

Asia

14. The situation in Afghanistan

During the period under review, the Security Council held nine meetings under the item entitled “The situation in Afghanistan”, including two private meetings.⁵⁰⁹ The meetings took the form of briefings and adoptions.⁵¹⁰ More information on the meetings, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is provided in the table below. In addition, in 2023, Council members held informal consultations of the whole to discuss this item.⁵¹¹ During its last meeting of the year on this agenda item, the Council adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy for Afghanistan.⁵¹²

During 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) provided quarterly briefings in meetings further to the reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.⁵¹³ The Council also heard briefings by four civil society representatives. The representative of Afghanistan and the representatives of neighbouring countries India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also delivered statements during the meetings held.

On 8 March, the Council heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA.⁵¹⁴ She noted that the bans against women working, studying, travelling without a male companion, and even going to parks or baths remained in place in Afghanistan. She emphasized that Afghanistan remained the largest humanitarian crisis globally, with two thirds of the population in need of humanitarian assistance that year to survive. She added that United Nations humanitarian action was challenged by an increasingly complex access and security environment, indicating that in some provinces, the United Nations had to temporarily suspend assistance because local officials had placed unacceptable conditions on its distribution.

⁵⁰⁹ See [S/PV.9242](#) and [S/PV.9488](#).

⁵¹⁰ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II.

⁵¹¹ See [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 8.

⁵¹² Resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#), para. 4.

⁵¹³ For the reports see [S/2023/151](#), [S/2023/453](#), [S/2023/678](#) and [S/2023/941](#).

⁵¹⁴ See [S/PV.9277](#).

She concluded that in general, there had been a recent deterioration of the humanitarian space and noted growing concerns about the looming threat posed to the security of United Nations humanitarian workers and NGO implementing partners by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan. Turning to the human rights situation, she indicated that there was no transparency regarding investigations of violations of the Taliban's amnesty decree such as extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions and torture, and that such violations appeared increasingly allowed to occur. She also reported on the continued implementation of the instruction by the Taliban leader calling for judicial corporal punishments as well as greater stifling and repression of the media sector and civil society. Regarding the political situation, she emphasized that the accumulation of the decisions by the Taliban leadership over the previous year had been a form of Government that was unacceptable to the international community and explained that the strategy of UNAMA was to preserve whatever political space existed for honest and straightforward discourse between the Taliban and the international community. She recalled that the international community had called for the decrees banning women from public life and other restrictions to be reversed and expressed hope that the Taliban would give greater consideration to the fact that it was in their interests and, above all, in the interests of the Afghan people to do so. At the same time, she added that the international community must begin building an agenda for discussion with the de facto authorities that included issues that mattered to them to form the basis of a process that could help build confidence and lead to a mutually acceptable outcome.

At the same meeting, the Afghanistan Programme Officer of Freedom Now, a female civil society representative, provided a briefing to the Council on the situation of Afghan women and girls since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. She emphasized that the Taliban had done everything they could to curb women's freedom of movement and expression, and that the total collapse of the legal system meant that women facing domestic violence had no access to justice. She stated that pursuing humanitarian action without women, or delivering aid that did not reach women, served only to further eliminate women from society. She added that outspoken international condemnation to the situation of women in Afghanistan was critical but not enough and underscored that the Taliban's human rights violations on the basis of gender amounted to gender persecution, a crime against humanity. She called on the Council to demand that the Taliban respect the human rights of all Afghans and urged the Council to continue not to grant the Taliban

formal recognition of any kind and to support initiatives to strengthen accountability for human rights violations, including all forms of gender-based violence as well as attacks against ethnic and religious communities and other marginalized groups.

