

Statement of the Republic of Bulgaria

**At the United Nations Security Council Arria Formula Meeting
On the Peace Process in Afghanistan**

20 November 2020 9.00 – 12.00 (EST)

Venue: Videoconference (supported by Global Virtual Solutions)

Delivered by Permanent Representative, H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov

At the outset, I would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, H.E. Mr. Urmas Reinsalu and to the other sponsors for organizing this meeting.

Bulgaria expresses hope that the intra-Afghan negotiations between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, started in Doha, Qatar, in September 2020, will serve as a platform to reaching lasting peace and genuine reconciliation. We are convinced that the reconciliation is possible only if the recent achievements made in the political, socio-economic and human rights domains are preserved. Bulgaria calls for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire that would stop the unnecessary suffering and will be key to the progress of the peace process. We reiterate the importance of the Afghan-lead and Afghan-owned peace process and its inclusiveness, regarding all national stakeholders, including Afghan women, people with disabilities, civil society. Bulgaria also calls upon Afghanistan's neighbors and regional stakeholders to actively engage in promoting peaceful resolution of the conflict. While underlining that the peace process must remain Afghan-owned and Afghan-led, Bulgaria further calls upon the international community to step up its support for the peace process.

Since 2002 Bulgaria has been fully engaged with the efforts of the international community to end decades of conflict in Afghanistan, to achieve lasting peace and to rebuild the country. Bulgaria actively participates in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission efforts to provide further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions. For more than 10 years, Bulgaria, through its ODA, has been contributing to building administrative capacity in Afghanistan. Bulgaria provides on annual basis financial support to UNHCR's activities related to the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in the Afghan displacement situation focused on finding durable solutions for Afghan refugees. On a larger scale, we support the continuous EU efforts towards achieving lasting peace and stability in the country. The progress which has been achieved over the last 20 years must be preserved through joint international and intra-Afghan efforts and we express our hope for further progress in the intra-Afghan negotiations. We welcome the forthcoming Geneva Conference, which presents an important opportunity for the Afghan Government and the international community to commit to common objectives for promoting sustainable development, prosperity and peace.

Bulgaria stresses that the implementation of resolution 2513 (2020), unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 10 March 2020, will allow the international community to constructively support intra-Afghan negotiations towards an inclusive political settlement that must protect the rights of all Afghans, including women, youth and minorities. In this regard, Bulgaria welcomes the commitment of the Afghan Government to enhancing women's participation in the peace process in its National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Bulgaria expects strong structural reforms to be carried out, especially to reinforce rule of law, promote good governance, and better fight corruption, illegal immigration and drug trafficking as well as further enhancing cooperation regarding readmission.

Bulgaria remains concerned with, and condemns the unacceptable levels of violence – including sexual and gender based violence – in Afghanistan, which have continued even after the Doha Agreement. Bulgaria condemns the attacks on humanitarian and UN personnel in Afghanistan,

which constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and urges the Governments to bring to justice the perpetrators of such violations.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a profound challenge to Afghanistan's health system, socio-economic and humanitarian situations, and is worsening the food crisis. Bulgaria commends the efforts of the UN, the international community, and the Government of Afghanistan to address the challenges of COVID-19 facing the country and its people. In May 2020, Bulgaria made financial contribution to the ICRC to fight the spread of the virus in Afghanistan.

Bulgaria expresses its concern that for two consecutive years, the Annual Resolution on the situation in Afghanistan is being adopted with a vote by the General Assembly. On the eve of this year's negotiations on the Annual Resolution on Afghanistan, Bulgaria calls upon all UN Member States to engage with maximum flexibility and willingness in order to reach consensus. Adoption by consensus of the Annual Resolution of Afghanistan would be a strong political message of the International Community to all key parties of the Afghan peace talks.