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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 [74/9](#) and Security Council resolution [2727 \(2024\)](#), 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 6 December 2024 ([A/79/675-S/2024/876](#)).

II. Relevant developments

3. The Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, took further steps to consolidate his authority, including through organizing key meetings under his leadership in Kandahar and appointing loyalists to important positions. The de facto authorities imposed new restrictions on women's access to medical education, and they continued public engagement to further enforce strict implementation of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Concerns were expressed to the United Nations in Afghanistan by different segments of the Afghan population, in particular women, regarding the negative effects of the Law on their lives and livelihoods. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) claimed several attacks, including the targeted killing of the de facto Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani, while several armed opposition groups also claimed attacks. However, neither ISIL-K nor the opposition groups seriously threatened the Taliban's hold on power and territory. As at late January, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2025, targeting 16.8 million people out of an estimated 22.9 million in need, had received only 3.5 per cent of the



\$2.42 billion required, while the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan for 2023–2025 had received less than 11 per cent of the \$2.53 billion required for 2025.

A. Political developments

4. The Taliban leader reportedly convened key meetings with Kabul-based and other high-level de facto officials in Kandahar. On 5 November 2024, the Taliban leader reportedly held a meeting in Kandahar with several high-level de facto officials, including the de facto Chief Justice, Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the de facto Minister of the Interior, Sirajuddin Haqqani, and the de facto Minister of Finance, Naser Akhund. One of the key decisions reportedly taken at that meeting was the appointment of the head of the newly established de facto Department of Public Property, Identification, Registration and Care. This department was created by a decree dated 14 October 2024 that centralized the authority to oversee the inventory, registration and distribution of weapons, ammunition, vehicles and military equipment under the Taliban leader.

5. On 4 December, the de facto authorities' spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, advised the media that a de facto Cabinet meeting was being held in Kandahar led by the Taliban leader and at which the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, and other de facto officials were in attendance. Subsequent reports indicated that the Taliban leader and high-level de facto officials attended several meetings at which a range of issues, including the activities of international organizations, were discussed.

6. Separately, reports indicated that, from 17 to 21 December, the Taliban leader met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Abdul Ghani Baradar, the de facto Minister of Economy, Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, and other de facto officials to discuss the presence of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Afghanistan. No formal announcement was made on the substance of the discussions. On 17 December, the de facto authorities announced on social media that a special session of the de facto Economic Commission, chaired by the Taliban leader, had been held in Kandahar. Decisions taken at that session concerned, inter alia, the allocation of land for residential, industrial and agricultural use, development of critical infrastructure, advancement of the Hajigak mine project, distribution of electricity in Helmand Province and addressing social practices inconsistent with sharia law and Afghan cultural norms.

7. During the reporting period, high-level de facto officials conducted public outreach both in and outside Kabul. For example, the de facto Minister of the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, held meetings in Farah, Helmand, Herat, Kandahar, Nuristan and Uruzgan Provinces at which he called for strict implementation of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Other messaging focused on the need to implement sharia law and preserve the Islamic system.

8. Civil society, women's groups and activists continued to raise concerns with UNAMA and on social media regarding the implementation of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, stating that the enhanced enforcement of the law impeded, for example, health service delivery, in particular for women and other vulnerable groups. They reported that, while implementation of the Law disproportionately affected women and girls, both men and women had been negatively affected, in particular those in small businesses, including private education centres, barbers and hairdressers, tailors, wedding caterers and restaurants, leading to a reduction or total loss of income and employment opportunities. UNAMA received reports of men and women throughout Afghanistan criticizing the exclusion

of females from work and education, which they said stripped families of their incomes, exacerbated poverty and forced families to consider migration.

9. On 26 December, the de facto Ministry of Economy reissued decree 4293, reaffirming the ban on Afghan women working for national and NGOs. In a letter addressed to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development, the de facto Ministry urged international NGOs to comply with that directive or risk facing such consequences as the suspension of operations and the revocation of licences. While no new restrictions were announced, some NGOs advised their Afghan female staff to work from home, while others continued to allow them to work from offices where gender-segregated facilities were available and where exemptions to the decree applied.

10. The de facto authorities continued to appoint and reshuffle Taliban loyalists – all male – to leadership positions. At the national level, appointments included one de facto minister, two de facto deputy ministers and six directors within the de facto ministries. The de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, Abdul Kabir, was appointed as the de facto Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, replacing Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani. Subnational appointments and reshuffles included 3 de facto provincial governors, 6 de facto deputy provincial governors, at least 18 subnational directors and at least 12 district governors.

11. During the reporting period, at least 29 de facto authority-registered madrasas, including 12 jihadi madrasas, held graduation ceremonies. Reportedly, 1,266 men and 100 women graduated from de facto authority-registered madrasas and 720 men graduated from jihadi madrasas. However, the number of graduates was not systematically published by the de facto authorities. Senior central and provincial-level de facto officials continued to use madrasa graduation ceremonies as public messaging platforms, calling for national unity and adherence to sharia law, and stressing the importance of religious education for youth.

