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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [79/317](#) and Security Council resolution [2777 \(2025\)](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on the situation in Afghanistan and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), including at the subnational level.

2. The report contains an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, dated 3 December 2025 ([A/80/556-S/2025/789](#)).

II. Relevant developments

3. The Taliban de facto authorities maintained effective control over the national territory of Afghanistan while continuing to enforce policies in line with their version of an Islamic system that restricts the rights of women and girls. The de facto authorities continue to prevent Afghan women personnel of the United Nations from accessing United Nations premises. Heightened cross-border hostilities with Pakistan, including shelling, air strikes and drone activity, resulted in civilian casualties and damage to property. Violations of human rights, including women's rights, remained widespread, involving corporal punishment, public executions, arbitrary arrests and restrictions on freedom of expression and the media. The humanitarian and economic situation worsened amid declining international assistance, severe underfunding of the humanitarian response, large-scale returns of Afghans from neighbouring countries, drought and intensifying climate shocks, the aftermath of major earthquakes and growing food insecurity, malnutrition and public health risks. The 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan includes an appeal for



\$1.71 billion to deliver prioritized, life-saving assistance to 17.5 million people out of the 21.9 million identified as being in need of humanitarian assistance.

A. Political developments

4. Through public gatherings, monitoring missions and provincial tours, including visits by senior de facto officials to address madrasa graduation ceremonies, the de facto authorities emphasized unity, obedience, sharia-based governance, merit-based administration and the rejection of ethnic biases. Concurrently, in its messaging, the leadership reaffirmed the importance of loyalty to the Taliban leader and disavowed rumours of internal divisions. These efforts were accompanied by intensified engagement with religious institutions across the country, underscoring the central role of religious authority.

5. In an audio message disseminated to the media on 15 November, the Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, criticized the legal framework that had existed under the former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and specifically rejected “democratic” and “non-Islamic” systems, asserting that legislation must derive exclusively from the Qur’an and hadith. On 16 December, during a three-day workshop attended by de facto officials in Kandahar, he emphasized that the work of administrative institutions constituted a religious obligation and reiterated his instructions on discipline and governance. On 5 January, reportedly on his instructions, salary increases introduced by the de facto authorities were approved for religious officials.

6. On 22 November, the de facto Minister for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, stated in an audio message that education would occur only within a framework defined by the Qur’an and ulama. He emphasized mandatory hijab and moral requirements and offered no timeline with regard to the resumption of secondary and higher education for girls and women. On 23 November, the de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice and Kabul provincial authorities held a gathering with scholars, elders, officials and residents to encourage cooperation on enforcement of the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice, promote unity and support for the Islamic system and counter “misinformation and external interference”. The de facto Minister engaged with de facto officials and religious leaders in Balkh Province on 1 December and in Nuristan Province on 15 December, underscoring the need for strict implementation of the law, official discipline, unity and religious responsibility. On 4 January, in an audio message, he instructed inspectors to adhere strictly to sharia law, disregard public criticism and prioritize reform and discipline in the enforcement of the law.

7. The de facto authorities continued the strict enforcement of the restrictions on access to United Nations offices for Afghan women personnel that had been in place across the country since 7 September 2025. The United Nations has continuously urged senior representatives of the de facto authorities to lift those restrictions.

8. Following an announcement on 8 November by the de facto Ministry of Justice that it would develop its five-year strategic plan aimed at, inter alia, improving access to justice and service delivery based on the sharia, a draft plan was circulated to de facto ministries for their input. On 9 December, the Deputy Spokesperson for the de facto authorities reiterated their commitment to eliminating corruption, land grabs and embezzlement and promised to facilitate oversight by the public authorities and simplify administrative processes.

9. On 8 January, the de facto Supreme Court sent a circular to all courts transmitting and calling for the implementation of the recently approved decree

No. 12 of 5 January on the “criminal rules of courts”. The decree expands the offences to which the death penalty can be applied, provides for the use of corporal punishment for numerous offences and contains provisions that violate the freedom of religion and the freedom of expression by criminalizing criticism of the de facto authorities and their policies.

10. The de facto authorities continued to appoint male-only Taliban loyalists to leadership positions. At the national level, reshuffles included the de facto Minister of Energy and Water; the de facto Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development; four de facto deputy ministers, responsible for labour and social affairs, public works, rural rehabilitation and development, and urban development and housing; and eight directors, within the de facto Office of Administrative Affairs of the Prime Minister, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture, and the national electricity company (Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat). Subnational appointments included 5 de facto provincial governors, for Bamyan, Daykundi, Jowzjan, Parwan and Sar-e Pul Provinces; 5 de facto deputy provincial governors, for Badakhshan, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nimroz and Takhar Provinces; 32 de facto district governors; 3 de facto mayors of provincial capital cities; 3 provincial chiefs of police, for Laghman, Paktika and Samangan Provinces; and 22 heads of provincial line departments.

