



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

10 December 2020

The Situation in Afghanistan

**Statement by HE The Hon Mitch Fifield
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United
Nations in New York**

Thank you Mr President.

Australia welcomes the ongoing Afghanistan peace negotiations, and we call on all parties to embrace this opportunity to create and implement a sustainable, inclusive political settlement. We support an Afghan led and Afghan-owned peace process, that preserves and builds on the political, economic and social achievements of the past 19 years. We call on both parties to conduct the negotiations in good faith, and note that difficult compromises may be needed to see a successful conclusion to the bloodshed.

We note with great concern the unacceptably high number of casualties, including among women and children, as a result of the conflict. We call on all sides to reduce the level of violence, and to observe a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire to create the environment necessary for the peace negotiations to progress.

We strongly encourage all parties to include Afghanistan's diverse voices – particularly those of Afghan women – throughout the negotiations. Australia continues to promote women as key agents of change, and encourages their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in Afghanistan's peace, stabilisation and decision-making processes – for the benefit of all Afghans.

Australia recognises Afghanistan's important steps on its development pathway, and we join the international community in supporting Afghanistan's continued progress towards self-reliance. At the International Conference on Afghanistan last month, the international community demonstrated strong support to Afghanistan by committing around US\$13.5 billion in development assistance, which included Australia's pledge of up to \$200 million Australian dollars from 2021 to 2024. We should acknowledge the strength of this support from international partners at a time when domestic and development budgets are under considerable strain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, this financial support does come with conditions. A prerequisite for ongoing international financial assistance will be Afghanistan's commitment to democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality, as embedded in the Afghan Constitution, along with the full respect for Afghanistan's international commitments. We also expect a strong commitment by all Afghans to fight against corruption, which will ensure critical international resources are provided to those most in need.

The prospect of peace offers a transformational opportunity, and the next few months are critical in setting Afghanistan's course for the years ahead. Australia remains committed to helping the Afghan people chart their course towards peace, and seek a more secure and prosperous future.