12. On 22 December, the de facto authorities announced that the Taliban leader had approved six decrees on various issues, including pensions, the prohibition of trafficking in persons and private sector development. One of those, an eight-article decree dated 10 December on pensions, was introduced after months of protests by civil service retirees over non-payment of pensions and established a specialized court to process pension claims in conjunction with the de facto Ministry of Finance and other de facto governmental institutions. Approximately 170,000 retirees have not been paid since the Taliban takeover. The majority of retirees, many of whom are facing economic hardship, expressed frustration to UNAMA and to media over what they saw as a bureaucratically cumbersome process. On 22 December, the de facto Ministry of Justice republished a decree that was originally published in November 2022 annulling all charges against, prosecutions and convictions of, and criminal proceedings instituted against all Taliban “mujahidin” by courts of the former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and ordering that related records be expunged.

13. On 12 January 2025, the de facto Minister of Justice, Abdul Hakim Sharae, chaired a meeting of the de facto High Commission for Defence Lawyers. Participants discussed the challenges defence lawyers encountered in their work, including access to clients in detention and conduct by many de facto judges that hinders the ability of defence lawyers to represent clients independently in de facto courts. Defence lawyers have reported to UNAMA that de facto judges prefer to use confessions in criminal proceedings, thereby affecting their ability to represent their clients. On 12 January, the de facto Supreme Court reiterated its March 2022 announcement that services provided by the de facto courts are free and invited the public to report persons who collect money for such services.

14. Information in public reports published by the de facto authorities indicates that, from 31 October 2024 to 21 January 2025, 15 local conflicts, including disputes related to family and community issues and land and water rights, were resolved through mediation by local community elders, religious scholars and the de facto authorities in 13 provinces.

15. From 31 October 2024 to 15 January 2025, UNAMA field offices facilitated 192 outreach activities involving a range of actors, including Afghan civil society, young persons, tribal elders, journalists, entrepreneurs and women activists. Those actors stressed, among other issues, the importance of education, including in modern sciences, for men and women, employment opportunities for youth and former government employees, preserving civic space and improving healthcare, water and agriculture facilities.

16. On 27 December, the Security Council issued a press statement on Afghanistan in which Council members expressed concern about the impact of the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls, calling for their reversal. The Council also expressed concerns regarding the humanitarian and economic situation and called upon the Taliban to take measures to combat terrorism and address narcotics. In addition, it stressed the importance of the role of the United Nations and that dialogue, consultation and engagement among all relevant Afghan stakeholders, the region and the wider international community, including through the meetings of special envoys on Afghanistan convened by the United Nations, are critical for a political settlement. The Council emphasized the importance of developing a political road map.

17. Following the recommendations of the independent assessment pursuant to Security Council resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#) (S/2023/856, annex) and discussions at the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, which was held in Doha on 30 June and 1 July 2024, UNAMA launched a working group on counter-narcotics and another on the private sector. The Secretariat and UNAMA are also developing a political road map to facilitate a more coherent, coordinated and structured engagement between the international community and the de facto authorities.

B. Security

18. From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, the United Nations recorded 2,081 security-related incident reports, marking a 16.8 per cent decrease compared with the same period in 2023/2024. In addition, there were 108 robbery incidents, marking a 129 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2023/2024.

19. From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, the armed opposition continued to pose no significant challenge to the Taliban's hold on territorial control. The United Nations verified 91 attacks claimed by the armed opposition groups. The National Resistance Front and the Afghanistan Freedom Front claimed to have carried out 53 and 21 attacks, respectively. The People's Sovereignty Front claimed one attack. The perpetrators of the other 16 attacks remain unverified. The verified attacks include the attack that occurred on 28 December in Kabul, near Sheikh Zayed Hospital and close to the de facto Ministry of the Interior, claimed by the National Resistance Front, and two separate attacks, one on 19 December and the other on 31 December, that occurred close to Bagram Airfield in Bagram District, Parwan Province, claimed by the Afghanistan Freedom Front.

20. From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, ISIL-K reportedly conducted six attacks targeting religious minorities, de facto officials and institutions in Afghanistan. Among the six attacks, notably, ISIL-K claimed responsibility for assault on a Sufi shrine in Nahrin District, Baghlan Province, on 21 November, in which at least 11 worshippers were killed. On 11 December, ISIL-K claimed

responsibility for a suicide attack at a mosque inside the de facto Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Kabul that killed the de facto Minister and three other persons and injured another four persons. On 7 January, ISIL-K claimed responsibility for an attack in Baghlan-e Jadid District, Baghlan Province, that killed a senior cleric of the grand mosque and injured one person. On 21 January, ISIL-K claimed responsibility for killing one Chinese national and one member of the de facto security forces in Khwaja Baha ud Din District, Takhar Province.

