Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the United Nations, and the governments of Germany, Qatar, and the United Kingdom for convening this conference.

August 15 of last year marked a watershed. In the history of Afghanistan and in its relationship to the outside world. Today, Afghanistan is ruled by de facto authorities not recognized by the international community. This makes normal political relations and regular partnerships for development impossible.

This gives the UN an even more important role. As penholders, we were glad to see a near unanimous Council gave UNAMA a robust mandate. To play a constructive political role. To protect and promote human rights. And to coordinate and facilitate humanitarian assistance and support to basic human needs.

Afghanistan is facing enormous challenges both political and humanitarian.

Millions of Afghans experience food insecurity, malnutrition and lack of access to health services. Children are particularly vulnerable in the dire humanitarian situation. This will affect the up-coming generation and the development of the society for years to come. Support for livelihood and food security, health services and other basic needs, is crucial.

Effective humanitarian action requires safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Humanitarian principles and human rights must be respected. The recent decision of the Taliban leadership to continue to ban girls from secondary education is deeply disappointing. It underscores the wisdom in judging them by their actions and not by their words. Access to education regardless of gender is a fundamental human right.

Norway has been in dialogue with the Taliban for many years. We also invited them to meet with other Afghans and Western representatives in Oslo earlier this year. We must be realistic about what can be achieved through dialogue. But without engagement, we lose our ability to influence. This engagement does not imply recognition.

The international community cannot abandon the people of Afghanistan. No matter how we judge the de facto authorities. In spite of other crises – including the brutal Russian attack on Ukraine – Afghans need our commitment. Afghanistan is facing one of the world’s most rapidly growing humanitarian crises. It is a disaster stemming from many years of conflict, climate change, flooding, drought, and economic collapse.

Norway will maintain its strong commitment to the Afghan people. This year, we will commit 700 million kroner, or 80 million US dollars, to Afghanistan. A higher level than in 2021, based on the increased needs. Our support goes to humanitarian assistance as well as basic service delivery. Through mechanisms bypassing the de facto authorities.
Continued humanitarian response is necessary but insufficient. The basic service institutions that donors have supported for years must be preserved. We must prevent food insecurity and a breakdown of the social fabric. Afghanistan is now isolated from the international financial system. This jeopardizes the emergency response and essential service delivery. Restoration of the banking system is critical. We welcome exemptions in the UN Security Council and other sanction regimes. But more must be done. It is crucial to integrate Afghanistan in the international economy and reestablish its independent macroeconomic institutions, such as the Central Bank.

We must work together, leaving no stone unturned. To tackle the profound and complex crises Afghanistan and its people are facing. A stable and peaceful Afghanistan is in the interest of all of us.

The primary responsibility for responding to the crisis lies with those that rule. The Taliban must listen to the appeals of the Afghan people and the international community: To respect human rights and to establish a more inclusive and representative government. True legitimacy must come from within the country, from Afghans. The Afghan people has our unwavering support.

Thank you.