



Briefing on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 8 March 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt
Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

President

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Otunbayeva for her briefing. We also thank Mozambique for inviting *Zubaida Akbar* to brief us on the challenges, or rather, the struggles and humiliations that women in Afghanistan are having to contend with on a daily basis. Your message on International Women's Day has special significance, and I assure you that Malta will remain committed to keeping the spotlight on this fundamental issue during its term on the Council and beyond.

President

Afghanistan remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with around 28.3 million Afghans in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.

According to the UN, in just 18 months, Afghanistan's GDP declined by some 30 per cent, the cost of a basic food basket rose by 30 per cent, and unemployment by 40 per cent. All this has tipped the country into yet another cycle of impoverishment.

Against this backdrop, Malta reiterates its full support for the work of UNAMA. Our focus remains on supporting the needs and rights of all Afghans.



We are also pleased that the European Union has re-established its physical presence in Kabul to support humanitarian operations.

President

Malta deplores the Taliban's systematic gender persecution and discrimination against women and girls across all political, economic, and social spheres. Their systematic aggression against women violates international law, contravenes fundamental human rights and gender equality norms, and the UN Charter itself. As an international community, we are obliged to respond to abuses of governance that institutionalise discrimination.

Afghan women and girls must be given access to education, work and be able to participate in political life without fear of reprisals.

Afghanistan's economic recovery and development cannot materialise without women's full, equal, and meaningful participation. Women are crucial leaders for change. Without them, there is little hope for a brighter tomorrow in Afghanistan.

President

Malta is also deeply concerned by the restrictive edicts placed on women by the de facto authorities in December 2022. These edicts are not only reprehensible, they also threaten to undermine the crucial humanitarian



operations across Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General states in his quarterly report, the recent edicts 'have in effect put the development of the three-year United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan on hold'.

We welcome the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and OCHA in engaging with the de facto authorities to find new parameters and protocols for humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. These parameters will allow aid to continue reaching the people of Afghanistan without compromising the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality, and humanity.

President

As the humanitarian and political crisis in Afghanistan continues to persist, much progress is needed on supporting the functioning of the Afghan economy and local markets, especially in the face of mass, acute hunger.

This Council must remain vigilant and united to swiftly respond against any further repressive measures by the de facto authorities.

The latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan illustrates the state of the shrinking space for civil society in the country. We support the recommendations outlined in his report and call on the de facto authorities to implement them in full.



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As the causes of the current crisis are multifaceted and diverse, we strongly support the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, which includes robust protections and advancements of the full spectrum of women's rights.

We look forward to actively engage with and further support the Mission towards accomplishing its priorities.

I thank you.