



Statements to the United Nations, International Organizations, and the Diplomatic Community

By Suraya Dalil

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"



Dear readers,

January 2019

This is a selection of a few notable statements that I have presented during the last three years as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations and other International Organizations based in Geneva, and Ambassador to Switzerland. The purpose of this presentation is to give you an insight on not only the messages conveyed, but also the pledges made on behalf of Afghanistan in the most important central point of multilateral diplomacy – the international Geneva.

The content of this collection reflects only a handful of statements of Afghanistan in the context of the human rights council, anniversaries of Afghanistan's Independence, anniversary of Afghanistan's membership to the UN, the meeting of the council of World Trade Organization, and cultural events. It also includes Afghanistan's voluntary pledges and commitments that were submitted to the UN General Assembly during the country's candidacy for the membership to the human rights council, which was authored by me with a great amount of inputs from my colleagues in the Mission, and after consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul and our Permanent Mission in New York.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of all members of the Afghanistan Embassy and Permanent Mission in Geneva, who have played an important role in representing the country's policies and priorities and contributing to the success of the Mission.

To me, the honor of representing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the nation – its potentials and aspirations – has greatly nurtured my love and commitment to my country and my people.

Thank you.

Suraya Dalil

Permanent Representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UN and other International Organizations based in Geneva, Ambassador to Switzerland

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Human Rights Council

39th Session

Item 3: General Debate on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development

UNOG, September 13, 2018

Mr. President,

Afghanistan welcomes the report presented by the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, and extends its gratitude for this notable work.

Two years ago, the Government of Afghanistan launched “The Citizens’ Charter” program, which implements a social contract between the government and its’ citizens, through Community Development Councils, to improve the core infrastructure and delivery of social services throughout the country.

The innovation of this Charter is that it is built around a unified budget and financial management system that enables communities to decide on their own development goals — and through the ability to monitor the quality of service delivery and report grievances — hold the government and other service providers accountable. The decision-making process within the Charter is deliberatively inclusive, allowing participation from all segments of the community, including women, youth, returnees, and the poor. I am pleased to inform that approximately forty percent of the members of the Community Development Councils are women.

Mr. President,

Although the report accurately echoes the concern on today’s widening disparities in development, it remains silent on the significant role of conflict and terrorism that hinders the ability of many States to achieve the right to development. We therefore recommend that the realities of conflict and terrorism, and recognition of the formidable obstacles they present, be weighed and considered in future reports.

Afghanistan stands ready to engage with the Special Rapporteur in his consultation with the Asian group later this year.

Thank you.

Human Rights Council

39th Session

Item 2: General Debate on the Oral Update of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNOG, September 11, 2018

Mr. President,

We would like to express our gratitude to the former High Commissioner for his leadership role in the promotion and protection of human rights values.

Afghanistan congratulates High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet as she assumes her new role, and wishes her the very best in being a global voice for human rights. We look forward to working with the new High Commissioner in the coming years, and take this opportunity to invite High Commissioner Bachelet to visit Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

We share concerns with the High Commissioner with regards to the record level of civilian casualties in Afghanistan in the past months.¹ The Government of Afghanistan has demonstrated courage, and a resolve to address the conflict by offering unconditional peace talks early this year, and declaring a unilateral ceasefire last month. We believe that the government, the United Nations and international community must exhaust every means available to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict.

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation of the countries mentioned in the oral update of the High Commissioner, and look forward to a productive engagement by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in preventing and mitigating the human rights violations worldwide.

¹The High Commissioner provided an Oral Update to the Council in which she stated that: “In Afghanistan, the Office is documenting record levels of civilian casualties. The number of civilians killed in conflict-related violence during the first half of 2018 was the highest six-month toll since we began our systematic documentation in 2009. Since then there has been a Taliban offensive on Ghazni in mid-August, and targeted attacks on the Shi’a community. We urge all parties to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, and to show more courage and creativity in breaking away from decades of war and violence.”

Mr. President,

As of last year, Afghanistan has extended a standing invitation for country visits to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. We remain eager to collaborate, and prepared to coordinate, such visits.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission – a Constitutional based commission, is dedicated to the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights. The Commission, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has twice secured ‘A-status’ accreditation from the peer review process of the International

Committee of national human rights institutions. This status has enhanced Afghanistan’s access to the United Nations human rights bodies, and has distinguished the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission as unique in our region.

We thank the OHCHR for the technical assistance provided to Afghanistan in the area of promotion and protection of human rights and look forward to continuing our constructive collaboration.

Thank you.