21. From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, six armed incidents involving de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces were reported. Both the de facto authorities and the Pakistani security forces significantly increased their troop presence along the border in the eastern, south-eastern and southern regions. On 24 December, Pakistan conducted airstrikes on suspected Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan hideouts in Barmal District, Paktika Province. On 27 December, armed clashes between de facto security forces and Pakistani forces occurred in Ali Sher District, Khost Province. On 27 and 28 December, cross-border shelling occurred in Ali Sher and Tirezai Districts of Khost Province and Dand Patan District of Paktiya Province. On 29 December, owing to clashes and shelling, United Nations humanitarian operations in the border districts of Paktika, Khost and Paktiya Provinces were paused until 6 January 2025. On 3 January, cross-border shelling from Pakistan impacted several villages in Tirezai District and, between 9 and 11 January, shelling and armed clashes occurred in Dangam District, Kunar Province. On 10 January, mortar fire and heavy clashes in Sar Kani District displaced about 250 families.

22. Between 1 November 2024 and 31 January 2025, there were at least two incidents of reported targeted killings of senior Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan commanders by unidentified perpetrators in Kunar Province. A Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan commander was reportedly killed and two other commanders were reportedly injured on 30 November in Shultan District, and four senior Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan commanders were reportedly killed in Shigal District on 3 December.

23. From 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, the United Nations documented 42 safety and security incident reports directly affecting its personnel, including 2 abductions of a dependent of national personnel, 1 accidental fire incident, 10 road traffic accidents, 6 arrests, 1 assault, 12 cases of harassment, intimidation and threat of violence, 6 movement restrictions, 1 non-violent public gathering and 3 incidents of robbery and theft. On 2 February, a member of the de facto security forces positioned outside the perimeter walls of the United Nations compound in Kabul fired shots at an observation post of the compound, wounding a United Nations contracted international security guard. The alleged shooter was found dead afterwards outside the compound perimeter walls.

24. UNAMA has developed a risk reduction framework for small arms and light weapons to assist the Mission and relevant stakeholders in pursuing practical risk reduction measures to address threats from illicit arms flows in Afghanistan and the region. In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has supported UNAMA by developing, through its Firearms Trafficking Section and its Global Firearms Programme, a three-year plan to monitor the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Accessing data from all stakeholders remains a challenge to the Mission's efforts in relation to small arms and light weapons.

C. Regional cooperation

25. On 25 to 26 November 2024, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA, Roza Otunbayeva, participated in the

fourteenth annual meeting of Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States. At that meeting, which was held in Tashkent, the participants highlighted the need for collective action to address shared challenges in Central Asia and Afghanistan. From 11 to 12 January, she participated in the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities that was organized by the Muslim World League and held in Islamabad under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The participants issued the Islamabad Declaration, in which they emphasize that girls' education is a fundamental right and that actions taken to obstruct the enjoyment of that right were a grave misuse of religious principles to legitimize policies of deprivation and exclusion.

26. High-level de facto officials travelled to countries in the region to participate in multilateral forums to promote cooperation in trade, finance and connectivity. On 9 November, the de facto Deputy Minister of Public Works for Railways, Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, attended the eighty-first session of the Rail Transport Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Tashkent, where he also held discussions with railway officials from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He also participated in the thirty-fourth regional conference of the International Union of Railways in Türkiye on 27 November. On 9 November, the de facto Governor of the Central Bank, Noor Ahmad Agha, participated in the nineteenth annual meeting of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions and the Islamic Development Bank in Bahrain. On 19 November, the de facto Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Najibullah Haqqani, participated in the 2024 World Internet Conference in China. From 27 to 30 November 2024, the de facto Minister of Commerce and Industry, Noorudin Azizi, participated in the Halal Expo trade exhibition in Istanbul, Türkiye. On 3 December 2024, the de facto Minister of Public Health, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, attended the World Conference on Traditional Medicine in China.

27. From 11 to 24 November 2024, the de facto head of the National Environmental Protection Agency, Matiul Haq Khalis, participated in the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku as a guest of the host State. Experts from Afghan NGOs and climate activists from inside and outside Afghanistan, including women, participated in side events at the session.

28. High-level de facto officials made bilateral visits to countries in the region to promote economic cooperation. On 2 December 2024, the de facto Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Sadrazam Osmani, led a delegation to the Islamic Republic of Iran to discuss agricultural cooperation. On 4 December 2024, the de facto head of the national electricity company (Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat), Abdul Bari Omar, along with officials from the de facto Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance, travelled to Turkmenistan and met with the chair of Turkmenenergo, the State-owned energy company, and the head of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan power transmission line project to discuss energy projects. On 25 December 2024, the de facto chief executive officer of the national electricity company and the chair of Barqi Tojik, the State-owned electricity company of Tajikistan, signed, in Türkiye, an agreement for the purchase of electricity in 2025. On 9 January 2025, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, held a meeting with the Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates, Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri, in Abu Dhabi, at which trade, economic and agriculture cooperation, and transit issues were reportedly discussed. On 21 January 2025, the de facto Minister of the Interior and the de facto Head of the General Directorate of Intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq, met with the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi.

29. Regional delegations visited Afghanistan to engage with the de facto authorities. On 19 November 2024, Islamic scholars from Bangladesh and India met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs. From 23 to 25 November 2024, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Sergei Shoigu, and the special envoy for Afghanistan of China, Yue Xiaoyong, visited Afghanistan separately. On 26 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, met with the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs in Kabul and discussed further strengthening bilateral relations and other issues of mutual concern.