On 16 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2678 \(2023\)](#), extending the mandate of UNAMA as defined in its resolution [2626 \(2022\)](#) for one year, until 17 March 2024.⁵¹⁵ The Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of the mandate of UNAMA, including at the subnational level.⁵¹⁶ At the same meeting, the Council also unanimously adopted resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#), by which it requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide in full to the Council, no later than 17 November 2023, an integrated, independent assessment and forward-looking recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, humanitarian, and development actors, within and outside of the United Nations system, in order to address the current challenges faced by Afghanistan, after consultations with all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders, including relevant authorities, Afghan women, and civil society, as well as the region and the wider international community.⁵¹⁷

Before the vote, the representative of Japan, speaking also on behalf of the United Arab Emirates as co-penholders on the issue of Afghanistan, underscored that the role of UNAMA was becoming more important and indispensable, and that all the components of its mandate were crucial in addressing the complex challenges faced by Afghanistan.⁵¹⁸ He added that the initiative of an independent assessment on the international approach in Afghanistan would provide forward-looking recommendations on how relevant political, humanitarian and development actors could address the existing challenges in an integrated and coherent way. He concluded that the adoption of the two draft resolutions would send a strong signal to the international community that the Council was united and unwavering in its support for UNAMA, as well as in its commitment to a secure stable, prosperous and inclusive future for Afghanistan and its people.

⁵¹⁵ See resolution [2678 \(2023\)](#), para. 3.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

⁵¹⁷ See resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#), paras 1 and 2.

⁵¹⁸ See [S/PV.9283](#).

After the vote, the representative of the United Arab Emirates, speaking also on behalf of Japan in their capacity as co-penholders, noted that with the adoption of the two resolutions, the Council had responded to the situation in Afghanistan with a strong and unified message that Afghanistan, and in particular, its women and girls would not be abandoned. Focusing on the adoption of resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#), she indicated that in requesting the independent assessment, the Council was not only demonstrating its deep concern with the alarming trajectory in Afghanistan, but it was choosing to do something about it.

Concerning the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA, the United Kingdom asserted that the decision sent a clear message that the international community would not abandon women and girls, while the representative of the United States noted that the United Nations would be able to continue its important work to restore Afghan's ability to exercise their human rights, especially those of women and girls and members of minority communities. The representative of Malta expressed full support for the mandate of UNAMA to promote and protect the rights of Afghan women and girls, monitor, report on and advocate for the protection of civilians, and prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Turning to the independent assessment, the representative of Malta reaffirmed her country's position that the experts to be appointed to carry out the independent assessment had to have the necessary gender expertise and context-specific knowledge and that women's rights would be central to the terms of reference. She further urged the establishment of a mechanism to ensure continuous consultations with Afghan women and civil society organizations in and outside Afghanistan, including in the elaboration of the terms of reference.

The representative of China encouraged UNAMA to continue with the implementation of its mandate in a comprehensive and balanced manner and expressed China's expectation that the independent assessment would focus on the most urgent difficulties facing Afghanistan, prioritizing alleviating the humanitarian crisis and the promotion of economic and social development. The representative of the Russian Federation commended the efforts by the United Arab Emirates and Japan to find compromise solutions while taking into account a wide range of positions. She asserted her conviction that the Council's unanimous support for UNAMA would demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan that the international community was committed to establishing long-awaited peace and stability in that long-suffering country, while emphasizing

that it was essential to maintain pragmatic engagement between UNAMA and the de facto authorities. In that connection, she expressed trust that the independent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan would be conducted, including on the basis of consultations with the de facto authorities and that the report would be balanced and reflecting the challenges regarding, inter alia, the freezing of Afghan assets, the fostering of development and economic reconstruction in the country, and a review of the negative consequences of unilateral sanctions.

The representative of Switzerland welcomed the unanimous adoption of the extension of the mandate of UNAMA and indicated that it sent an important message conveying the international community's continued support for the United Nations presence in Afghanistan and its confidence in the work of the Mission. The representative of France thanked the co-penholders for their success in preserving the unity of the Council on such a crucial issue and welcomed the fact that the independent assessment referred to in resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#) was specifically intended to make recommendations on addressing violations by the Taliban of human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls. The representative of Ecuador was grateful for the efforts of the co-penholders to incorporate the perspectives of all delegations and to propose a balanced text that responded to the situation with regard to the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the authorities of the Taliban regime. She explained that Ecuador had voted in favour of resolution [2678 \(2023\)](#) on the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA because it believed in the strength and comprehensiveness of the mandate. She also welcomed the initiative of the co-penholders to conduct an independent assessment that would enable the Council to monitor the situation and consider recommendations aimed at reversing the violations that had been institutionalized by the policy of discrimination against Afghan women and girls. She concluded that the adoption of the two resolutions on Afghanistan sent a message of Council unity.