99th Anniversary of Afghanistan's Independence

Geneva, September 5, 2018

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues, and Friends,
Good evening.

I am honored to welcome you this evening to mark the 99th anniversary of Afghanistan's Independence. Thank you for being here and sharing this moment with us.

Every nation has a special historical journey, and they mark these journeys to honor their values and their aspirations. For my country one such distinction is the Day of Independence befallen 99 years ago.

For Afghans, Independence Day is a reminder of courage and pride that dates back to Ghazi Amanullah Khan, whose era marks the foundation of modern-day Afghanistan. The most significant reform credited to him was the creation of Afghanistan's first Constitution. In addition to this landmark feat, the establishment of a legislative assembly, an effective banking system, and the abolishment of slavery and forced labor were also initiated under his leadership. It was during Ghazi Amanullah Khan's that Afghanistan established diplomatic ties with most of the countries in the world.

Moreover, King Amanullah Khan's wife, Queen Soraya, was leading the efforts towards women's empowerment and participation by launching girls' education, access to maternal healthcare and women's active inclusion in the public sphere. Queen Soraya was the first Muslim consort who appeared in public together with her husband, an unconventional act at the time. The profound political and social changes that King Amanullah Khan and Queen Soraya brought, years ago, are what Afghanistan remains grateful for today.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Afghanistan President Mohd. Ashraf Ghani said, the people and the Government of Afghanistan have been engaged in an intense effort to re-imagine the country. Breaking the vicious circle of conflict, criminality, and poverty and replacing it with a virtue of participation, partnership, peace and progress is our critical task. Our national security forces have demonstrated their patriotism through daily sacrifices in a conflict that is imposed and has roots beyond our borders. We are proud of our national security forces and thank the international community for their Resolute Support.

The Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations will be co-hosing a Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Geneva on November 28. The Conference will be an opportunity to review the progress of the country towards self-reliance and to enhance support for the peace process as well as to establish a realistic path forward to accelerate this journey. We look forward to your participation and to a candid discussion.

Distinguished colleagues,
I wish you enjoy your time this evening with us, have some Afghani cuisine particularly our traditional Qabuli Palow, and enjoy the music performance.

Thank you.



Candidacy of Afghanistan to the Human Rights Council (2018-2020)

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 60/251

September 6, 2017

1. Afghanistan is honored to present its candidacy for membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council for the term of 2018-2020. Afghanistan brings vast experience in the implementation of human rights based on its policies, strategies and progressive accomplishments in the promotion and protection of human rights. Following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan's achievements in the human rights area have been remarkable. The credit goes to several parties including the State itself, national human rights institutions, civil society, as well as the international community, who with continued support has helped Afghanistan move toward a better country where its citizens live with dignity and rights. Afghanistan has consolidated its human rights gains and is ready to share them with the international human rights fora, the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms. This is the first time Afghanistan presents its candidacy for membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council.
2. The Afghan Constitution enshrines Afghanistan's commitment to the human rights. It acknowledges the importance of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while specific articles ensure the rights of every man and woman. Progressive realization of the human rights principles such as freedom of expression; inclusive decision-making; women's participation in political, social, economic, and security domains; and improvement in social services such as access to health care and education, are critical gains achieved by Afghanistan. The country is rigorously building its national security forces while combating terror and violent extremism every day almost in every corner of its territory. Afghanistan brings with itself a diverse experience acquired from conflict and its consequences, socio-economic challenges, institutional efforts for peace and justice, and democratic aspirations, all of which allow the country to have a practical and exceptional role in the promotion and protection of human rights and human dignity.

3. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, established in accordance with the United Nations sponsored Bonn Agreement of December 2001, was officially recognized by the Afghan Constitution (article. 58) in 2004. The Commission is a national human rights institution dedicated to the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights as well as the investigation of human rights abuses. The Commission, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has twice secured 'A-status' accreditation from the peer review process of the International Coordinating Committee of national human rights institutions, giving it enhanced access to the United Nations human rights bodies. The Commission has played a significant role in the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights situation in Afghanistan since its creation.

1. Action at the international level:

Adherence to the United Nations core international human rights conventions

4. Afghanistan has signed and ratified seven core international human rights conventions, some of which extend as far as 1983. These include: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1983); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1983); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1983); Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987); Convention on the Rights of the Child (1994); Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (2003) and International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012). Afghanistan has also ratified Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2002) and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2003).
5. Afghanistan was among the first Islamic countries to support the approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which is a strong indication of the nation's commitment to universal standards of human dignity.