11. During the reporting period, nine registered religious madrasas were inaugurated, in Ghazni, Wardak, Paktiya, Daykundi and Farah Provinces. Fifteen graduation ceremonies were organized, in Badakhshan, Balkh, Badghis, Ghazni, Samangan, Farah, Logar, Paktika, Wardak, Kabul and Zabul Provinces, in which 1,560 male and 413 female students graduated, including 709 male graduates from jihadi madrasas.

12. During the reporting period, the de facto Administrative Reform and Civil Service Authority reported the organization of over 105 training programmes and seminars across the country for approximately 6,987 civil servants. The training sessions covered a range of subjects, including correspondence, strategic planning, monitoring, performance evaluation, civil service conduct regulations and management fundamentals. Civil servants in place since before 2021 continued to be replaced with individuals educated primarily in religious institutions affiliated with the Taliban.

13. The de facto Ministry of Finance began disbursing pension payments to retirees in December. The payments, which had been suspended since August 2021, were reinstated on the condition that retirees appeal to a special court to confirm eligibility. On 25 December, media reports indicated that, following the court’s review, approximately 11,000 retirees from 30 de facto institutions and directorates were confirmed to be eligible to receive pension payments. However, the Retirees’ Association publicly raised concerns that the eligibility criteria might exclude a significant number of former pension recipients.

14. Saudi Arabia facilitated negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which were reportedly held in Riyadh in November, to address the heightened cross-border hostilities. The two sides reportedly agreed to maintain the ceasefire agreed to during negotiations in Doha in October.

15. Between 27 October and 25 January, UNAMA field offices facilitated 192 outreach activities involving Afghan civil society, tribal elders, journalists, entrepreneurs and women activists. Participants highlighted a range of concerns, including the continued shrinking of civic space following the introduction in 2024 of the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice, the obstruction of education for both men and women, limited employment opportunities, severe water scarcity and climate change impacts, inadequate socioeconomic facilities and the exclusion of non-Taliban Afghans from governance structures.

16. From 23 to 25 January, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs visited Kabul. During the visit, she met with de facto authorities, members of the diplomatic community in Kabul, Afghan women, civil society representatives and female national United Nations personnel. In her meetings with the de facto authorities, the Under-Secretary-General raised strong concerns about restrictions on the access of female Afghan United Nations staff to United Nations premises, as well as the broader limitations on women's access to education, work and public life, and urged them to lift those restrictions immediately. She called upon the de facto authorities to engage fully in the proposed comprehensive approach and address the international obligations required for Afghanistan to be reintegrated into the international community. The de facto authorities agreed to continue their engagement with the United Nations.

17. The United Nations continues to engage with the international community, the de facto authorities and Afghan stakeholders on the proposed comprehensive approach to Afghanistan, based on Security Council resolution 2721 (2023), with the objective of an Afghanistan fully reintegrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations, including in relation to human rights and women's rights, for the benefit of the Afghan people.

B. Security

18. From 1 November 2025 to 31 January 2026, the United Nations recorded 2,660 safety and security-related incident reports, marking a 27.8 per cent increase compared with the same period the previous year.

19. From 1 November to 31 January, armed opposition groups posed no significant challenge to the de facto authorities' control over the national territory. In Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kunar, Kunduz, Kabul, Kandahar, Logar and Panjshir Provinces, the Afghanistan Freedom Front, the National Resistance Front, the National Mobilization Front, the Islamic Liberation Movement of the People of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan Liberation Movement claimed responsibility for a total of 36 incidents, of which 14 were verified. Those incidents included sporadic rocket and hand grenade attacks and shootings on checkpoints and convoys of the de facto authorities.

20. On 19 January, an explosion occurred inside a Chinese restaurant in Kabul City. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack and released a photograph of the alleged suicide bomber. The de facto authorities continue to act against the group, which is assessed as retaining significant operational and combat capability (see S/2026/44).

