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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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The Situation in Afghanistan

Statement by Mr David Yardley
Counsellor (Political), Permanent Mission of Australia to the
United Nations

(As delivered)

Thank you President.

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, the Australian Government congratulates the people of Afghanistan on their courage and determination, participating in Presidential elections on 28 September. We commend the Afghan people for exercising their democratic right in difficult circumstances.

We await the results of the election and encourage all stakeholders to respect due process during the period of tallying votes and reviewing complaints.

The Australian Government acknowledges the commitment of the Afghan Government, and the bravery of the Afghan security forces, in promoting security, combatting terrorism and working to create the necessary conditions for a peaceful end to the longstanding conflict in Afghanistan.

Afghans are ready for peace and security, which are preconditions for Afghanistan's development.

There is no military solution to the conflict. Dialogue and negotiation are the only path to a permanent settlement. We welcome the important steps the Government of Afghanistan, and the United States, have taken towards ending the conflict, including recent confidence building measures. We encourage our partners to support these steps towards a peace that can set the stage for post-peace economic development.

We condemn the Taliban's ongoing use of violence. We are disappointed that the Taliban continues to resist direct talks with the Afghan Government. We do not believe that a sustainable political settlement is viable without such talks, and call on the Taliban to reduce violence immediately and begin discussions without preconditions.

While we welcome efforts made towards peace, we must not forget the millions of Afghans who continue to struggle in the face of a protracted humanitarian crisis. The links between conflict, humanitarian need and ongoing development are complex. International partners need to coordinate closely and draw on our collective experience to support Afghanistan through a successful transition to peace. There are many challenges, including corruption, that diminish the extent to which the Afghan people are able to benefit from peace and development.

Australia calls on international partners to recognise Afghan women's achievements, their gains and their particular struggles in the ongoing conflict. Afghan women have the right to a strong voice in the ongoing

dialogue on peace and development. Indeed, a peace process cannot be successful without their full involvement. We call on international partners to mobilise diplomatic and development resources to support Afghan women.

We appreciate the valuable contribution of all UN agencies, diplomatic partners and their staff in supporting Afghanistan to meet its people's needs. Australia calls on the international community to cooperate in continued efforts to support the people of Afghanistan.