



# AUSTRALIA



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**UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**  
**26 June 2018**

## **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

**Statement by H.E. Gillian Bird**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative**  
**of Australia to the United Nations**

(As delivered)

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Thank you Mr President

Australia takes this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Afghanistan on President Ghani's 16 June decision to extend the unilateral ceasefire for the remainder of the holy month of Ramadan and for the Eid-al-Fitr.

The Afghan people overwhelmingly supported the cessation of hostilities, and the ceasefire has given hope that a lasting peace may be possible.

Australia has also welcomed President Ghani's invitation to the Taliban at the 28 February meeting of the Kabul Peace Process to

engage in negotiations ‘without preconditions and without the threat of violence’.

President Ghani’s offer in February and the ceasefire in June are bold steps, and they reflect the aspirations of the Afghan people. Australia underscores its disappointment that the Taliban has chosen so far not to match President Ghani’s bold thinking.

We deeply regret the continuing violence outlined in the Secretary-General’s report, and the role of the Taliban and other insurgent groups in engaging in a series of heinous and cowardly attacks targeting Afghanistan’s civilian population.

We condemn the brutal attacks by insurgent groups, and the actions of ISIS and ISIS-inspired groups, Al-Qaida, its affiliates and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

Together with our allies and partners in the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, Australia remains committed to supporting the Afghan security forces to meet the challenges presented by these groups.

Throughout the years of conflict, the Afghan people have demonstrated their steadfast commitment to building a better society in which the voices of all its members can be heard.

The parliamentary elections now scheduled for October 2018 will be another important step in this process.

We have been encouraged that, despite ongoing violence and intimidation, voter registration has been growing.

Conducting parliamentary elections in October will be crucial for political credibility. We encourage the Afghan Government to maintain its efforts to hold inclusive elections, and welcome the UN's commitment to providing support to those elections.

We look forward to further discussing the Afghan Government's plans for the upcoming November 2018 Ministerial Conference in Geneva, to progress Afghanistan's economic and social prosperity.

In addition to its many other challenges, we note Afghanistan is facing an imminent drought crisis, affecting two-thirds of the country.

An estimated 1.4 million people are likely to need emergency food and nutrition assistance. Australia will continue to help respond to this challenge.

International efforts in Afghanistan are supported by a strong UN presence, and Australia values the role UNAMA, ably led by

Special Representative Yamamoto, plays in guiding and coordinating international support in Afghanistan.

Thank you Mr President.