21. Between 1 November 2025 and 31 January 2026, multiple incidents occurred along the border areas with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. On 6 November, de facto and Pakistani security forces clashed, affecting civilian areas and infrastructure in Kandahar Province, while Afghan de facto security forces and Iranian security forces clashed along the border of Nimroz Province, resulting in a temporary border closure. On 9 and 11 November, de facto and Pakistani security forces exchanged small arms fire along the border of Khost and Paktika Provinces. On 4 December, there was open fire on individuals attempting to cross into Pakistan from Paktika Province. On 5 December, clashes between de facto and Pakistani security forces occurred at two locations along the border in Kandahar Province. Between 7 and 17 January, repeated clashes occurred along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in Kunar Province. On 19 and 20 January, clashes occurred along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in Ma'ruf District, Kandahar Province. On 31 January, in La'lpurah District, Nangarhar Province, an exchange of mortar and heavy machine

gun fire between the de facto and Pakistani security forces was reported after the latter started building a tower near the border fence.

22. On 24 December and 18 and 29 January, reports indicate that the border forces of Tajikistan confronted individuals attempting to cross into Tajikistan from Badakhshan Province in Afghanistan, causing civilian casualties.

23. From 1 November to 31 January, multiple air strikes and drone activities were reported across Afghanistan. Drone surveillance was observed by communities over districts in Ghazni, Kandahar, Khost, Wardak, Panjshir and Paktika Provinces. On 4 November, a drone strike on a mosque in Nangarhar Province killed a senior Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan commander. Air strikes continued in Khost, Kunar and Paktika Provinces on 25 November and in Ghazni Province on 3 and 14 December. On 13 December, an explosive device near a private residence killed three suspected Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan members in Kunar Province, and on 13 January, a drone strike was reported in Goshtah District, Nangarhar Province, resulting in injuries to civilians.

24. From 1 November to 31 January, the United Nations documented 47 safety and security incidents directly affecting its personnel, compared with 42 incidents documented during the same period the previous year. Officials of the de facto Ministry of Defence transferred responsibility for enforcing restrictions on female national United Nations staff accessing United Nations compounds in Kabul to the de facto Ministry of the Interior. That situation already applied to United Nations offices located outside Kabul.

C. Regional cooperation

25. On 12 December, on the margins of the International Forum of Peace and Trust in Ashgabat, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, and the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, issued a joint statement stressing the importance of a stable and secure Afghanistan. On 14 December, special representatives of China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan convened in Tehran to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Participants reportedly highlighted the importance of regional dialogue, the challenge to the region posed by terrorism from Afghanistan, and the need for regional stability and economic integration. On 20 December, in the Tokyo Declaration of the first Summit of the “Central Asia Plus Japan” Dialogue, participants, including Heads of State and Government, reaffirmed their interest in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan.

26. In a joint communiqué following the China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue in Beijing on 4 January, China and Pakistan agreed to work with the international community to encourage the de facto authorities to build an inclusive political framework, adopt moderate policies, focus on stable development and pursue good-neighbourliness, and to help Afghanistan to reintegrate into the international community. They called for more visible and verifiable actions to eliminate all terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan, which threatened regional and global security, and to prevent terrorist organizations from using Afghan territory to endanger other countries.

27. On 20 October, the National Leader and Head of the Upper Chamber of Parliament of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, visited the construction site of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project in Herat Province to assess progress in the Afghanistan segment. On 12 November, the Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Special

Envoy for Afghanistan, Tarig Ali Bakheet, met in Kabul with the de facto Minister for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, the de facto Minister of Higher Education, Sheikh Neda Mohammad Nadeem, and the de facto President of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar. From 15 to 18 November, a high-level delegation from Tajikistan led by the Special Envoy, Khisrav Sohizoda, met with the de facto Prime Minister, Mohammad Hassan Akhund, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, the de facto Minister of Border and Tribal Affairs, Noorullah Noori, and the de facto Head of the General Directorate of Intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq. The discussions focused on border security and bilateral relations.

28. On 9 December, the Special Envoy of Kazakhstan, Yerkin Tukumov, met in Kabul with the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs and the de facto Minister of the Interior, Sirajuddin Haqqani, to discuss trade, economic projects, border security and counter-narcotics. On 17 December, the Minister of the Economy and Commerce of Kyrgyzstan, Bakyt Sydykov, met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Abdul Salam Hanafi, and the de facto Minister of Industry and Commerce, Noorudin Azizi, to discuss economic issues, and inaugurated the Kyrgyzstan Trade House in Kabul. On 1 February, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Rashid Meredov, met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Abdul Ghani Baradar in Herat Province and discussed such cross-border infrastructure projects as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

29. From 16 to 21 December, the de facto Minister of Public Health, Noor Jalal Jalali, led a delegation to New Delhi, where he participated in the second World Health Organization Traditional Medicine Global Summit and discussed cooperation in the health sector with the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Jagat Prakash Nadda, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, and the Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy), Prataprao Jadhav. From 11 to 13 January, the de facto Minister of Higher Education visited Oman, where he met with officials of the Ministry of Higher Education of Oman and discussed strengthening bilateral academic and scientific cooperation.