The representative of Afghanistan welcomed the adoption of the two resolutions and expressed hope for sustained and parallel progress on all aspects of the mandate of the United Nations, especially with regard to establishing a political dialogue that would lead to the start of a meaningful political process for inclusive and legitimate governance; addressing the grave human rights situation, in particular with respect to the rights of women and girls; and meeting the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people. He also highlighted that the Council had taken an important step in supporting a comprehensive assessment of the overall situation in Afghanistan,

which reflected a new degree of unity and consensus within the Council on ensuring a more effective response by the United Nations to the challenges faced by the Afghan people.

On 27 April, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2681 \(2023\)](#), by which it condemned the decision by the Taliban to ban Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan.⁵¹⁹ In the same resolution, the Council called for the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and called upon the Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restricted the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁵²⁰ The Council also stressed the critical importance of a continued presence of UNAMA and other United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes across Afghanistan and reiterated its full support to the work of UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.⁵²¹

Before the vote, the representative of the United Arab Emirates, speaking also on behalf of Japan as co-penholders on the issue of Afghanistan, underlined that by adopting the draft resolution, the Council would send an unequivocal message of condemnation and a clear call for the swift reversal not only of the latest ban on Afghan women from working for the United Nations, but of others restricting the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.⁵²²

After the vote, the representative of Japan speaking also on behalf of the United Arab Emirates in their capacity as co-penholders, stressed that members of the Council, along with the wider States Members of the United Nations, came together to send a strong message of condemnation concerning the ban on women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan and called for a swift reversal of the policies and practices that restricted enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls. He also stressed the importance of dialogue, consultation and engagement by all relevant stakeholders, noting that it would be in no one's interest to isolate the Taliban. The representative of the United States emphasized that the United Nations and its Member States would not remain on the sidelines when women and girls were deprived from exercising their human rights. He indicated that his country continued to urge an

⁵¹⁹ Resolution [2681 \(2023\)](#), para. 1.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 5.

⁵²² See [S/PV.9314](#).

inclusive political process among Afghans that led to a representative Government accountable to its people, including the meaningful participation of women and members of minority communities. The representative of China shared the regret and concerns concerning the ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations and expressed hope that the Afghan interim Government would protect the basic rights and interests of all Afghan people, including women and girls and ethnic minorities, and affirmed that in the face of the dire humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan, it was necessary to step up assistance in order to promote a political solution and maintain peace and stability in the Afghan region at large. In that connection, he stated that it was necessary to maintain dialogue and engagement with all relevant Afghan stakeholders.

The representative of China also addressed the issue of Afghanistan's frozen assets and called for their use for the benefit of the Afghan people. The representative of the United Kingdom, welcomed the unanimous adoption of the resolution and indicated that the latest ban was a direct violation of the core tenets underpinning the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of non-discrimination, and warned that the ban was going to severely impede the delivery of life-saving aid to women and girls. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed regret and disappointment that steps towards a more prominent reflection about the whole set of challenges Afghanistan was facing had been blocked. He further indicated that while the Russian Federation did not welcome the decision by the Taliban to restrict the rights of women and girls, the real reasons for the unresolved issue of unfreezing Afghan assets that belong to the Afghan people; calls for increasing humanitarian assistance and restoring the country's economy; and the negative consequences of unilateral sanctions – those matters had not made it into the resolution. He also expressed his country's position that pragmatic interaction with the de facto authorities on all key issues via UNAMA remained imperative, emphasizing the importance of preventing the isolation of Afghanistan.