Cooperation with special procedures mechanisms

6. Afghanistan has welcomed all the special procedures mandate holders in the recent years. The country received visits from the United Nations Special Representatives and Special Rapporteurs on various thematic areas including the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions in October 2002 and May 2008; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living in September 2003; the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination in 2009; the Special Rapporteur for children in armed conflict in February 2010; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in November 2014; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict in February 2016; and the Special Rapporteur on human rights of internally displaced persons in October 2016. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan expects the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in the course of 2017.

7. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has welcomed the recommendations made by the special procedures and employed them as guidance to strengthen the systems. Afghanistan is committed to continue compliance with their recommendations and follow ups. The country has prepared action plans to ensure implementation of the recommendations and rigorously monitor the progress.

Cooperation with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights

8. Afghanistan continues to strengthen its cooperation with the Office of United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights. In the past twelve years, the United Nations High Commissioners for Human Rights have made three different visits to Afghanistan, each of which have inspired a constructive relationship between the country and the Office that is still maintained today. Further, the Human Rights Unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was established as part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to pursue an overall strategy for ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights. The unit is involved in strategic discussions on human rights, as well as aiding the country in targeted research and reporting on the human rights situations.

Implementation of United Nations core human rights conventions

9. Afghanistan attaches significant value to its reporting obligations to human rights instruments and closely follows the implementation of their recommendations. Afghanistan's second periodic report for the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was reviewed in April 2017. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is fully committed to the implementation and follow ups of the concluding observations from the review. The country's second periodic reporting to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women was accomplished in July 2011, and the report to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2009. Additionally, Afghanistan reported on its obligations for the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in April 2008.

Universal Periodic Review

10. Afghanistan is committed to an open and constructive engagement in a robust universal review procedure, including reporting on measures taken to follow up on its recommendations. Afghanistan was among the first countries reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the Council in May 2009, followed by the second cycle of the review in January 2014. Both of which were prepared through an inclusive and extensive consultation process involving all relevant ministries and other governmental entities, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil society, and non-governmental organizations. Afghanistan undertakes the implementation of recommendations made in its last review and is currently preparing for its third review cycle planned for January 2019

International Criminal Court

11. Afghanistan is committed to cooperation with the International Criminal Court. The majority of crimes preserved in Rome Statute have been reflected in the new Penal Code of Afghanistan, which is already in the final stages of endorsement. A channel of communication and collaboration with the International Criminal Court has been established in the last two years and the Government is committed to keeping it open and constructive. To strengthen the relations and share the progress, Two high-ranking delegations from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan visited the headquarter of the International Criminal Court, which was followed by submission of two sets of informational packages to the Court pertaining to the legal actions taken by the Government against the crimes under the Rome Statute. Moreover, an official invitation has been extended to the International Criminal Court to visit Afghanistan.

2. Actions at the national level

Progress in national legislations

12. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has strived for including provisions of the conventions it has ratified into domestic laws. Afghanistan has recently endorsed the Law Inhibiting Torture (February 2017), Law on Combating Human and Migrants Trafficking (December 2016), Criminal Procedures Code (May 2014), Law on Prohibition of Children Recruitment in Military (December 2014), and Law on Access to Information (November 2014). In addition, provisions of the conventions were adopted in several legislations that were enacted in the past years including the Juveniles Code, Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women, Law on Financing Terrorism, Labor Law, Law on Anti-Corruption Strategy, Law on Juveniles Rehabilitation Centers, Law on Abduction and Human Trafficking, Law on Commercial Mediation, Law on Private Investment, Law on Prisons and Detention Centers, Law on Political Parties, Law on Gatherings, and the regulation on women's shelter/support centers. Those legislations, some landmark achievements of their kind, allow the country to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights and human dignity. Afghanistan is committed to reinforce rule of law, justice system, and accountability mechanisms, and deliver the best to its citizens.

Improving accountability and transparency

13. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan believes that accountability and transparency are an integral part of governance for peace, development and human rights. Besides the legislative reforms, Afghanistan has started a judicial reform program that includes review of structures and procedures. Most of the human resources of the Supreme Court and Attorney General Office have been recruited in the last two years through a merit-based competition with a noticeable female representation. A high-level council on rule of law and anti-corruption, which reports to the President, was established to lead the government effort on accountability and transparency. To further improve accountability and transparency, a special court to review cases of corruption has been established, which has so far reviewed several cases of alleged corruption.

14. To emphasize the needs for good governance and accountability, the government launched the Citizens Charter program last October. The Citizens Charter is part of the effort to break the cycle of fragility and violence, as well as promote the right to decision-making and development at the grassroots-level. The Charter grants a social contract between the government and community-level development councils to improve the delivery of core infrastructure and social services. Moreover, approximately forty percent of members of the development councils are women.