30. On 20 November 2024, the newly appointed Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Afghanistan presented a copy of his credentials to the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs. On 22 December 2024, Saudi Arabia announced the reopening of its embassy in Kabul.

31. UNAMA continued to engage with and facilitate regional cooperation efforts. The Mission's engagements included the organization of regular and ad hoc meetings with Kabul-based diplomatic missions and other bilateral engagements with visiting diplomats.

III. Human rights

32. Attacks resulting in civilian casualties were recorded during the reporting period. At least 81 civilians (37 men, 8 women, 18 girls and 18 boys) were killed and at least 111 others (57 men, 9 women, 15 girls and 30 boys) were wounded in such attacks. On 21 November, gunmen shot and killed 11 Sufi worshippers inside a mosque in Baghlan Province. ISIL-K claimed responsibility for the attack. Attacks causing civilian casualties were also claimed by other groups.

33. Between 1 September and 31 December 2024, the Afghanistan country task force on monitoring and reporting documented some 360 grave violations against approximately 130 children, including at least 30 girls. The most prevalent violations were the denial of humanitarian access and killing and maiming, with explosive devices remaining the leading cause of child casualties.

34. Unexploded ordnance continued to cause harm to civilians, mostly children. During the reporting period, a total of 9 civilians were killed (4 men, 2 girls and 3 boys) and 36 were wounded (10 men, 1 woman, 8 girls and 17 boys).

35. Cross-border armed violence between Pakistani and de facto security forces also caused civilian casualties. On 24 December, in Paktika Province, air strikes by Pakistani security forces resulted in at least 45 civilians killed (30 children, 8 women and 7 men) and 8 wounded (6 children and 2 women). On 28 December, in Paktiya Province, cross-border firing between de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces resulted in three men killed and six men wounded. The Embassy of Pakistan to Afghanistan informed UNAMA in writing that "Pakistan's concerns regarding the interim Afghan authorities' failure to act against the TTP, enjoying safe havens on Afghan soil, and about the terrorist attacks being planned and orchestrated on the Afghan side of the border, are well documented and are known in the public domain" and noted that there had been "unprovoked firing on Pakistani security installations and personnel from across the border".

36. Human rights violations against former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to be reported, despite the 2021 general amnesty. UNAMA documented at least 1 killing, 37 arbitrary arrests and detentions, and 18 instances of torture and ill-treatment of

former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

37. During the reporting period, UNAMA documented lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer individuals' experiences of arbitrary arrests, and torture and sexual violence in places of detention by de facto officials.

38. On 13 November, in Gardez, Paktiya Province, a man was publicly executed after being convicted of a murder that he had reportedly committed when he was a minor. An order to implement the death penalty in that case was issued and approved by all three judicial levels of the de facto Military Court (primary, appellate and supreme) before final approval by the Taliban leader.

39. The de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice continued to enforce the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, including in the media sector. In November, in Khost Province, two radio stations were suspended for playing background music during their programmes. They were allowed to resume broadcasting after providing a guarantee that they would refrain from playing music. On 4 December, in Kabul Province, the de facto Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice arrested employees of a television station for dubbing television series that were deemed in violation of Islamic principles and Afghan culture. They were released in mid-December pending court procedures. In some instances, the mahram requirement was more stringently enforced than what is stipulated in the Law, further affecting women's access to services. For example, in some provinces, the de facto Department required female patients to be accompanied by a mahram to use healthcare facilities and female healthcare workers to be accompanied by a mahram to go to work.

40. On 26 November, UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report examining the state of media freedom in Afghanistan. The report found that interference by the de facto authorities with editorial content and in the operation of media outlets has substantially diminished media freedom. The prohibition on broadcasting music and dramas combined with the easy access to programmes from abroad over the Internet and by satellite, as well as the country's economic difficulties, have contributed to a decrease in media viewership and revenue. Journalists and media workers have been subject to threats, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention. Restrictions imposed on women in the media have either prohibited them from working in the sector or confined them mainly to office duties. The de facto Ministry of Information and Culture rejected the findings of the report, stating that "no journalist has been detained as a journalist".

41. Further restrictions were imposed on women's right to education. On 2 December, the de facto Deputy Minister of Public Health, Bakht-ur-Rahman Sharafat, informed the heads of medical institutes gathered in Kabul that the Taliban leader had issued an order banning women and girls from attending medical education courses in such areas as midwifery, nursing, dental care and nutrition starting 3 December. In November, the de facto Departments of Education in Paktiya and Nangarhar Provinces ordered schools and NGOs running accelerated learning programmes to suspend girls' classes indefinitely. On 18 January, at a madrasa graduation in Khost Province, the de facto Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, appealed to the Taliban leadership to reassess their policy on girls' education and ensure universal access to education for both boys and girls.

42. The de facto authorities continued to implement discriminatory policies that affected women's right to work. In addition to the de facto authorities' reiteration of the ban on Afghan women working for NGOs, UNAMA documented women being denied work permits by the de facto Departments for Labour and Social Affairs in

some provinces for jobs with national and international NGOs. From 4 to 6 January, in Kandahar, only men were permitted to participate in a trade fair while women were excluded, both as exhibitors and customers.