30. UNAMA continued to support regional cooperation by organizing briefings with Kabul-based diplomatic missions and facilitating engagement between the Afghan people, including the de facto authorities and other Afghan stakeholders, and regional actors in the areas of transport, trade, environment and access to humanitarian corridors. On 27 and 28 November, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) and Officer-in-Charge of UNAMA participated in a meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the Central Asian States in Almaty, Kazakhstan, convened by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

III. Human rights

31. During the reporting period, clashes between de facto and Pakistani security forces caused at least 50 civilian casualties (24 killed and 26 injured) in Afghanistan. Most of the civilian casualties were caused by air strikes and cross-border shelling in Kandahar, Khost, Paktika, Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. On 28 December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan informed UNAMA in writing that, despite Pakistan sharing information with the de facto authorities, “the de facto forces routinely resort to cross-border firing when Pakistani troops are undertaking counterterrorism measures on their side of the border”, and that Pakistan “has always

demonstrated restraint [and] only acted in self-defence”. On 5 February, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed UNAMA in writing that it rejected “allegations suggesting that attacks against Pakistan were launched from Afghan soil” and called for respect for the “fundamental principles of international humanitarian law” in the conduct of cross-border military operations.

32. On 19 January, a suicide attack was carried out at a Chinese restaurant in Kabul City. At least 7 people were killed and 13 injured in the attack. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack.

33. Between 2 and 5 January, in Chah Ab District, Takhar Province, hundreds of residents protested against the environmental damage and water shortage caused by gold mining in the area. Armed guards of a gold mining company shot at the protesters, resulting in the deaths of four civilian protesters and eight injured. A bodyguard of the mining company was also killed.

34. Unexploded ordnance continued to cause harm to civilians, mostly children. During the reporting period, a total of 26 civilians were killed (6 men, 1 woman, 3 girls and 16 boys) and 69 were injured (17 men, 6 women, 12 girls and 34 boys).

35. In the period from 6 November to 25 January, UNAMA documented at least 12 extrajudicial killings (by members of the de facto authorities and unknown actors), 29 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 6 instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, including those who have returned to Afghanistan.

36. UNAMA documented 316 instances of corporal punishment carried out by the de facto authorities (against 30 women, 281 men, 1 girl and 4 boys) for offences defined by the de facto authorities, including adultery, running away from home, homosexuality, alcohol consumption and gambling.

37. On 2 December, in a sports stadium in Khost Province, the de facto authorities publicly executed a man convicted of murder. His sentence was upheld by three de facto courts (Primary, Appeal and Supreme). This was the twelfth judicially sanctioned public execution carried out in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover.

38. Between 1 October and 31 December, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan verified some 300 grave violations affecting at least 200 children, including 49 girls. The most prevalent violations included killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access, which together accounted for at least 75 per cent of all verified violations.

39. UNAMA documented cases in which individuals accused of posting content on social media that was considered inappropriate by the de facto authorities faced threats, arbitrary arrest and detention. In November, authors, publishers and bookstore owners in some provinces were instructed by the de facto Ministry of Information and Culture that, prior to publication, book drafts must undergo review by its Book Evaluation Commission. Content not in compliance with the de facto authorities’ rules is edited. Bookstores were instructed not to sell prohibited books. The de facto authorities enforced the prohibition of images of living beings, with different levels of severity, in at least 25 provinces, affecting the viability of the media sector. The provinces most recently affected were Herat, Parwan and Uruzgan.

40. From 4 November, in Herat City, de facto security forces and inspectors of the de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice denied women who were not wearing a burqa (a full-body cloak covering the head with a mesh screen over the eyes) access to public and private services. On 9 November, the Spokesperson of the de facto Ministry publicly denied that women were ordered to

wear burqas. Since mid-November, the burqa requirement appeared to have been relaxed. However, UNAMA documented incidents in which women not wearing a chador (a full-body cloak covering the head) were denied access to public transportation and health services.

41. Women were further excluded from public sector employment. In January, many women public servants, who had already been barred from attending the workplace and were receiving a standardized salary of 5,000 afghanis (approximately \$77), received notice that they would cease receiving their salaries altogether or were being terminated from their posts. On 14 November, the de facto National Examination Authority organized the 2025 graduation examination for medical students. No women were allowed to take part in the examination.

