



Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

STATEMENT

BY

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National Statement

Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council

9 June 2020

NEW YORK

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Afghanistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

As the UN celebrates its 75th anniversary, the world is facing an emergency. We are facing a public health crisis, an economic depression, and one of the most significant global challenges in the history of the United Nations. The most vulnerable people and nations are the hardest hit. People in humanitarian settings are facing increased risks and vulnerabilities. In responding to the pandemic, their needs must be met and their dignity upheld. Otherwise, the world will fail to meet the central promise of the 2030 Agenda – to leave no one behind.

As such, the theme of this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment – “Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centered solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles” – is timely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need to implement existing protocols and agreements to improve humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance must better serve the needs of each individual by recognizing intersecting forms of vulnerabilities and discrimination. Tools such as intersectoral needs analysis, disaggregated data, participatory programming, and community-based responses to strengthen accountability to affected populations should be further implemented.

There are not enough donations to meet the level of need. Therefore, humanitarian assistance must become more effective and efficient. Implementing the agreed tenants of the Grand Bargain will be a step in the right direction. Assistance should also become more sustainable and strengthen the collaboration between humanitarian, development, peace and climate efforts. Innovative financing mechanisms, including anticipatory finance and pooled funding, should be further used.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are facing a precarious moment in Afghanistan’s history. While concrete steps are taken to end the 40-year conflict, humanitarian needs are growing. The situation is also more complex and uncertain due to the threat of COVID-19, the continued high-levels of violence perpetrated by terrorists and violent extremists against the civilian population and the looming threat of climate change.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, 9.4 million people needed humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Needs are driven by conflict and insecurity, the aftermath of the 2018 drought, and natural disasters exacerbated by climate change.

By the end of 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs classified the conflict in Afghanistan as the deadliest conflict on earth. Casualties were primarily driven by the Taliban's continued disregard for civilian lives. 3,403 civilians lost their lives last year. This year, after a brief reduction of hostilities, violence continues to proliferate. The government has continued to call on the Taliban to heed the call of the Secretary-General and implement a humanitarian ceasefire to address the COVID-19 pandemic. But despite our efforts and international pressure, they have continued their violent campaign uninterrupted, except for a brief three-day ceasefire in respect of Eid. We call on the Taliban to build on the Eid ceasefire and implement an indefinite reduction of hostilities. Other violent extremists, notably the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, have continued their abhorrent attacks. The disgusting attack against a maternity ward in April presented a new low.

Currently, COVID-19 is threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions of Afghans and is increasing the levels of need. The number of returnees in need of humanitarian support from Iran and Pakistan has, for example, substantially increased. More than 300,000 undocumented returns have been recorded from Iran and Pakistan. Food prices have increased by up to 20% and many casual laborers have lost their livelihoods. Without continued support, food insecurity and malnutrition are likely to increase.

The government and its humanitarian partners have taken decisive actions against the disease. Still, response capacity remains low due to the existing security threats and humanitarian access remains a significant issue. While only a political solution to the conflict can provide a long-term solution to the humanitarian crisis, the peace process should not be allowed to influence humanitarian action. We urge all stakeholders to recognize that humanitarian action must not be politicized and call on our international partners to support our peace efforts at this critical juncture and during the reconstruction process that will follow. The success of an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process is the only guarantee for a lasting solution for peace, security and stability.

Distinguished delegates,

We will only be able to address these daunting humanitarian challenges through better coordination, effectiveness and efficiency. Promising steps are being taken. In 2018, the government and our partners established a multi-year humanitarian response plan to address chronic needs better and integrate humanitarian and development action. Innovative financing

tools are being used, including the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. We ask our partners to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus further, use sustainable approaches to humanitarian assistance, further implement the localization agenda and strengthen the accountability to affected populations. We hope to work with all partners to make Afghanistan into a model for successfully implementing these concepts in practice.

To address the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, including the needs driven by COVID-19, more funding is, however, needed. According to OCHA, 803.8 million dollars are required to respond to the most pressing needs this year. At this time, the Humanitarian Response Plan is only 26% funded. We thank all donors who have provided generous funding to the plan, especially those who have provided funding to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, and hope to have their continued support.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan remains committed to working together with the international community in shaping a new, more effective and comprehensive approach to humanitarian action, enabling us to prevent and respond to existing and emerging emergencies and achieve sustainable development and prosperity for all.

Thank you.