



SRSG BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

**Briefing to the United Nations Security Council
by the Deputy Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Georgette Gagnon,
New York, 10 December 2025**

[As delivered]

Madame President,

Today the world marks Human Rights Day, a reminder of the enduring relevance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its promise of dignity, equality, and justice for all.

The Afghan people continue to endure multiple crises, and their resilience, while clear, is under severe strain. Their situation demands both urgent attention and greater international support.

Women and girls continue to be systematically excluded from almost all aspects of public life. The ban on secondary and tertiary education for girls persists now into its fourth year, depriving Afghanistan of female doctors, entrepreneurs, teachers, and leaders critical to the country today and for its future.

Media freedom is increasingly restricted. Journalists face intimidation, detention, and censorship, reducing the space for public debate and public participation with people excluded from decisions on their own future.

Afghans—women and men—continue to experience systematic infringements into their daily lives through the enforcement of the de facto authorities' law on the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice.

The deteriorating human rights situation is not the only crisis affecting the Afghan people.

The country continues to face a grave humanitarian crisis with more humanitarian support needed.

More than 23 million Afghans—over half the population—continue to require humanitarian assistance in 2026. Their needs are staggering and growing.

At the same time, thousands of Afghans each month have returned from Iran and Pakistan, some under duress. The return of nearly 2.5 million Afghans from Iran and Pakistan in 2025 represents a six percent population increase, compounding the deep-rooted economic, climate and humanitarian crises the country already faces.

Many returnees arrive with few possessions, destined for host communities that are ill-equipped to receive them and an economy insufficiently robust to provide them with jobs and basic services.

According to the World Bank, while GDP growth this year is expected to reach around 4.5 percent, the per capita income will fall by about 4 percent due to the population increase. This would be the third straight year of declining per capita GDP.

The de facto authorities have set the objective of economic self-sufficiency, using Afghanistan's geographical position to increase transit trade as well as increasing production of goods in Afghanistan. This is outlined in their recently released National Development Strategy. The private sector is also one of the few areas where women have some freedom to work. But the overall self-sufficiency project is undermined by other policies that create political risks that hinder investment. Ideological restrictions also impede economic activity for women in particular but also for men.

Many women and girls returning to Afghanistan have skills and capabilities that could help lift the economy. They will not be allowed to.

The de facto authorities continue to prevent UN female national staff from accessing UN premises countrywide. This violates their human rights and the United Nations Charter, and is a barrier in our ability to deliver on the mandate the Council has given to us. We have consistently raised this unacceptable situation with de facto leaders. We need your further support to ensure this situation does not become normalized.

Madame President,

Successive droughts and land degradation, compounded by a struggling economy and population pressures, are devastating agricultural production in a country where most livelihoods depend on it.

The de facto authorities' ban on opium cultivation, welcomed by the international community, is now implemented for the third straight year.

As UNODC recently reported, rural incomes have dropped by 48 percent with farmers trying to manage the transition from opium to licit crops of value.

As part of the Doha process, UN agencies, the de facto authorities, donors, regional countries, and Afghan experts have worked together in the Counternarcotics Working Group on an action plan to advance alternative livelihoods. More funding and technical assistance are required to implement the action plan.

Counternarcotics is a no-risk issue for the international community. Everyone benefits from addressing it; everyone suffers from not supporting counternarcotics efforts.

Madame President,

Afghanistan's security situation is outwardly calm. Millions of Afghans have enjoyed a period of relative stability and absence of war-related violence not seen in a generation.

However, tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the presence and activities of the TTP are rising, with deadly cross-border exchanges of fire and airstrikes resulting in civilian casualties.

The tensions have led to the closing of key border posts between Afghanistan and Pakistan for the past two months, with economic consequences for Afghanistan and Pakistan and people on both sides.

We welcome Pakistan's recent decision to allow humanitarian supplies for the Afghan people to cross the border.

We also welcome efforts of countries in the region to find a solution through dialogue. We urge the parties to address the core issues and for both sides to respect the ceasefire in place.

Afghanistan's de facto authorities continue to miss or reject opportunities to engage multilaterally with the international community, risking disengagement particularly from donor countries that are increasingly frustrated with Afghanistan's refusal to seriously address their concerns.

In UNAMA's briefing to this Council in September we raised the issue of whether the de facto authorities had sufficient pragmatism to address the multiple crises the country is facing. Shortly after, the Taliban leader ordered the shutdown of all telecommunications including the cellphone network and internet.

This had a wide-ranging – and in some cases life-threatening – implications for people in Afghanistan, including delayed or no access to healthcare and emergency services; disruption of people's daily and family lives; exacerbation of existing restrictions on women and girls; and severe disruption of business, banking, humanitarian and air operations. The diplomatic community in Kabul was suddenly isolated from their capitals. The impact of this unprepared and unannounced decision was so disruptive that it was reversed by the more pragmatic faction of the de facto authorities.

This incident provides a vivid snapshot of the general situation in Afghanistan. On the one hand there is among the de facto authorities a faction that would isolate Afghanistan from the world. On the other hand, there is a faction that understands that Afghanistan is connected to the world, as are Afghans, and that the country cannot survive without these links which should be developed.

Our common objective is clearly stated in the 2023 Independent Assessment and in Security Council resolution 2721 (of 2023): an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbors, fully reintegrated into the international community, and meeting its international obligations. Let me stress that the objective is not the reintegration of Afghanistan under the de facto authorities as they currently are. It is reintegration once they have met their international obligations.

The United Nations remains committed to principled and pragmatic engagement guided by respect for international obligations, inclusive governance, and counter-terrorism commitments.

The United Nations has proposed a political roadmap as part of the Doha process to achieve this objective. The roadmap seeks to initiate progress on the major issues blocking Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community as described in the Independent Assessment.

We do not underestimate the challenges ahead. We have already noted the reluctance of the de facto authorities to engage in a multilateral process. We must also acknowledge the divergent positions within the international community that reduce international leverage. As the Secretary-General said during the First Meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan in Doha in May 2023, we expect that not all interests align but we do need to maintain some basic common positions. Across these issues and interests, the gaps between the international community and the de facto authorities – and among Member States themselves – are not easy to reconcile.

Promoting unity and overcoming these obstacles are the subject of our daily diplomacy with all stakeholders. While they are demanding, we must not collectively lose sight of the main objective.

Despite the serious issues described, and the serious crises described, an opportunity exists to build on the current relative stability to begin resolving the root causes of these crises. With the Council's support, we can continue to build bridges of engagement and work towards our

common vision of an Afghanistan at peace, reintegrated into the global community and where the human rights of all Afghans are realized and respected.

Thank you, Madame President and Members of the Council.

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