On 21 June, the Council heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA.⁵²³ She noted that the United Nations continued to face a complicated situation in Afghanistan following the restrictions imposed against Afghan women working for the United Nations and asserted that female national staff would not be replaced by

⁵²³ See [S/PV.9354](#).

male national staff. She recalled Afghanistan's responsibilities under the Charter, including the obligation to respect the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its officials, including Afghan women who worked for the Organization. She further called on the de facto Taliban authorities to rescind the bans against Afghan women and girls' participation in economic, social and public life and indicated that in addition to human effects, the bans obscured some of the other more positive achievements that had taken place under the de facto authorities, including the effective enforcement of the ban on opium cultivation. She reported that the Afghan economy remained stable but pointed out that macroeconomic stability coexisted alongside severe household poverty. She also recalled that United Nations humanitarian efforts continued to address the needs of nearly 20 million people, while noting that the cash shipments required for humanitarian operations were expected to decrease as donor funding declined, which in turn could negatively affect monetary stability. She announced the issuance of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan the following week, outlining the range of activities the United Nations could carry out in Afghanistan between the current year and 2025 if the necessary enabling environment was to be provided by the de facto authorities.

On counter-terrorism, the Special Representative said that the picture was mixed, with the de facto authorities making concerted efforts to counter the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Despite that, she added, attacks targeting both the de facto authorities and the civilian population had taken place. She took note of the annual report by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team,⁵²⁴ including the observation that the existing sanctions procedures were obsolete and needed to be updated to reflect the current realities in Afghanistan. She also expressed great concern about Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change, which was fostering population displacements inside Afghanistan and could be destabilizing. She welcomed the visit being undertaken by the Special Coordinator for the Independent Assessment on Afghanistan mandated by resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#) and looked forward to his recommendations.

At the same meeting, the Council also heard a briefing by the co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA), a non-governmental organization that provided education to Afghan girls. In addition to describing the work of her organization, the co-Founder

⁵²⁴ See [S/2023/370](#).

and President of SOLA called on the international community to ensure that the internet remained open and accessible within Afghanistan so that girls who could not go to school could access education electronically. She further stressed that the international community needed to ensure that Afghan refugees, particularly female refugees, had access to quality education in their nations of residence.

During her briefing⁵²⁵ to the Council on 26 September, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported that, since her last briefing, UNAMA had issued three human rights reports documenting human rights violations by the de facto authorities in contravention of international law. She noted that UNAMA's human rights efforts were focused on engaging with the de facto authorities and enabling them to establish an inclusive, responsive system of governance that respected human rights norms and standards. In that context, she suggested strengthening engagement with the relevant components of the de facto authorities through appropriate means to increase their knowledge and further compliance of law enforcement actions with international norms. At the same time, she regretted that this engagement strategy had been significantly undermined by the more than 50 decrees of the de facto authorities aimed at eliminating women from public life and education. She stated that, although these policies were unacceptable to the international community, UNAMA was of the view that engagement must be continued, and dialogue maintained. She took note of many instances of consultations between the de facto authorities and local communities and creation of provisional ulama councils in all 34 of Afghanistan's provinces. However, she cautioned that it was too early to ascertain whether these councils were instruments of accountability and consultation or of control. The Special Representative reported that there had been growing evidence that the de facto authorities had significantly reduced the cultivation of poppy and reiterated her requests to provide enhanced assistance to affected farmers and communities. She also expressed her great concern on the humanitarian funding gap and called for more sustainable and cost-effective means of providing assistance.

At the same meeting, the Executive Director of UN-Woman informed the Council that, while many of the demands of women living inside Afghanistan had remained unchanged, three

⁵²⁵ See [S/PV.9423](#).

marked shifts demanded urgent attention. First, women's influence on decision-making had shrunk dramatically at the community, extended family and household levels, with space around household decision-making shrinking the most. Second, restrictions were being enforced more frequently and more severely on Afghan women, including by male family members, as the de facto authorities held them accountable to enforce their decrees. Third, mental-health concerns had become one of the most pressing priorities for Afghan women. The briefer relayed to the Council the demand by Afghan women that the international community provide spaces for them to speak directly with the de facto authorities and to use all means at their disposal to leverage and pressure for change, including the use of sanctions, without exceptions for travel, and the issue of non-recognition. In that context, she brought forth three recommendations for the Council. First, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1988 \(2011\)](#) should convene a dedicated meeting on the role the Committee can play in responding to violations of women's rights in Afghanistan, including hearing from Afghan women and women's rights experts directly and updating the listing criteria and using all the tools at the Committee's disposal. Second, the situation in Afghanistan was not purely or exclusively a humanitarian crisis but also an economic, mental-health and development crisis, and the thread that connected all these different facets was the underlying women's-rights crisis. That must be the primary lens through which to understand what was going on and what to do. Third, the Council should lend its full support to an intergovernmental process to explicitly codify gender apartheid in international law.