42. The de facto Office of Prison Administration reported that, as at 31 January, its prison population comprised 16,000–17,000 individuals who had already been convicted, with the remainder in pretrial detention. It did not specify the number of detainees in pretrial detention. While United Nations agencies and other organizations provided limited support to detainees, including winterization needs, the de facto Office continued to seek support for detainees in relation to nutrition, health and vocational and educational training, including from other de facto institutions.

43. Nationwide consultations conducted between 1 and 25 December with 809 women across all 34 provinces and 167 men across 14 provinces by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Organization for Migration and UNAMA indicate that women's access to justice continued to deteriorate. While the de facto authorities, amid broader restrictions on women's rights, have issued decrees affirming women's rights to inheritance and choice in marriage, most of the women interviewed – particularly in rural areas – were unaware of those measures and reported no evidence of their implementation. Formal justice mechanisms are widely perceived as inaccessible: only one woman for every four men consulted reported having access to courts. Women are least likely to seek assistance from de facto justice institutions, compared with alternate justice pathways. Many are dependent on male relatives or, more rarely, informal women's networks to pursue their cases.

IV. Economic development, donor coordination and aid effectiveness

44. Afghanistan faces interlinked humanitarian, economic and demographic pressures, which are driven by large-scale population returns from neighbouring countries, declining international financial assistance, natural disasters and trade disruptions. Humanitarian needs remain severe, with vulnerabilities deepening across multiple sectors.

45. The earthquakes in August and November devastated eastern and northern Afghanistan, resulting in over 2,100 deaths, 3,600 injuries and widespread destruction of housing and critical infrastructure. The Joint Rapid Recovery Needs Assessment, which involves the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and the World Bank, identified substantial recovery requirements across the housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, health, education and water sectors, underscoring the urgency of linking the humanitarian response with early recovery and resilience-building efforts. Flash floods on 1 January further compounded needs. Together, these recurrent and overlapping shocks highlighted the heightened exposure of Afghanistan to climate-related disasters and reinforced the imperative for integrated, risk-informed and resilience-focused humanitarian, recovery and development approaches.

46. Approximately 2.78 million Afghans returned to the country during 2025, including more than 1.9 million from Iran (Islamic Republic of), 898,703 from Pakistan and 17,000 from Türkiye, including forced returns and returns under adverse circumstances. Many returnees, particularly women-headed households and children, lack civil documentation, constraining access to services and livelihoods. The post-return monitoring conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2025 indicated that returnees were settling in fragile areas marked by deepening poverty and limited access to services and that many were unable to return to their places of origin due to a lack of shelter, land or livelihoods. During the reporting period, the United Nations documented serious protection concerns affecting returnees, including reports of retaliatory actions against certain profiles, including former government officials and members of the former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. At the Fifth High-level Coordination Forum, held on 18 November and co-chaired by the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator and the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, the discussions were focused on durable solutions, including initiatives to build townships, and resulted in an agreement to strengthen technical-level follow-up between de facto line ministries and United Nations entities with regard to returnee reintegration, livelihoods and basic services.

47. According to the economic monitor released by the World Bank in December, despite modest growth, per capita gross domestic product was projected to decline by approximately 4 per cent in fiscal year 2025 as a growing population resulting from both high birth rates and recent population returns outpaced economic output growth. Weak private investment and constrained access to finance continued to slow capital formation, thereby limiting productivity gains, despite some recovery in private domestic consumption associated with returnee inflows.

48. The World Bank report recorded decreased external trade following the prolonged Afghanistan-Pakistan border closure. The trade deficit widened by 5 per cent to approximately \$1.02 billion in December on a month-on-month basis and reached \$8.5 billion during the first nine months of fiscal year 2025, equivalent to 39 per cent of the current annual gross domestic product of Afghanistan. Although alternative trade corridors partially eased some supply shortages, higher transport and logistics costs weakened export competitiveness. At the same time, increased import costs contributed to inflation and to the erosion of household purchasing power.

49. The closure of the border with Pakistan continued to affect trade, freedom of movement and humanitarian operations, delaying an estimated 5,500 tons of United Nations cargo, valued at nearly \$25 million, including food and medical supplies. On 4 December, Pakistan reopened the Torkham and Chaman border crossings for United Nations humanitarian shipments only; however, restrictions on the Afghan side continued to limit the full resumption of cross-border flows.