43. UNAMA recorded incidents of gender-based violence against women and girls, including murders, so-called honour killings, child marriages, forced marriages, rape, domestic violence and suicide because of domestic violence. In some instances, de facto officials referred extremely serious cases, such as attempted murder, to mediation, despite the victims' stated desire to seek formal judicial resolution.

44. As at late January 2025, the de facto Office of Prison Administration reported holding approximately 25,500 persons, including around 1,900 women with 450 accompanying children, and 1,400 juveniles, in its custody. By order of the Taliban leader, the de facto Supreme Court issued a circular dated 14 December 2024 instructing the de facto Appeal Courts to establish committees in each province to identify individuals eligible for pardon or sentence reduction. In January, the de facto Office of Prison Administration reported that more than 670 prisoners had been released from the country's prisons, including Pul-e Charkhi prison in Kabul, and that the sentences of another 1,145 prisoners had been reduced.

45. On 23 January, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court requested a Pre-Trial Chamber of the Court to issue arrest warrants for the Taliban leader and de facto Chief Justice, stating there are reasonable grounds to believe that they bear responsibility for the crime against humanity of persecution on grounds of gender.

IV. Economic development, donor coordination and aid effectiveness

46. The World Bank, in its Afghanistan development update of December 2024, indicated the economy of Afghanistan experienced modest growth of 2.7 per cent, driven primarily by an increase in private consumption, following two years of significant contraction. However, the state of the economy remains unsettled and fragile, owing to policy uncertainty, financial isolation, continuing restrictions on women's economic participation, trade imbalances and weak public investment, which are hindering development. Most households struggled to meet basic needs, as unemployment and poverty remain widespread. Vulnerable groups, including women, children and displaced populations, continued to bear the brunt of economic hardship because of inadequate social protection.

47. Other macroeconomic indicators showed modest growth during the reporting period. In November 2024, prices declined by 0.4 per cent month-to-month, reversing the upward trend observed since August. Housing costs spiked while food prices remained stable, although oil and vegetable prices increased owing to extreme weather. In November, overall prices were 3.8 per cent lower year-on-year, supported by weak demand, a stronger Afghani and surplus agricultural supply. The Afghani appreciated by an average of 15.7 per cent against the United States dollar in 2024 compared with 2023 owing to currency controls and inflows of dollars for humanitarian operations. However, the Afghani depreciated by 4.8 per cent in the November and December 2024. Imports surged 40 per cent year-on-year to \$10.8 billion in 2024, driven by increased imports of food, chemicals, minerals and transportation equipment, while exports fell by 5 per cent. Revenue collection remained strong, reaching \$2.5 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year (March 2024 to January 2025), an 11.5 per cent year-on-year increase, driven by growth in non-tax and customs revenue, as well as improved border management and trade ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Central Asia.

48. The de facto authorities pursued their stated goal of self-sufficiency through infrastructure development, private investment, domestic production and new regulations. Construction of the Afghan segment of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline began in December and 81 per cent of the second phase of the Qush Tepa irrigation canal project had been completed by January 2025, with 1 million acres of land around the canal allocated for agriculture and industry. The implementation of the New Kabul City project, designed to house 3 million residents, began in December. A total of 30 new standards for construction materials, food, mining, petroleum products and other sectors were approved to improve product quality. Export documentation processes were streamlined. The Afghan banking sector focused on promoting the Afghani, addressing liquidity issues and advancing Islamic banking. Mining procedures were significantly simplified, and 9 large-scale and 18 small-scale contracts worth \$3 billion were granted by the de facto authorities to national and international companies between March 2024 and January 2025. A China-Afghanistan joint private venture reportedly signed a 30-year agreement to establish a \$145 million cement factory in Logar Province that is projected to produce 2,500 tons of cement daily. The figures relating to the China-Afghanistan venture have not been independently verified.

49. On 13 November, the de facto authorities convened the second national microfinance conference, following up on a first conference held in October 2023. The conference was aimed at encouraging stakeholders and beneficiaries to engage with the microfinance sector, with microfinance regulations having been introduced in 2024. The conference resulted in the announcement of five new microfinance institutions and an investment of \$67.4 million by the de facto authorities to support the microfinance sector. During the reporting period, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) facilitated the inclusion of 40 individuals from different Afghan financial institutions in the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions and in fellowship programmes to enhance the capacity of the financial sector and supported 1,650 micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises with subsidized loans.

50. On 13 February 2025, as a follow-up to the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, UNAMA convened the first meeting of the private sector working group in an online format with participating Member States and international organizations, the de facto Ministries of Commerce and Industry, Economy, Finance and Foreign Affairs, the de facto Central Bank, Afghan business experts, including women, the international financial institutions and relevant United Nations agencies. The discussions at the meeting built on the outcomes of broad in-person and virtual consultations with a range of businessmen and businesswomen in and outside Afghanistan, which helped to refine the discussion of four focus areas – job creation and entrepreneurship, access to finance, market integration, and private banking and financial infrastructure.