The civil society briefer, an international legal expert, opined that the rule of the de facto authorities represented the antithesis of the Charter of the United Nations and was a threat to peace and security. She called upon the Council to make it clear through action that the international community would not tolerate the system of gender apartheid imposed by the de facto authorities. She expressed the belief that the gender apartheid approach was one of the most promising options for a more effective way forward, which could be pursued both through gender-inclusive interpretation of existing apartheid law and by codifying gender apartheid in international law going forward. She also made three recommendations. First, the Council and other relevant United Nations bodies should consider adopting resolutions labelling the treatment of Afghan women by the Taliban as both gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid. Second, for the proposed treaty on crimes against humanity currently under consideration, Council

Members and other States should ensure that the treaty would be gender-competent and include a reference to gender apartheid. Third, UNAMA should fully implement all aspects of its mandate on women's rights.

Briefing the Council again on 20 December, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General reported that, notwithstanding the impasse on women's rights, UNAMA had certain successful interactions with the de facto authorities in the areas of climate, microfinance, counter-narcotics and drug addiction, demining, private-sector development, human rights and governance.⁵²⁶ On human rights, she assessed that the key features of the situation in Afghanistan were a record of systemic discrimination against women and girls, repression of political dissent and free speech, a lack of meaningful representation of minorities and ongoing instances of extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment. At the same time, she noted that UNAMA did have a dialogue on human rights with many of the de facto authorities being open to further engagement with UNAMA and to seeking an awareness of human rights standards. Taking note of an influx of Afghans who had returned at the onset of winter, she stated that the human rights consequences for women and girls forced to return were particularly severe.

On security, the Special Representative assessed that the de facto authorities continue to maintain a generally good level of security, although the Shia community remained at disproportionate risk of harm. Turning to education, the briefer expressed concern over the quality of education in Afghanistan, which affected both girls and boys. At the same time, she noted increasing anecdotal evidence that girls of all ages could study at madrasas and the de facto educational authorities' continuous claim that they were working on creating conditions to allow girls to return to school. Assessing that Afghanistan was one of the countries most affected by climate change with severe recurring droughts, she expressed the belief that the de facto authorities, who had demonstrated a desire to engage with the international community on this issue, must be part of the global conversation. While welcoming the independent assessment conducted by the Special Coordinator,⁵²⁷ she noted that the de facto authorities had deemed the appointment of a special envoy to be unacceptable and that, in general, the de facto authorities' response to the report indicated a preference for bilateral approaches. In conclusion, the Special Representative

⁵²⁶ See [S/PV.9515](#).

⁵²⁷ See [S/2023/856](#).

suggested two factors to guide the future approach to the situation in Afghanistan – the first must be a more durable and more detailed international consensus on Afghanistan; the second was to make far greater use of the de facto authorities' willingness to engage in dialogue with Members of the international community.

Following the Special Representative, the Director for Coordination of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that there had been a dramatic surge of Afghan returnees from Pakistan since 1 November, who would require both immediate attention and assistance at the border and longer-term support for reintegration. He added that the needs of women and girls in Afghanistan had continued to grow at a scale and intensity commensurate with the repressive approach by the de facto authorities. However, despite further attempts to limit the role of women working for international and national non-governmental organizations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to achieve some degree of practical cooperation with the de facto authorities at the local level to enable Afghan women to be involved in humanitarian action. In this challenging context, the briefer emphasized the vital role of the humanitarian exception provided by resolution [2615 \(2021\)](#) to enable aid flow. Although in general, aid diversion had not occurred in Afghanistan, there were still challenges in terms of post-distribution diversion in the form of confiscation and attempted interference in aid programming by the de facto authorities. Nevertheless, he assured the Council that humanitarian organizations took very seriously their responsibility to minimize the risk of aid diversion.