50. According to the World Bank, inflation remained relatively moderate but showed signs of upward pressure in December, particularly in urban and returnee-hosting areas. In November, headline inflation rose to 4.7 per cent year-on-year, up from 3.0 per cent in October, driven mainly by higher food prices and rising housing, health and transport costs. Housing prices rose by 13 per cent year-on-year, reflecting strong rental demand linked to population returns. Core inflation rose to 5.8 per cent, indicating broader price pressures despite relative currency stability.

51. In December, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization implemented an internship programme aimed at 60 young Afghan women, in collaboration with a private bank in Afghanistan. It also launched an initiative with the European Union for 7,500 Afghan youth and adults, focusing on women and girls. In February, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

launched a comprehensive mapping report of the private sector in Afghanistan. In the report, the sector's role in economic recovery was recognized, structural barriers were assessed, and sectoral opportunities for growth were noted, with an emphasis on women's economic participation as a critical prerequisite.

52. On 9 February, UNAMA convened the third meeting of the private sector working group under the Doha Process, which was held in Kabul in a hybrid format and brought together the de facto authorities, Member States, United Nations entities and male and female private sector representatives. The meeting consisted of two sessions aimed at taking stock of progress to date, continuing challenges and focus areas for the next period. The sessions were focused respectively on the growth and inclusion of private sector activity and on the integration and transparency of financial transactions.

53. The United Nations continued to operate a physical cash shipment facility to support humanitarian operations. A total of \$640 million was imported in 2025 for United Nations entities and approved non-governmental organizations. This represents a decline compared with the \$1.28 billion imported in 2024, reflecting reduced aid flows and increased use of bank transfers for account replenishment. In January, UNAMA facilitated the first technical meeting between the secretariat of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism and the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Afghanistan. The meeting was focused on exploring potential areas of technical cooperation.

54. In December, the Steering Committee of the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan endorsed two joint initiatives with a total allocation of \$17.09 million. The first provides rehabilitation and economic empowerment for people recovering from drug use disorder, and the second helps to support the integration of returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran into Afghan communities and advance durable solutions for displaced populations.

55. During the reporting period, the credit guarantee facility supported by UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the Afghanistan Credit Guarantee Foundation enabled access to finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. By October, \$20 million in loans had been extended to 7,444 such enterprises, including 2,225 loans to women entrepreneurs, sustaining 18,791 jobs, of which 4,701 were held by women. UNDP also supported 1,085 returnee-owned micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (at least 60 per cent women-led), contributing to the maintenance of 2,303 jobs (at least 40 per cent for women). These actions helped to sustain livelihoods for women and returnees.

56. The United Nations common risk assessment for 2026, conducted in December, confirmed that the overall risk environment of Afghanistan continued to deteriorate. The risk of aid diversion remained elevated. Common mitigation measures to reinforce internal controls and strengthen partner oversight were outlined in the assessment.

V. Humanitarian assistance

57. Decades of conflict, underdevelopment and economic fragility have left millions of Afghans in a severe humanitarian situation. These challenges are compounded by acute food insecurity, climate-driven drought, restrictions on women and girls, recurrent natural hazards and large-scale returns. An estimated 21.9 million people, or 45 per cent of the population, require humanitarian assistance in 2026. Priority needs include food assistance, treatment of acute malnutrition, essential health services, access to safe water, and shelter, alongside protection services, particularly for women and girls.

58. Humanitarian partners continued to deliver assistance at scale. From January to November 2025, humanitarian partners reached 16.4 million people with at least one form of assistance, including 3.7 million who received three or more types of support. Some 10.1 million received food and livelihood support; 7.3 million received healthcare; 3.4 million received water, sanitation and hygiene support; 5.9 million received protection services; 5.3 million received nutrition assistance; 707,000 received education support; and about 617,000 received emergency shelter and non-food items. As at 20 January, humanitarian partners had assisted more than 319,000 people in the districts affected by the earthquakes in August.

59. Population return movements in 2025 strained reception capacity, housing, basic services and livelihoods. Border consortium partners assisted over 1 million returnees, including by providing protection services, cash assistance and in-kind support. Partners ensured that comprehensive, immediate humanitarian assistance at the borders was available to all returnees.

60. Food security sharply deteriorated. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis conducted in December, approximately 17.4 million people faced acute food insecurity, including 4.7 million in phase 4 (emergency). Funding constraints forced the World Food Programme to scale back winter programming from covering 40 per cent of the acute hunger needs in the winter of 2024/25 to only 23 per cent in the winter of 2025/26, pushing households towards harmful coping strategies, including child labour and early marriage. In December, the World Food Programme supported close to 2 million people with emergency food and cash assistance. From October to December, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reached 1.1 million people through emergency and resilience-oriented agricultural interventions, supporting both immediate food security and longer-term livelihoods.