51. The domestic water supply of Afghanistan is facing critical challenges, compounded by climate change and increasing demand. About a third of the population lacks basic drinking water services. The city of Kabul, in particular, has to contend with acute groundwater depletion and water access constraints, severely affecting women and children. On 5 December, the Afghanistan Water Platform held a meeting on the Kabul water crisis, and the provincial committee on the water crisis held a meeting on 18 December that brought together the de facto Governor of Kabul Province, relevant de facto line ministries and the United Nations.

52. On 15 January, the Fourth High-level Coordination Forum was held in Kabul under the co-chairpersonship of UNAMA and the de facto authorities, with a view to enhancing engagement among the de facto authorities, the United Nations system and partners, including international and national NGOs, and women. The participants

underscored the need for coordinated efforts, transparent aid operations and dialogue to address basic human needs, and they drew attention to the negative impact of restrictions on the Afghan population.

53. On 2 and 3 December 2024, the United Nations system-wide risk management working group assessed risks and mitigation actions for 2025 and reviewed the progress made in implementing the common risk action plan in 2024. As a result, the 2025 common risk assessment indicates increased risk levels owing to new restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities, highlighting the importance of maintaining coordinated common risk management across the United Nations system in Afghanistan to ensure operational coherence and effective responses.

54. On 3 December, the Steering Committee of the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan convened to approve the fund's strategic note for 2025, which is aimed at, inter alia, reorienting the fund to focus on displacement solutions to enable the sustainable reintegration of internally displaced persons and returnees, with an emphasis on women's empowerment.

55. In January 2025, the Afghanistan Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Harassment Network reached 321 entities and over 550 focal points, from the United Nations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, with an aim to enhance coordination, reporting, capacity-building and support services. Progress has been made in reducing sexual exploitation and abuse risks in Afghanistan, which is demonstrated by the drop from the highest global risk ranking to fourth place in the 2025 Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a composite index that brings together indicators on a range of different factors that can influence the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

V. Humanitarian assistance

56. Humanitarian needs in Afghanistan remain considerable in 2025, with 22.9 million people requiring assistance owing to high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, recurring natural hazards and climatic shocks, ongoing population movements, including protracted displacement, a weak economy, inadequate access to basic services and ongoing restrictions on the Afghan people, affecting women and girls in particular.

57. In November, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group and the Humanitarian Access Working Group conducted their tenth survey on the continued impact of the bans on Afghan women from working for NGOs and the United Nations and of other restrictions placed on women, including those stipulated in the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The findings revealed a decline in the mobility of women staff, with only 52 per cent of respondents reporting that they were able to visit field sites, compared with 64 per cent during the same period in 2024. Enactment of the Law has led to increased staff anxiety regarding movement and dress code (54 per cent in the tenth survey, compared with 34 per cent in the previous survey) and affected the ability of Afghan women staff to report to the office (46 per cent) and partners' ability to hold meetings with Afghan women (49 per cent). Responding partners also reported the departure of women staff from organizations owing to decrees issued by the de facto authorities (43 per cent). Since the December 2024 reiteration of the ban on Afghan women working for NGOs, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group has documented a few cases of NGOs suspending recruitment of Afghan women.

58. From January to December 2024, humanitarian partners reached 20.4 million people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance, including 3 million people

who received at least three different types of sectoral support. In total, 13.9 million people received food and livelihood support, 8.4 million people healthcare, 4.6 million children and pregnant and lactating women nutrition assistance, 6.3 million people protection assistance, 5.4 million people water, sanitation and hygiene, 941,000 people emergency shelter and non-food items and 554,000 children education. As at 29 December, the 2024 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan had received \$1.45 billion, or 47 per cent, of the required \$3.06 billion.

59. Food security improved slightly, with a total of 14.8 million people facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 3 and above), compared with 15.3 million people during the same period in 2023. Reduced income opportunities and the lingering effects of drought conditions continued to drive food insecurity. Malnutrition rates remain high and are projected to increase by 1 per cent for severely acute malnourished children and 28 per cent for moderately acute malnourished children in 2025. The World Food Programme provided 11.8 million people with food, nutrition and livelihood assistance between January and December 2024 and provided 6.4 million vulnerable people with food and cash assistance in November and December as part of pre-positioning efforts for the winter months.

60. From 1 October to 31 December 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 5.79 million beneficiaries through agricultural-based livelihood support interventions, including emergency assistance, across a wide range of areas, such as wheat cultivation, home gardening, backyard poultry production, mushroom cultivation packages, solar dryer and dairy kits, and unconditional cash transfers for 5.64 million people across the country. FAO also rehabilitated three irrigation schemes, spanning 22 km and covering 1,004 ha command area for irrigation, organized 133 community rooted common interest groups, vaccinated more than 4 million cattle against various animal diseases, reseeded 251 ha and rehabilitated 75 ha of degraded rangelands, produced 286 tons of soybean seeds through trials and farmer education in 10 provinces and responded to the devastating effects of flash floods in two provinces by cleaning 71.5 km of canals and renovating 234 m of stone masonry walls protecting canal banks.

61. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 175,262 cases of acute watery diarrhoea with dehydration, 4,722 suspected cases of dengue fever and 1,221 suspected cases of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever were reported from 1 January to 31 December. In addition, 59,753 suspected measles cases, 81,304 confirmed malaria cases and 1,357,350 cases of acute respiratory illness or pneumonia were reported. WHO, as part of its programmes, provides technical and financial support to prepare for, detect, investigate and respond to infectious disease outbreaks.

62. From January to November 2024, the number of conflict-induced trauma cases, both treated and referred to secondary care, increased by 0.2 per cent, reaching 44,384 cases, compared with 44,290 during the same period in 2023. In November and December 2024, a total of 92,790 children under five years of age suffering from severe acute malnutrition were admitted and treated in 148 inpatient and 3,068 outpatient medical facilities. In addition, 183,274 children under five years of age with moderate acute malnutrition were reached through a targeted supplementary feeding programme. In December, 414 mobile health and nutrition teams reached populations in remote, underserved areas, providing more than 471,600 primary healthcare consultations.

63. Between 22 October 2024 and 7 January 2025, 356,329 Afghans are estimated to have returned to Afghanistan, excluding passport holders with valid visas. That figure includes 59,217 from Pakistan and 297,112 from the Islamic Republic of Iran, with 173,506 of those individuals having been deported. During this period,

humanitarian partners assisted more than 120,700 undocumented Afghan returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in International Organization for Migration reception centres. From 1 January to 31 December 2024, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted 54,720 registered refugees and refugee-like returnees with protection support. Returnees interviewed by UNHCR reported financial support, shelter, food, documentation, legal assistance and access to basic services as top needs in areas of return. In 2024, UNHCR directly reached more than 1.3 million vulnerable individuals in Afghanistan with assistance, including protection services, cash and in-kind aid.

64. Humanitarian access remained challenging, with 418 humanitarian access-related incidents recorded from October to December 2024, a 5 per cent increase from the same period in 2023. The primary challenge was interference in humanitarian activities by the de facto authorities, accounting for 86 per cent of incidents. Other challenges included movement restrictions (18 incidents) and violence against humanitarian workers (29 incidents), including 17 detentions in which 41 humanitarian workers were detained, physical environment (5 incidents) and ongoing military operations (1 incident). These incidents led to the temporary suspension of 161 activities across various regions, marking a 25 per cent decrease compared with the previous reporting period. Gender-related access incidents increased to 31 reported in December 2024, as compared to 18 reported in November 2024.

65. In November and December, 17.4 km² of land were cleared of explosive ordnance, facilitating the safe return of displaced families and enabling agricultural activities, road construction, development of residential areas and safe grazing access. The United Nations-led Mine Action Technical Cell conducted 297 quality management visits, convened 13 coordination meetings to ensure effective planning and implementation and responded to 14 requests to assist with the disposal of explosive ordnance from humanitarian partners. Resource shortages remain critical, as funding for the Mine Action Technical Cell has yet to be secured for 2025, and could affect quality assurance, database management and response coordination.

VI. Counter-narcotics

66. In a report published in November 2024, UNODC indicated that opium production in 2024 in Afghanistan remained low for the second consecutive year, despite an increase of 19 per cent compared with 2023, with production estimated at 433 tons and cultivation levels still far below what they were in the period before the implementation of the opium ban. Cultivation, which had previously been concentrated in the southern provinces, shifted to the north-eastern provinces, in particular Badakhshan Province. On 27 November, UNODC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released the first comprehensive report on substance use treatment in Afghanistan, highlighting significant disparities in service distribution, accessibility and gender representation, despite services being available in 32 of 34 provinces. Opiates remain the leading cause of treatment admissions, with rising demand for services related to use of stimulants, in particular methamphetamine.

67. Between 1 November and 31 December 2024, the health programme of UNODC, in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, provided support to more than 17,138 women who use drugs, or are at risk of drug use, and their children. The support provided included primary and reproductive healthcare, dental care, basic social services, vocational skills training and support services for victims of gender-based violence. UNODC organized six webinars of health professionals of NGOs, civil society and drug

treatment centres to exchange best practices with international experts on voluntary residential treatment services. A UNODC alternative livelihoods programme delivered vocational skills training to 301 women detainees in Kabul and Herat prisons, with 50 women completing the tailoring training and 18 women completing the carpet weaving training. UNDP supported 800 farmers, including 88 women, in six provinces (Badghis, Balkh, Farah, Kandahar, Laghman and Nangarhar) where poppy cultivation levels had been high previously by providing them with technical and financial assistance. It also supported 1,229 farmers (including 252 women) by providing them with agricultural extension training and by assisting in the rehabilitation of two post-harvest processing facilities.

68. On 28 November, as a follow-up to the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan held in Doha, the working group on counter-narcotics convened its first online meeting with participating Member States and international organizations, the de facto Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Ministry of Public Health, the international financial institutions and relevant United Nations agencies. The working group agreed to establish small groups on alternative livelihoods, drug prevention and treatment, and narcotics production and trafficking. A joint action plan on alternative livelihoods was presented at the second meeting of membership of the working group, on 12 February.