In his remarks, the representative of Ecuador, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1988 \(2011\)](#), opined that it was important for the current sanctions regime to remain an appropriate and effective tool to counter threats to peace and stability in Afghanistan. He noted that while Afghanistan continued to face an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, the humanitarian exemption mechanism established under resolution [2615 \(2021\)](#) had created the conditions necessary to address that issue without violating United Nations sanctions. He reported that in 2023, the Committee approved 16 exemptions to the travel ban for the purposes of promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan or humanitarian objectives, while concerns remained about unauthorized travel and late requests, highlighting the importance of Member States adhering to the travel ban measures. The representative further reported to the Council that the Committee had not agreed to take action to implement the

recommendation of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team that the Committee update certain provisions of the guidelines for the conduct of its work, including exemption procedures, short-notice or emergency authorization and standard forms. He emphasized the importance of Member States cooperating and sharing information with the Monitoring Team and urged all Member States to respect the annexes to resolutions [2255 \(2015\)](#) and [2611 \(2021\)](#), to consult confidentially with the Monitoring Team, and to strengthen the enforcement of the sanctions measures.

The Executive Director of Rawadari, a civil society organization, briefed the Council on human rights trends observed on the ground in Afghanistan, including, inter alia, an alarming pattern of human rights violations across the board with repression of women's rights in every conceivable sphere of life; a brutal crackdown on civic space, on the freedom of expression and the media and on human rights defenders; ongoing killing of former security and government employees; and dismantling of independent institutions. In that context, she made four recommendations for the Council. First, in its deliberation on the recommendations made in the independent assessment, the Council should take no steps that would contradict the repeated recommendations of many Afghan women that there should be no unprincipled engagement with or recognition of the de facto authorities or a seat for them at the United Nations as long as their systematic discrimination against women and girls would continue. Second, she urged the Council to support all avenues to ensure justice and accountability for human rights violations, including by bringing cases to the International Court of Justice and through the establishment of an independent international accountability mechanism on Afghanistan. Third, she further urged Member States and other United Nations bodies to label and investigate the treatment of Afghan women as both gender persecution and gender apartheid. Fourth, it was critical that UNAMA retain and implement its mandate in full, especially in the areas of rights advocacy and protection for those at risk. In addition to these four recommendations, the international community must prioritize extending support to Afghan human rights defenders and civil society.

On 29 December, further to the letter of the Secretary-General transmitting the independent assessment⁵²⁸, the Council held its last meeting of the year in relation to this agenda item, in which

⁵²⁸ See [S/2023/856](#).

it adopted resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#), with China and the Russian Federation abstaining from voting. Affirming that the objective should be a clear end state of an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbors, fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting international obligations, and recognizing the need to ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of Afghan women in the process throughout, the resolution encouraged Member States and all other relevant stakeholders, inter alia, to increase international engagement in a more coherent, coordinated and structured manner.⁵²⁹ It also requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Afghan women and civil society, to appoint a Special Envoy for Afghanistan to promote implementation of the recommendations of the independent assessment.⁵³⁰

Before the vote, the representative of Japan, speaking also on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, expressed the belief that the independent assessment served as the best basis for discussion on the way forward.⁵³¹ He added that the draft resolution, once adopted, would express the Council's strong determination to facilitate a new strategy to address a wide range of issues in Afghanistan and set the course for international mechanisms necessary to tackle them.

After the vote, the representative of the United Arab Emirates, speaking also on behalf of Japan, noted that resolution [2721\(2023\)](#) would set in motion a principled and pragmatic international approach to Afghanistan, which centered on the interests of Afghans, while reflecting the need to for regional and international buy-in. She pointed out that the implementation of the recommendation in the Special Coordinator's report would bring coherence to an often ad hoc and reactive approach by the international Community. She also joined other Council Members to encourage all parties, including Afghan and international stakeholders, to implement the independent assessment's recommendations.⁵³² Several Council Members expressed support for the appointment of a special envoy.⁵³³ However, the representative of China expressed the view that a forcible appointment of a special envoy, with disregard for the views of the country concerned might lead not only to the Special Envoy being unable to discharge their functions, but might also heighten what he described as "antagonism and confrontation between the international

⁵²⁹ Resolution [2721 \(2023\)](#), para. 3.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., para. 4.

⁵³¹ See [S/PV. 9521](#).

⁵³² United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique) and France.

