

**Remarks at a UN Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting on Afghanistan's Peace Process
(via VTC)**

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Thank you so much. Good morning.

Let me start by thanking the briefers here today for their valuable insight into the ongoing peace process – I would of course also like to thank President Ghani for sharing his assessment and vision with us. Allow me to take the opportunity to convey our appreciation to Special Envoy Lyons for the excellent leadership she continues to demonstrate at UNAMA. We are particularly grateful for UNAMA's unique and crucial role in supporting this peace process, promoting human rights, working to empower women, and supporting democracy in Afghanistan.

Before sharing the U.S. perspective on how the Security Council can support the Afghan peace process, I would like to comment on the horrific violence we have seen over the past few weeks in Afghanistan. The attacks on schools and universities are heartbreaking and are only the most recent examples of how this protracted conflict has terrorized and victimized innocent civilians. Students and educators must be

allowed safe, supportive learning environments that are free from violence and threats. As noted in September's UN Security Council Presidential Statement, these deplorable acts must be condemned, and perpetrators held accountable.

Tremendous challenges lie ahead for all engaged in this process to establish a sovereign, unified, and democratic Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and at peace with its neighbors. We must remain vigilant as spoilers attempt to disrupt this cause of peace.

There are concrete ways this Council can support Afghanistan's peace process. First, we should continue to use our platform to condemn violence, while impressing upon the parties that it is crucial and critical that they not allow cowardly attacks to derail the progress toward peace. The ongoing talks in Doha demonstrate the commitment of all parties to finding a path forward for their country that provides the Afghan people a promising future free of terrorism.

The second thing this Council can do is stress that a peaceful future for Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation of women along the way. Ms. Gailani, as one of the four women representing the Islamic Republic in negotiations, represents a crucial voice, and she must be heard. The role of women in these negotiations is

not limited to a narrow set of issues that affect women alone. Their full participation is vital to achieving the peace, the stability, and economic growth that will ensure a better future for Afghanistan.

This leads me to my final recommendation: we should not hesitate to convey that we will calibrate our actions to the outcome of the ongoing talks. The United States has been clear and direct on this issue: while the final political settlement is one for Afghans themselves to decide, our political and economic support will be determined based upon the decisions Afghans make, including on the rights of women and girls, and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

At the donors' conference next week, we will reaffirm our support for Afghanistan and for its people, but we will also continue to be candid about our desire to see Afghanistan make real progress on social, political, and economic reforms. Finally, we thank Finland, Afghanistan, and the United Nations for their efforts to organize this conference, especially amid the constraints posed by COVID-19.

In closing, allow me to thank the co-hosts of today's discussion for convening this meeting to exchange views on how the UN can help the Afghan people at such a historic moment. This council must support them as they build a future of peace and a future of harmony.

Thank you.

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