VII. Mission support

69. As at 31 January 2025, vacancy rates in UNAMA were 12 per cent for international staff, 3 per cent for international United Nations Volunteers, 11 per cent for national United Nations Volunteers, 15 per cent for National Professional Officers and 11 per cent for national staff, compared with approved rates of 8.3 per cent, 9.3 per cent, 5 per cent, 15.5 per cent and 11.2 per cent, respectively. The proportion of women staff was 34 per cent for international staff, 38 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 9 per cent for National Professional Officers and 11 per cent for national staff. The national United Nations Volunteers programme remains a critical pipeline for young Afghan women wishing to join the United Nations workforce.

VIII. Observations

70. Despite the end of high-intensity conflict over three years ago, the economy of Afghanistan remains fragile and the country continues to experience one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with 22.9 million people requiring assistance. The de facto authorities' continuing restrictive policies and practices imposed on the Afghan population, especially women, have further constrained people's economic activities and livelihoods across the country and have hindered the delivery of assistance to people in need. These policies of the de facto authorities violate international human rights law and the international obligations of Afghanistan, risking the country's isolation from the international community, including from donors, at a time when international humanitarian and basic human needs assistance is of critical importance to the Afghan people.

71. The United Nations remains committed to achieving the end state described in Security Council resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#) of an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting international obligations, including through the United Nations-convened meetings of Special Envoys and the working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector. Maintaining an international consensus on Afghanistan is of utmost importance. While compromises will need to be made by all stakeholders, these compromises

should be achieved through an intensified dialogue with the de facto authorities within the parameters of international obligations and norms. I am encouraged by the discussions so far in the working groups towards addressing the basic needs of the Afghan people and building confidence among participants.

72. The enforcement of the Law on Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice continues to cause multifaceted challenges for both women and men of all generations, while disproportionately affecting women, whose freedom of movement and access to essential services have been further constrained. The range of restrictive measures prohibiting women from working in the media sector and confining them to duties in the office is alarming. Freedom of expression with guarantees of independent media must be ensured and the importance of women working in the media sector recognized. I urge the de facto authorities to revoke all restrictions that impede and impair the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls.

73. The ban on women and girls attending classes at medical institutes is not only discriminatory and contrary to the international human rights obligations of Afghanistan but will also drastically reduce the already insufficient number of female health workers in Afghanistan, thereby further restricting women's and girls' fragile access to healthcare. The ban on women pursuing education in midwifery and other fields of medical practice will have serious and immediate consequences for maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity for generations to come. I again urge the de facto authorities to rescind all decisions to ban women and girls from education.

74. The de facto authorities must cease the implementation of corporal punishment, which constitutes a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under international law. Afghanistan is a party to international human rights treaties that strictly prohibit all forms of torture and ill-treatment. The use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people below the age of 18 is strictly prohibited under international human rights law. I urge the de facto authorities to establish a moratorium on further executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

75. Continued reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and the torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, despite the de facto authorities' publicly stated commitment to their general amnesty, are deeply concerning. It is critical to ensure the protection of these individuals and, when violations of the amnesty occur, to carry out thorough and transparent investigations to establish accountability for perpetrators.

76. The continued loss of children's lives and their suffering from life-changing injuries as a result of unexploded ordnance are both unacceptable and preventable. There is an urgent need for the international community to increase its support for mine clearance efforts and awareness-raising to prevent further harm.

77. Humanitarian access continues to be hindered by interference in aid activities, movement restrictions, particularly on women and girls, and violence against aid workers. The current restrictions on girls and women, which deny them their rights, can only condemn the society to a vicious, escalating cycle of aid dependency, which is unsustainable, and those restrictions must be rescinded. The de facto authorities should take immediate action to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers, facilitate unimpeded and independent humanitarian operations and ensure the safe, meaningful and comprehensive participation of Afghan women in humanitarian response.

78. I remain concerned about the challenges in scaling up capacities to absorb the growing number of returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and from Pakistan

and to enable their sustainable reintegration. Returnees face immense challenges in reintegration, in particular in securing housing, employment and access to basic services. I call upon the international community to support efforts to strengthen the absorption capacities in Afghanistan so as to mitigate the risks of further destabilization and potential out-migration. I encourage countries hosting Afghan refugees to continue to extend protection to those in need and abide by their international obligations, ensuring that any returns to Afghanistan are voluntary, safe and dignified. I also urge Member States to enhance support for Afghan refugees and to promote greater responsibility-sharing and global solidarity with the neighbouring countries, which have generously hosted Afghan refugees for decades, at significant cost.

79. In the face of complex humanitarian crises globally, I remain concerned by the impact of the dramatic decrease in funding for Afghanistan and call upon the international community to remain steadfast in its continuous support for the critical humanitarian and basic human needs of the people of Afghanistan. Without the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders, millions of Afghans – in particular women and children – will continue to face extreme and avoidable hardship.

80. The United Nations continues to play a crucial role not only in delivering on humanitarian and basic human needs but also in advancing a political process to bring together all stakeholders to achieve sustainable stability in Afghanistan. I extend my deep appreciation to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of my Special Representative, Roza Otunbayeva, and to NGO partners for their continued dedication and service to the people of Afghanistan in an extremely challenging environment.