15. The freedom of expression has been a fundamental success in contributing to the promotion of human rights, social accountability and transformation that is unique to Afghanistan and its current generation. This freedom has manifested to a considerable number of television channels, radio stations, print media, art and music platforms, as well as a heavy presence on social media networks by Afghans. As a result, the free and independent media play a significant role in the protection, promotion and the monitoring of human rights in Afghanistan. The Law on Access to Information has been useful in empowering the citizens and the growing and vibrant civil society is among the most crucial contributor to human rights promotion and protection in Afghanistan.

Empowering women and promoting gender equality

16. The government is the main vehicle for implementing policies and commitments to advance the status of women and girls. Afghan women have taken a large burden from causes related to chronic conflict and war trauma, widespread poverty, socio-cultural traditions and practices, and poor infrastructure. The Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women is in force since 2009 and a regulation on the Protection of Human Rights in the Governmental Institutions was endorsed in August 2014. The national multi-year Action Plan on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution of 1325 on women, peace, and security was endorsed in 2015. The country has concluded a National Action Plan on Women's Economic Empowerment through an inclusive and extensive process involving women representatives from the provinces, civil society, and experts. Girls education, including access to higher level of education; maternal health and nutrition; women access to employment; women's role in political, social, economic and security; access to justice; and women's participation in peace process are centric to the government. The Ministry of Women Affairs is mandated with the formulating policies, setting priorities, and coordinating the programs on empowerment of women with other partners. In the recent years, Directorate of gender and human rights have been created in the ministries and in the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces. Recently, the position of Deputy Attorney General was created specifically in the areas concerning violence against women, juvenile offenses, and human rights. Similarly, at the provincial level attorneys, structures on combating violence against women, juvenile offenses and human rights are established. With the aim of gender equality and merit-based recruitment, the female representation in the Attorney General Office has increased from four percent to seventeen percent during last year. That includes recruitment of ten female at the level of Director General, four of whom are members of High Council of the Office of Attorney General. Moreover, special courts and prosecutors on the cases related to violence against women and juvenile justice have been created to ensure women have better access to the justice system.

Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and returnees

17. Afghanistan has experienced an unprecedented return of refugees and internally displaced persons in the recent months. The Government is committed to protecting the rights of internally displaced persons and returnees and providing effective mechanisms for addressing their specific needs. The Migration Council led by the President and the Displacement and Return Executive Committee led by the Chief Executive are high-level decision-making mechanisms to ensure effective government-led responses to the protracted and newly internally displaced persons and returnees. The National Internally Displaced Persons Policy remains a key instrument to guide government efforts to address the specific needs. To address population displacement, the government aims for a durable solution that consists of improved security, predictable resources, and employment opportunities. The steps taken so far in the peace process, regional economic integration and civil service reform will support solutions to the population movement.

Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals

18. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan believes that equality and justice are requisites to peace and a sustainable development. Afghanistan has thus endorsed the basic pillars of sustainable development, which are economic, social, and environmental goals and the integrated principles of peace, justice, and institutional development. Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (2017-2021) affirms the vision and commitments of the country to achieve self-reliance and improve welfare of its citizens. The economic and development forecast of Afghanistan is strongly linked with achieving a durable peace and reconciliation. The Government has invested in the peace process and stands firm on the need to find political solutions to the conflict.

3. Challenges

19. Global terror has targeted Afghanistan due to its central location and difficult terrain. Best estimates show an increase from 200 to 11,000 foreign fighters over the past two years. Afghanistan is making a full contribution as a frontline state and as a first line of defense for the security of the region. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is fighting over twenty international terrorist groups on behalf of the world. The situation of the country at the time of this pledge is highlighted with the high number of civilian casualties from conflict, including the suicide attacks and threats from Taliban, Al-Qaida, ISIS, Haqqani network and other militant groups. The country also faces a humanitarian situation caused by internal displacement due to conflict and a large number of returning refugees. Despite these challenges, everyday Afghans strive toward their aspirations of security and peace, justice, and human dignity. Membership of Afghanistan to the Human Rights Council will boost the nation's aspirations for the value of human rights, as they are universal, indivisible, and interdependent.