61. Afghanistan faces an exceptionally severe child malnutrition crisis. An estimated 3.7 million children under 5 and 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women suffer from acute malnutrition. Between September and December, 180,000 children under 5 with severe acute malnutrition received treatment. An additional 441,655 children under 5 and 271,160 pregnant and breastfeeding women with moderate acute malnutrition were reached through targeted supplementary feeding. During 2025, funding shortfalls forced the closure of 305 nutrition facilities across 25 provinces, cutting off services for more than 88,000 vulnerable children and women.

62. Public health risks remain acute. From September to December, Afghanistan recorded 310 communicable disease alerts. Major funding cuts led to the closure or suspension of 455 health facilities, affecting 3.8 million people. The World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund continued to support essential health services, including trauma care, mental health and psychosocial support, and maternal and newborn health. The second phase of the nationwide measles vaccination campaign concluded in November, reaching 8.3 million children.

63. Afghanistan continues to report one of the highest casualty rates from explosive ordnance in the world. Mine action activities declined by 37 per cent compared with 2024 due to funding shortfalls. From October to December, the United Nations-led Mine Action Technical Cell continued to coordinate the mine action sector and align tasks with humanitarian priorities, conducting 246 visits, 628 hotline call responses, and mine action interventions for nine entities, including non-governmental organizations.

64. Women and girls continue to face severe barriers undermining access to essential services. The ongoing ban on secondary education affects 2.2 million adolescent girls, with lasting impacts on protection, livelihoods and social cohesion.

The suspension of women's medical education since December 2024 reduced the availability of female health professionals, weakening health service delivery. Afghanistan continues to record one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world, at 521 deaths per 100,000 live births. In response, in December, the United Nations Population Fund deployed 2,515 Afghan women healthcare workers across the country.

65. In November, the de facto authorities' restrictions at the Islam Qala border crossing prevented women personnel from assisting returnees, prompting temporary service suspensions. Although limited access was later restored for female Afghan staff, and health services resumed, operations remained constrained. As from 6 January, following negotiations, the United Nations and partners resumed operations. The necessary levels of female Afghan staff and service provision were split between the reception centre and the transit centre, with the latter providing non-health-related support to returnee women and girls. United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners continue to monitor and assess the situation.

66. Humanitarian partners reported 1,042 access incidents across Afghanistan between January and December, which resulted in the temporary suspension of 577 humanitarian activities. The incidents included the detention of 132 staff, including 12 United Nations personnel. Incidents fell 37 per cent from 2024, due mainly to reduced humanitarian activity caused by funding shortfalls.

VI. Counter-narcotics

67. According to reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), while opium poppy cultivation declined significantly across the country since the implementation of the cultivation ban in 2023, it moved in concentration from the south-west to the north-east.¹ Synthetic substances and misused pharmaceutical drugs increasingly characterize drug use.² Former opium-cultivating villages reported significant declines in socioeconomic conditions, as shifting to cereal agriculture improved food availability but failed to compensate for reduced earnings. Agricultural support remains limited, reaching 12 per cent of former poppy-growing villages, while gaps persist in access to health services, education infrastructure and women's healthcare.

68. From November 2025 to January 2026, UNODC supported 4,679 households, including 1,030 women-headed households, through interventions in irrigation, crops and livestock, and market linkages, and assisted 24 facilities for people using drugs. A total of 6,476 beneficiaries, including 225 women, received services across 13 provinces.

69. Within the framework of the Counter-Narcotics Working Group established under the Doha process, the United Nations, Member States, de facto authorities and international partners identified and promoted measures to address challenges in the area of counter-narcotics in Afghanistan. Activities included an exposure visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran conducted in November by representatives of the de facto Ministry of the Interior in relation to evidence-based drug use prevention, and three workshops conducted in October and November and supported by UNODC and UNAMA with a view to facilitating cooperation among the de facto authorities,

¹ UNODC, "Socio-economic impact of the narcotics ban in Afghanistan with a focus in northern provinces", December 2025. Available at www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Socio_Economic_brief_2025.pdf.

² UNODC, "Afghanistan drug use assessment", February 2026. Available at www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_drug_use_assessment_2026.pdf.

