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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

**Statement by Mr David Yardley
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations**

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Thank you Mr President, and thank you to Special Representative Yamamoto and all of today's briefers.

Mr President

We congratulate the people of Afghanistan on their courage and determination during parliamentary elections on 20 October. Despite violence and intimidation, and disappointing administrative failures, the Afghan people turned out to vote in impressive numbers, and make their voices heard.

Australia urges the Government of Afghanistan to quickly address the deficiencies evident in the electoral processes, and ensure that the 2019 presidential election is credible, transparent, and fully reflects the will of the Afghan people.

Mr President

Just as the October elections demonstrated the desire of Afghans to participate directly in the governance of their country, their call for an end to the conflict and ongoing suffering is loud and should be heard.

President Ghani's determination to take the lead on peace through the Kabul Process, and his offer to the Taliban of negotiations without pre-conditions, demonstrate a strong desire for a new chapter dedicated to peace.

Australia understands and shares this desire, and welcomes these initiatives. Australia believes the Kabul Process should form the framework for the pursuit of peace in Afghanistan, and the basis for an Afghan-owned and led peace process.

Mr President

We were pleased the international community re-confirmed its support for Afghanistan – and for an Afghan-owned and led peace process – at the 28 November Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, and the 6 December General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan.

Australia particularly welcomes the efforts of the United States to build on the Afghan Government's initiatives in 2018, and to bring the parties together in meaningful negotiations.

We are deeply disappointed that, to date, the Taliban has refused to engage with the Afghan Government, and has continued its bloody campaign against the Afghan people.

We call on the Taliban to end its violence, enter genuine negotiations with the Afghan Government, and bring relief to the Afghan people.

In the meantime, Australia will continue to stand with its allies and partners in the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, and work with Afghanistan's security forces to overcome the challenges they face.

Australia also recognizes that Afghanistan has made important progress, especially on economic and institutional reform. We encourage continued progress, especially against corruption to ensure that more resources reach their intended destinations.

Mr President

The Afghan people face natural as well as man-made challenges. We have seen this year how drought has affected many Afghans. In March 2018 we pledged \$39 million over three years to support vulnerable groups affected by conflict and displacement, bringing Australia's humanitarian response to Afghanistan to \$89 million since 2014.

During the Geneva Conference, we also announced an additional \$5 million contribution to provide emergency assistance to almost 1.4 million Afghans on the verge of acute famine.

Finally, Mr President, we wish to again record our appreciation for UNAMA's work in Afghanistan. At a difficult time of record levels of violence, we nevertheless look forward to a point when UNAMA can help Afghanistan enter a new era of peace and reconstruction.