

Joint Communiqué of the U.S.-Europe Group on Afghanistan



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Special Envoys and Representatives for Afghanistan of the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States met in Washington D.C. on September 15, 2022, to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Other officials from Japan, Qatar, Switzerland and UNAMA also participated in the meeting as observers, which included technical sessions with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The Special Envoys and Representatives for Afghanistan:

Expressed grave concerns with the continued undermining of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Afghans; welcomed the recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan to the UN Human Rights Council; denounced violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of rights protected under international human rights treaties and conventions to which Afghanistan is a State Party, including abuses of the rights of members of ethnic and religious minority groups or other marginalized groups; condemned, in particular, abuses of the rights of Afghan women and girls throughout the country, including restrictions on freedom of movement, as well as their exclusion from political, economic, educational and social spaces; noted the issuance of no fewer than 16 Taliban announcements and policies since August 2021 that have restricted women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights; and called for the immediate reversal of the Taliban's ban on girls' attendance in schools in grades 7 to 12, noting girls have not attended school at these levels for the last year throughout most of the country.

Denounced increasing restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, notably through media repression, including of female reporters, and condemned the detentions of both Afghan and foreign journalists.

Stressed the urgency in continuing to address the grave humanitarian crisis in the country, including through steps to prepare the Afghan population for the upcoming winter; highlighted the substantial humanitarian assistance provided for Afghanistan since August 2021 from their respective governments and organizations; affirmed the need for all relevant actors to adhere to applicable international law and to ensure the independence of humanitarian organizations; emphasized the importance of all humanitarian staff – men and women – having unimpeded access to any areas of the country necessary to performing their jobs effectively; called for adherence to humanitarian principles and for the removal of any restrictions and obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance; and emphasized the importance of equitable and direct access to humanitarian aid, as well as to aid intended to address basic human needs, with appropriate consideration for vulnerable populations, including women and women-led households, children and ethnic and religious communities.

Expressed grave concern about the continued presence and operations of terrorists and terrorist groups in Afghanistan, including al-Qa'ida and other groups with a stated aim to target countries in the region and beyond; and specifically condemned the recent presence of al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan and emphasized that Zawahiri's presence in Kabul was a clear example of the Taliban's failure to meet their counter-terrorism commitments.

Highlighted the need for the Taliban to take sustained and verifiable steps, consistent with their commitments and applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, against all terrorist groups and activity occurring in Afghanistan; condemned recent ISIS-K attacks against civilians, the diplomatic community and areas where civilians gather, including mosques; acknowledged active operations by the Taliban against ISIS-K; and called on the

Taliban to protect at-risk ethnic and religious communities from attacks by members of ISIS-K and other terrorists, as well as to take all possible steps to ensure perpetrators of such attacks are held accountable.

Emphasized that enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan requires a credible and inclusive national dialogue leading to a constitutional order with a representative political system; noted that the risk of armed conflict is likely to increase significantly without a broadly representative and accountable government chosen through a credible process in which all adult Afghan women and men can participate; and called on the Taliban to fulfill their commitment made in the February 2020 Doha Agreement to participate in intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations over a political roadmap that leads to a new Afghan Islamic government.

Underscored the importance of the Taliban fulfilling their commitments to counter drug production and trafficking.

Noted that the Taliban have committed to allow safe and orderly passage to and from Afghanistan of foreign nationals and Afghans – both women and men – who are properly documented.

Discussed the recent lapse of the exceptions to the UN travel ban on certain Taliban leaders and called on all countries to act responsibly in implementing their UN obligations.

Emphasized that foreign assistance to Afghanistan is for the benefit of the Afghan people and not a sign of progress toward normalization of relations with the Taliban; and noted that engagement by members of the international community with the Taliban should not be interpreted as progress toward normalization.

Highlighted the need for the Taliban to focus on the country's economic crisis and to create an enabling environment for greater investment through, among other things, adherence to fair and transparent rule of law; stressed that humanitarian assistance and assistance for basic human needs are not sufficient to prevent further deterioration of the country's economy; discussed other ways to help sustain Afghan

livelihoods through economic liquidity in the country; emphasized the importance of reviving Afghanistan's banking and financial sector and to facilitating licit cross-border money flows; raised the need to expand the capability, transparency and professionalism of the Afghan central bank as part of efforts to increase liquidity and to stabilize the economy; noted the recent establishment of the Afghan Fund in Switzerland that aims to preserve and protect Afghan central bank reserves and to make targeted disbursements from those reserves for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan; and emphasized the need for the Afghan central bank to (1) demonstrate its independence from political influence and interference; (2) demonstrate it has instituted adequate anti-money laundering and (AML/CFT) controls; and (3) complete a third-party needs assessment and onboard a reputable third-party monitor.

Welcomed the appointment by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres of Ms. Roza Otunbayeva as the new Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA; and called on the Taliban, other Afghans and members of the international community to cooperate with SRSO Otunbayeva as she implements UNAMA's mandate, including on the promotion of dialogue among all relevant Afghan stakeholders aimed at achieving inclusive, responsive, representative and participatory governance at national and subnational levels and on the monitoring of the human rights situation; and expressed support for the renewal by the UN Human Rights Council of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, called for the strengthening of its role on gender rights and an increase in the position's financial resources, and welcomed the work done to date in this role by Mr. Richard Bennett.

Welcomed UNAMA's mandate to promote transitional justice and called on the Taliban and other Afghans to work in good faith toward addressing the country's legacy of war crimes and other violence; acknowledged that grievances exist on all sides of the conflict and noted that sustainable peace is unlikely without a reconciliation process that emphasizes healing and restorative justice over retribution; and noted the importance of adherence to the Taliban's policy of amnesty for

former Islamic Republic officials and to upholding accountability for those who violate this policy.

Highlighted the need for all members of the international community, particularly Afghanistan's neighbors, other partners in the region and Muslim-majority countries, to cooperate in Afghanistan with the interest of the Afghan people in mind.

Expressed their appreciation to the United States for organizing these consultations and hosting the meeting.

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