4. Commitments by Afghanistan as a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council

20. Afghanistan fully acknowledges the responsibilities of its membership to the Human Rights Council. Afghanistan is committed to making a meaningful contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national, regional and international levels during and after its membership in the Council. Afghanistan hereby pledges to:

National level

- (a) Remain committed to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- (b) Ensure endorsement of the revised Penal Code consistent with the Afghan Constitution and guided by the commitment of Afghanistan to the international conventions.
- (c) Ensure endorsement of a comprehensive Child Act and the development of a national Action Plan on the protection of children.
- (d) Ensure full implementation of the national multi-year Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council resolution of 1325 on women, peace and security.
- (e) Remain committed to ensuring meaningful participation of women in political decision-making, including the peace talks, security and justice sectors, legislative processes and economic programs.
- (f) Ensure civilian casualties from armed conflict are reduced to a minimum level.
- (g) Continue its full support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Ensure the implementation of the Ombudsperson office within the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.
- (h) Establish an adequate information sharing system on threats to media outlets, civil society organizations, journalists and human rights defenders at the provincial level.
- (i) Continue to foster genuine participation and meaningful involvement of civil society and human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Regional level

- (j) Maintain support for the creation of a regional human rights mechanism in South Asia, and advocate its role and effect with relevant member States.

International level

- (k) Continue its full cooperation with the Council in accordance with resolution 60/251 and engage with the aim of contributing to the full implementation of the mandate of the Council.
- (l) Establish qualitatively new standards of cooperation with all parts of the human rights monitoring mechanism of the United Nations system, including the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Procedures Mandate Holders, Complaint Procedure of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies.
- (m) Uphold the universality of the Universal Periodic Reviews and engage in the review process through constructive participation in the interactive dialogues.
- (n) Remain committed to implementing the recommendations that received its support during the second cycle of the Afghanistan Universal Periodic Review.
- (o) Support initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the Council to promote the rights of the most vulnerable groups with special emphasis on children, women, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees.
- (p) Increase its activities aimed at sharing its experience in carrying out renowned programs in various areas such as counter terrorism, women's rights, freedom of expression, and others that serve the goal of effective implementation of human rights.
- (q) Continue to support meaningful engagement of civil society and NGOs with the Council.
- (r) Support efforts aimed at ensuring efficient international response to newly emerging human rights challenges.

WTO Council for trade in goods

Pakistan’s Restricting Measures on Trade and Transit

WTO, April 6, 2017

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to be on record with the following declaration.

On February 17, 2017, the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan unilaterally closed the entry points at the Durand line with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for all trade and transit. This closure was maintained for 32 days until March 21, 2017.

As a result, Afghan exporters were prevented from shipping any goods to Pakistan destined to be released for consumption in that country. Similarly, they were unable to export any goods to other countries which, in order to reach their destination, have to transit the territory of Pakistan. By the same token, imports from Pakistan to Afghanistan did not reach our country. The same is true as far as goods from other countries are concerned which, in order to reach Afghanistan, have to transit through Pakistan.

The measures taken by the government of Pakistan at the entry points at the Durand line, border with Afghanistan, were tantamount to a total ban of trade between the two countries. Afghanistan considers that these measures nullified the benefits accruing to Afghanistan under the provisions of Article I:1, Article V:2, and Article XI:1 of the GATT 1994.

The total import value from Pakistan during 2015-2016 was (\$ 876 million). The total export value from Afghanistan to Pakistan during 2015-2016 was (\$ 235 million). Regarding the international transit, on average base during 2015-2016, a total of 3,400 trucks have taken the transit goods from Afghanistan through Pakistan to other countries.

Accordingly, the consequences of closing the entry points at the Durand line were immense. After almost one week, some 2,434 trucks were blocked in both Afghanistan and Pakistan sides of the entry points at the Durand line. Around 308 trucks, which would transit through Pakistan to a third country, were blocked as well. When the entry points at the Durand line opened, it took around

11 days to return to a normal clearance of goods, but there are still many unjustifiable measures that exist for Afghanistan’s trucks to transit through Pakistan.

As a result, Afghan exporters and carriers suffered enormous economic losses. They were caused by demurrage, costs for stocking perishable goods, and loss of the same. The total value of exports that were banned from Afghanistan due to blockage of the entry points at the Durand line was estimated at \$ 6 million. Based on the report of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), Afghan traders have suffered a total loss of \$ 80-90 million, paying demerge fees as well as damage of perishable goods.

Moreover, closing the entry points at the Durand line had adverse effects on the entire economy and population of Afghanistan. After a few days, shortages of basic goods occurred, pushing their prices to levels that many Afghans cannot afford.

Afghanistan is a least-developed country. To a large extent, the country’s development depends, on its participation in international trade. Enhancing this participation is one of the main goals of the government of Afghanistan. Access to the markets of other countries is a prerequisite for achieving this goal.

Afghanistan is also a land-locked country. Freedom of transit through the territory of neighboring countries, in particular those that have access to the sea, is a crucial condition for being able to participate in international trade.