⁵³³ United States and Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique).

community and the Afghan authorities”, which would be at odds with the message “sent by the independent assessment to increase constructive engagement with the Afghan authorities”. Regretting that the amendments proposed by his country and the Russian Federation during consultations were not taken on board, he expressed hope that the Secretary-General would proceed with caution when appointing the Special Envoy. The representative of the Russian Federation suggested that the Secretary-General, when appointing the Special Envoy, should consult the de facto authorities and consider the views of all Council members. She further emphasized the need for patient and broad discussions of the recommendations, including consultation with the de facto authorities. Many Council members expressed concern about the de facto authorities’ repressive measures against women and girls and called for the reversal of those measures.⁵³⁴

Following the briefings, Council members and other participants expressed concern about the human rights situation in Afghanistan, especially over the Taliban decrees banning women and girls from participating in civilian life, including their access to work or education, and called for the reversal of those bans.⁵³⁵ Council members also discussed the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, including the effects of climate change,⁵³⁶ and the impact of the restrictions imposed by the Taliban against Afghan women for working for the United Nations on humanitarian response.⁵³⁷ Participants also deliberated on bilateral or multilateral modalities of engagement by

⁵³⁴ United States, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique) and France.

⁵³⁵ See [S/PV.9277](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), United Kingdom, Switzerland, Albania, Ecuador, Malta, Brazil, France, United States, China, Pakistan, India); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, Japan, Brazil, United States, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), United Kingdom, Ecuador, Malta, Albania, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), United States, Brazil, Switzerland, France, China, Albania, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, United States, Albania, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Malta, France, Brazil, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Ecuador, Uzbekistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan).

⁵³⁶ See [S/PV.9277](#), Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), Switzerland); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, Switzerland and Pakistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (United Arab Emirates and Switzerland); and [S/PV.9515](#) (United Arab Emirates and Switzerland).

⁵³⁷ See [S/PV.9277](#) (United Arab Emirates, Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), Switzerland, Albania and United States); [S/PV.9354](#) (Brazil, United States, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), France and Tajikistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (Albania); and [S/PV.9515](#) (United States).

the international community with the de facto authorities,⁵³⁸ the commission and findings of the independent assessment,⁵³⁹ the issue of Afghan frozen assets,⁵⁴⁰ the need to bolster the Afghan economy,⁵⁴¹ the illicit activities related to opium production,⁵⁴² and the security threats posed by the activities of terrorist groups, including ISIL-Khorasan in Afghanistan and the region.⁵⁴³

During its participation in Council meetings, the representative of Afghanistan requested the United Nations, UNAMA and international partners to support and provide platforms for progressive and democratic movements of Afghans inside and outside Afghanistan, and called on the Council to use all its tools, including sanctions, to pressure the Taliban to comply effectively with their commitments.⁵⁴⁴ He further welcomed the decision of the Security Council to conduct an independent assessment aimed at ensuring greater coordination and a more integrated international approach and effort towards stability in Afghanistan, adding that that decision and

⁵³⁸ See [S/PV.9277](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), United Kingdom, Albania, Ecuador, Russian Federation, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, Japan, China, Brazil, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (Japan, Ecuador, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Malta, United States, Brazil, France, China, Albania, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Albania, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), France, Brazil, China, Russian Federation, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and India).

⁵³⁹ See [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, Japan, Albania, Switzerland and Iran (Islamic Republic of)); [S/PV.9423](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, India and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (Japan, United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, United States, Albania, France, Brazil, China, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Ecuador, Iran (Islamic Republic of), India and Pakistan).

⁵⁴⁰ See [S/PV.9277](#) (Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique) and China); [S/PV.9354](#) (China, Brazil, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (Brazil, China and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Brazil, China, Russian Federation and Iran (Islamic Republic of)).

⁵⁴¹ See [S/PV.9277](#) (Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), United Kingdom, Switzerland, Russian Federation, Malta, China and Pakistan); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, China, Brazil, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Switzerland, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan); [S/PV.9423](#) (United Arab Emirates, Brazil, China, Albania and Iran (Islamic Republic of)); and [S/PV.9515](#) (United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Brazil, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Pakistan).

