equal participation of women in all spheres of economic life. The resumption of aid flows hinges primarily on action by the de facto authorities to reverse regressive policies.

71. Progress towards a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, fully integrated into the community of nations, and in a manner consistent with Afghan sovereignty, leadership and ownership, will require dialogue, trust-building and compromises. For peace to be sustainable, it must be anchored in the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Afghans, inclusive and participatory governance that reflects the aspirations and interests of the people, and comprehensive security and counter-

terrorism guarantees. The United Nations remains committed to accompanying these efforts, for the benefit of the Afghan people.

72. I extend my deep appreciation to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, under the leadership of my Deputy Special Representatives, Markus Potzel and Ramiz Alakbarov, and to non-governmental organization partners for their continued dedication and service under extremely challenging conditions and during a particularly difficult period for the Afghan people.

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