Moreover, Afghanistan is in a particularly vulnerable state as a least-developed and landlocked country. Therefore, denial of access to the markets of other countries and of the freedom of transit through neighboring countries is prone to put the country’s development into jeopardy. In short, it is in contrary

to the principles of international trade, and is fundamentally unfair.

Securing the respect of these rights has been one of the main concerns that motivated Afghanistan’s decision to join WTO. The government of Afghanistan hopes that Pakistan, from now on, accepts to honor the corresponding obligations as a Member of the World Trade Organization.

Thank you Chair.

Reception to honour Afghan Women Orchestra “Zohra” visit to Switzerland

UNOG, January 23, 2017

Distinguished Ambassadors,
Colleagues from the United Nations,
Dear children,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Asalum Alikum, Good evening!

Thank you for being with us tonight. I appreciate your time and presence here with us.

On behalf of Afghanistan Permanent Mission, I welcome the Afghan Women Orchestra Zohra, who are here in Geneva as part of their Europe tour. Last week, the Orchestra conducted a remarkable performance with their Swiss partners in the closing session of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos. They performed in Zurich over the weekend, and will perform for the public on Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th of January in the Centre des Arts, Ecole Internationale de Genève, before proceeding to Germany. We have provided printed information that we invite you to share with colleagues, and encourage you to attend the public concert for a more complete experience of these talented musicians.

Let me tell you why this Orchestra is special for us.

They are a group of 30 young girls between the ages 13 to 20 years, who have defied the odds against them, and are pursuing music as their educational focus and career. Many students in the Zohra Orchestra have experienced shattered childhoods with the loss of loved ones, displacement, conflict

and extreme poverty. And today they are the first women in their families, their community, and their country to learn music in over 35 years. They have chosen music as their vehicle of expression, and as the means with which they can contribute to building a peaceful and just society. This group of young women represents diversity and transformation — their very existence demonstrates the power of determination to conquer fear.

The Zohra Orchestra display values that the Government of Afghanistan and its international friends uphold and have fought for over the last sixteen years. These values include freedom of expression, inclusive decision-making, and girls’ education. The Zohra Orchestra’s message to the World, is that the answer to terrorism and fundamentalist extremism is within our grasp — and can be achieved through community empowerment, inclusiveness of youth, girls and women, education and peace, and effective leadership.

This Orchestra embodies a new identity for young Afghans – an identity that enshrines commitment, courage and innovation. This is, therefore, a moment of celebration!



Dear Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to remind us that Afghanistan is a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the term of 2018 to 2020. This is the first time that Afghanistan contends for a membership in the Council. We believe that this is the time for Afghanistan to consolidate its hard-won experiences and share them with the world. I hope that you continue supporting us on our journey in championing for human rights.

I am also pleased to share additional news of success. Our Parliamentarian Ms. Fawzia Koofi, who is with us here tonight, was elected today as the Chair for the Committee of Human Rights of Parliamentarians within the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Please join me in congratulating her on this notable achievement.

The Afghan Women Orchestra “Zohra” is part of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music of the Ministry of Education that was inaugurated in 2010. Under the leadership of Dr. Ahmad Sarmast, the Institute has become a venue for music education for hundreds of young students in the recent years. I now invite Dr. Sarmast to address the event.

Thank you.

The 70th anniversary of Afghanistan’s membership to the UN

Afghanistan Permanent Mission in New York, November 21, 2016

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening,

I am delighted to be part of this event marking the 70th anniversary of Afghanistan’s membership to the United Nations. On November 19, 1946, Afghanistan joined the United Nations to become its 52nd founding member. At that time, and now again, Afghanistan has demonstrated its commitment to the UN Charter in «maintaining international peace and security» for mankind, thus «reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small».

In the last seven decades following Afghanistan’s membership to the UN, the country has been on a long and challenging journey toward peace. Following a period of relative stability and a degree of development, we experienced a prolonged period of political instability and conflict, including years of severe discrimination and oppression of girls and women in particular, marked by the Taliban rule in the 90s. Since the end of 2001, the nation has experienced notable achievements, guided by the new Constitution that envisions a democratic governance and a society where women and men have equal rights and duties. Prominent achievements include Secretary improvement in social services such as access to health care and education, and women’s participation in political, social,

and economic domains. Most importantly, the progressive realization of human rights principles is evident in a growing civil society, freedom of media, and a sustained commitment to human rights. Recognizing that terrorism and violent extremism present fundamental barriers to our aspirational goals, we are steadfast in our efforts to build and strengthen our national security forces. We thank the international community, United Nations, NATO, the European Union, and all our partner countries in the region for their continued support and engagement.

Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

As Ambassador Saikal mentioned, for the first time, Afghanistan is a candidate for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2018 to 2020. We believe that we are a strong candidate because we are especially relevant and highly committed, and we are thus able to represent the multidimensional realities from the heart of Asia. Afghanistan has already been a party to seven core international human rights treaties and has ratified three optional protocols. Our government considers constructive dialogue as a valuable tool to exchange views and build consensus. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Afghanistan will have the opportunity to share with other Member States its experiences, challenges, and approaches in finding solutions to issues of humanitarian nature, especially in difficult circumstances. We acknowledge that peace, security, development, and human rights are interconnected in nature and mutually reinforcing. Afghanistan stands ready to assume its first mandate in the Human Rights Council, committed to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedom for all, through effective international cooperation.

Your vote to support Afghanistan’s candidacy to the Human Rights Council is a vote to recognize the sacrifices the nation is making every day in its fight against terrorism. It is a vote of affirmation for a country that is committed and determined to secure a better future, and it is a vote for universality of human rights principles.

My colleagues and I look forward contacting you in the near future here in New York, in Geneva as well as in your capitals to ensure your full support and address any questions that you may have.

Thank you.

97th Anniversary of Afghanistan’s Independence

Geneva, September 5, 2016

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

I am delighted and honored to welcome you to the 97th anniversary of Afghanistan’s Independence. Thank you for sharing this moment with us. For Afghans, Independence Day signifies our pride and our love for our country. It reminds us of the courage and commitment demonstrated by Ghazi Amanullah Khan who led the country through its independence, and laid the foundation for a modern society.

Afghanistan’s relations with Switzerland goes to the time when Ghazi Amanullah Khan visited Switzerland in 1928 – the first state visit of Afghanistan to Switzerland. The relations between the two countries subsequently have been nurtured over time, and recently strengthened with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two governments in Kabul in May 2016.

Today, we celebrate the Independence Day of Afghanistan in a situation where every day our national security forces are in combat with Taliban, Daesh, and Al-Qaeda to protect the lives, ideals, and accomplishments that the nation has made in the last few years. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Afghanistan’s national security forces for their dedication and sacrifices, and on behalf of the government, I thank the countries,

as well as NATO, who have been supporting us in our efforts to not only combat insurgencies and terrorism, but also to establish rule of law and institutions. Security and stability in Afghanistan are critical for the regional and global security and peace, and although Afghans pay a huge cost for the current conflict, the consequences and the solutions of the conflict go beyond our borders. We must find a resolution collectively and honestly and, in fact, soon.

Afghanistan, the heart of Asia, was a platform on the Silk Road for few centuries, and thus serving as a connecting corridor between Central Asia and South Asia. We have seen, not very long ago, that Afghanistan and its neighbors were living in peace, allowing trade of goods and services, exchange of science and arts, and hence fostering prosperity and development for the nations in the region. The region needs regional collaboration and trust building measures now more than ever. Afghanistan’s vision in regional integration and connectivity, especially through trade and energy exchange, will contribute to the creation of new opportunities for the region.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Afghanistan values the role of the United Nations in today’s world. We believe that the United Nations can fulfill its effective role in promoting cooperation among states, guiding a sustainable development, and establishing a just and reasonable international political and economic order that meets the interest of all nations. We acknowledge the presence of the UN in Afghanistan and the role it plays in reflecting the needs and national priorities of the country.

Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Afghanistan’s achievements in the last fifteen years in the area of democratic governance have been noteworthy. The Constitution in particular upholds democracy, human rights, and freedom of media. Afghanistan will present its vision and strategies for self-reliance and development in the EU-hosted conference on Afghanistan in Brussels on October 5. I would like to thank the EU and the government of Belgium for hosting the upcoming Brussels Conference. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the countries and organizations who have committed attendance in the Brussels Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This evening, I hope that you enjoy the taste of Afghan classical music – Afghan Rubab by Mr. Khalid Arman who is one of the very few musicians to master two classical traditions: the Indo-Afghan and the European. His concerts, recordings, and teachings are incredible means of dialogue between cultures.

Now, I would like to invite His Excellency Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to address this event. High Commissioner Grandi worked in Afghanistan as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General from 2004 to 2005 and since then remained a close friend to the country.

Ramadan – Iftar invitation

hosted by the United States Ambassador to Switzerland

Ambassador’s Residence, Bern, June 15, 2016

Dear Ambassador LeVine,

I thank you for this Iftar invitation, and for bringing together a group with various religion background, to mark the fasting month for Muslims – the month of Ramadan. I appreciate this.