⁵⁴² See [S/PV.9277](#) (Russian Federation); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, China, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Iran (Islamic Republic of)); [S/PV.9423](#) (Russian Federation, Malta, France, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (Japan, Albania, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Brazil, China, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Pakistan).

⁵⁴³ See [S/PV.9277](#) (Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), Russian Federation, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and India); [S/PV.9354](#) (United Arab Emirates, Japan, China, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Russian Federation, Ecuador, France, Tajikistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Uzbekistan); [S/PV.9423](#) (Ecuador, United Kingdom, Russian Federation, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), France, Albania, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan); and [S/PV.9515](#) (United Arab Emirates, Albania, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Malta, France, China, Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan).

⁵⁴⁴ See [S/PV.9277](#).

the recent United Nations meeting on Afghanistan hosted by the Secretary-General and with the participation of a broad group of special representatives, including from within the region, had raised hopes about a growing international consensus on Afghanistan.⁵⁴⁵ He further emphasized the need for international efforts to prioritize the start of a political process towards a political settlement through national dialogue, indicating that the crisis in Afghanistan was primarily political in nature and calling on the international community to unite in creating an environment conducive to the start of negotiations. Urging the United Nations to recognize and classify the plight of Afghan women and girls as gender apartheid, he called for a special session of the General Assembly to address the issue.⁵⁴⁶ Welcoming the independent assessment by the Special Coordinator, he assessed that, despite certain shortcomings, the assessment could serve as a solid foundation and guiding document for initiating discussions to address existing problems and fundamental challenges.⁵⁴⁷ He added that the report’s key recommendations offered a path for progress and ensured a positive trajectory for the way forward.

Developments in Afghanistan were also considered elsewhere under the item entitled “Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts”.⁵⁴⁸

Meetings: The situation in Afghanistan, 2023

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.9242 13 January (closed)				Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee	All Council members, all invitees	

⁵⁴⁵ See [S/PV.9354](#).

⁵⁴⁶ See [S/PV.9423](#).

⁵⁴⁷ See [S/PV.9515](#).

⁵⁴⁸ For more information, see part I, sect. 28.

S/PV.9277 8 March	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/151)		Afghanistan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Afghanistan Programme Officer of Freedom Now	13 Council members, ^a all invitees	
S/PV.9283 16 March	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/151)	Draft resolution submitted by Japan and the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/196) Draft resolution submitted by Japan and the United Arab Emirates (S/2023/197)	Afghanistan		Ten Council members, ^b all invitees	Resolution 2678 (2023) (15-0-0) Resolution 2679 (2023) (15-0-0)
S/PV.9314 27 April		Draft resolution submitted by 91 Member States ^c (S/2023/292)	89 Member States ^d		Six Council members ^e	Resolution 2681 (2023) (15-0-0)
S/PV.9354 21 June			Afghanistan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan	13 Council members, ^f all invitees	
S/PV.9423 26 September	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/678)		Afghanistan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) Pakistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Executive Director of UN-Woman, a civil society representative	13 Council members, ^f all invitees	

S/PV.9488				Special Coordinator of Independent Assessment Mandated by Security Council Resolution 2679 (2023)	
28 November (closed)					
S/PV.9515	Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2023/941)	Afghanistan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) Pakistan and Uzbekistan	Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Director for Coordination of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Executive Director of Rawadari	Thirteen Council members, ^f all invitees	
20 December					
S/PV.9521	Letter dated 8 November 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/856)	Draft resolution submitted by Japan and United Arab Emirates (S/2023/1056)		Eight Council members ^g	Resolution 2721 (2023) (13-0-2) ^h
29 December					

^a Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon (also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique), Japan, Malta, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.

^b China, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States. Before the vote, the representative of Japan spoke on behalf also of the United Arab Emirates. After the vote, the representative of the United Arab Emirates spoke also on behalf of Japan.

^c Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Yemen.

^d Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uruguay and Yemen.

^e China, Japan (also on behalf of United Arab Emirates), Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates (also on behalf of Japan), United Kingdom, United States.

^f Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Mozambique (also on behalf of Gabon and Ghana), Japan, Malta, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.

^g China, France, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique), Japan, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States. spoke on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Ghana.

^h *For*: Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States; *against*: none; *abstaining*: China, Russian Federation.