Fasting for one month each year is one of the five pillars of Islam that in fact commemorates the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). During Ramadan, from dawn until sunset, Muslims refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, and smoking. However, alongside prohibition from food and drink, we are also instructed to avoid sinful behavior such as ill speech, dishonesty, theft, and violence. The whole purpose of this fasting is to demonstrate belief and faith in God and keep the mind focused on the spiritual being.

Ramadan is viewed by Muslims as a month-long school where graduates leave with a developed sense of self-control in areas including diet, sleep, emotions, and the use of time. A true Muslim, during Ramadan and all along, avoid hatred, suppression, violence, and bloodshed - these were never solutions and will never be.

Muslim civilization is an important part of world history that contributed to world identity, cultural evolution, and development. The Islamic Golden Age, between the eighth to thirteenth centuries, was a time when the Islamic world experienced notable scientific, economic, and cultural gains: from mathematics to medicine, architecture to literature.

Islam is a religion of love, and the Taj Mahal proves it. Taj Mahal – the white marble mausoleum in India designated as a UNESCO world heritage site – is one of the universally admired Muslim’s architectures. It is a monument of “love” – love of a Muslim king to his favorite wife. That is what Islam inspires and teaches.

Today we need to continue to apply the guidance of the Holy Quran in our search for knowledge and compassion, and in our determination for peace.

Thank you Ambassador LeVine again.
Ramadan Karim and bone appetite.



Afghanistan morning at the UN Women’s Guild

UNOG, March 1, 2016

Distinguished Ladies,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Good morning. I thank the UN Women’s Guild for having me here, and would like to join them in welcoming all of you to the Afghan coffee morning.

I am delighted to be here to share my enthusiasm and commitment for the cause of women, for those in Afghanistan, in Switzerland, and all over the world.

I have been working in Geneva for four months, and on several occasions, I have been asked to explain what the life of a woman is like in Afghanistan. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the life of an average/ordinary Afghan female citizen, from childhood to adulthood, including some of the challenges she encounters.

The birth of a baby girl in many instances is not a cause for celebration – unlike that of a baby boy. Childhood for both girls and boys is a time where survival and wellbeing are threatened by disease and malnutrition. Primary school participation for children is approximately 84 percent on average – however this average mask the differences between boys and girls. Only 1 in 2 girls will attend primary school, and many will not complete high school for reasons arising from circumstances affecting their security such as the distance from home to school, the limited number of female teachers—especially in remote areas, and poor school facilities. Similarly, access to sports, libraries, music and art,

remain limited to some urban areas. Adolescence for an Afghan girl is often characterized by marriage at a young age and early motherhood, both of which contribute to life-long physical, social, and emotional disadvantages. Preventable maternal mortality from pregnancy-related complications remains high with a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of more than 300 deaths per 100,000 live births. To place this public health metric in context - one Afghan woman dies every two hours from pregnancy-related causes, and most of these deaths are preventable. Even worse, with a first pregnancy at a young age, and an average of 4.9 children during her reproductive life, a woman faces this risk multiple times.

Despite this challenging condition for girls and women, however, the country has made remarkable progress compared to what we experienced two decades ago. First, the Afghanistan Constitution of 2004 has indicated equal rights for men and women. This was a historical victory for Afghan women. This Constitution specifies 27 percent of seats should be allocated to female parliamentarians - a proportion that is far ahead of many other countries. In addition to the increasing proportion of female cabinet members and governors, the political, social, and economic participation of women is evident in increasing numbers of female teachers, physicians, journalists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, police officers etc. Currently, around 35 percent of students at the universities and 22 percent of civil service staff are women ¹

The most important development, is that many women are now aware of and capable of making choices regarding their career, travel, marriage, and reproductive health — including the timing and number of children they may have. The journey for women’s empowerment and gender equality has been invaluable, despite the challenges and complexity that accompany prolonged conflict and socio-economic difficulties. This journey is not over and will require determination, strategic leadership, and sustained commitment.

The Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is committed to achieve an environment for women and men as is provided for in the Constitution. The Government believes that the role of women in promoting peace, development, and prosperity is critical.

Dear friends and fellow sisters,

Today, we are honored with the presence of a great Afghan musician Mr. Hussain Arman whose music is a source of inspiration and joy to many Afghans. He is accompanied by another young musician, Mr. Mansoor Ghafoori. They will shortly perform traditional Afghan music.

Thank you for your attention and, again, welcome to this event.

¹The figures are from UNICEF and AMS 2010 report.

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