Member States and Afghan technical experts, including Afghan men and women, in relation to the joint action plan on alternative livelihoods that was presented at the meeting of the Working Group held in February 2025. Members of the Working Group also discussed cooperation on Afghanistan at a workshop on drug use prevention and a meeting on law enforcement in December. Those activities were aimed at enhancing dialogue, cooperation and compliance with international obligations on counter-narcotics, anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism, firearms trafficking and counter-terrorism.

70. UNAMA convened the fourth meeting of the Counter-Narcotics Working Group on 3 February, in Kabul in a hybrid format, bringing together the de facto authorities, Member States, United Nations entities and male and female subject matter experts. The participants reviewed key results on engagement in relation to counter-narcotics in Afghanistan, highlighted key challenges and discussed tangible actions and mechanisms to collectively tackle those challenges.

VII. Mission support

71. As at 31 December, vacancy rates in UNAMA were 20 per cent for international staff, 25 per cent for international United Nations Volunteers, 11 per cent for national United Nations Volunteers, 21 per cent for National Professional Officers and 24 per cent for national General Service staff, compared with approved rates of 8.3 per cent, 9.3 per cent, 5 per cent, 15.5 per cent and 11.2 per cent, respectively. The proportion of women staff was 34 per cent among international staff, 39 per cent among international United Nations Volunteers, 11 per cent among national United Nations Volunteers, 9 per cent among National Professional Officers and 11 per cent among national General Service staff.

VIII. Observations

72. The current context in Afghanistan is marked by a relative stability that masks deepening humanitarian, political and socioeconomic risks, while the human rights situation continues to deteriorate. The accumulating consequences of declining international assistance, large-scale population returns, natural disasters and regional trade disruptions are placing additional pressure on the Afghan people.

73. The continued, systematic discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan not only deprives half the population of its rights and dignity, but also violates the country's obligations under international human rights law. This fact continues to prevent the reintegration of Afghanistan into the international system. Although the de facto authorities continue to describe the ban on female education past sixth grade as "temporary", it will soon enter its fifth year. I again urge the de facto authorities to lift all restrictions against women and girls and to allow them to fully exercise their rights to education.

74. The restrictions on access to United Nations offices for Afghan women, now in its sixth month, compromise the Mission's ability to fully implement its mandate and support the Afghan people at a time of escalating needs. Ensuring unhindered, non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive access for all humanitarian actors and United Nations personnel is essential in order to reach the most vulnerable people and to uphold the impartiality of interventions by the United Nations and its partners. The restrictions violate the Charter of the United Nations and the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its personnel. I call upon the de facto authorities

to rescind the restrictions and permit United Nations national female personnel to return to their places of work.

75. Despite multiple formal constraints against women and girls, the resilience and creativity of Afghan women in securing operational space are commendable. Yet, the United Nations has met with many Afghan women who reported their fear that the formal bans are seen to be the “new reality” by the international community, which will lead to a decrease in support for Afghan women. Donors can help by supporting women and women-centred organizations and providing the needed resources and funding as a priority.

76. A further area of concern is decree No. 12 circulated on 8 January 2026 concerning the “criminal rules of courts”, which contains provisions that are inconsistent with the country’s international human rights obligations, to which the State is bound. Further examination and clarification by the United Nations and other stakeholders on its official status and how it will be implemented are required.

77. Civilian casualties caused by cross-border armed violence remain of deep concern. I urge the relevant parties to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, and ensure the protection of civilians. I welcome the mediation efforts to seek a lasting solution to the disputed issues and urge the parties to continue to seek to resolve differences through diplomacy.

78. Continued reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and the torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and members of the former Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, are deeply concerning. While the de facto authorities’ declaration of a general amnesty remains a positive measure, it needs to be translated into actions that provide for the safety of the affected individuals and the conduct of thorough and transparent investigations into violations of the amnesty.

79. Measures to regulate the media, publishing and online expression, together with the law on the propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice, continue to constrain the freedom of expression and access to information of the Afghan people. These restrictions undermine public trust, limit accountability, impede inclusive dialogue and restrict the exchange of knowledge and ideas essential for the development, social cohesion and long-term stability of Afghanistan. Many media outlets have also ceased operations due to financial difficulties, and additional restrictions jeopardize the survival of the media sector as a whole.

80. The de facto authorities’ ban on opium poppy cultivation in April 2022 has led to a dramatic reduction in cultivation across the country over the past three years. The ban benefits the international community even as it is costly to the de facto authorities to enforce and unpopular with farmers who have long grown to depend on that illicit crop as a source of cash. In the absence of adequate licit livelihood alternatives, former poppy-growing households have experienced sharp income losses. Increased investment, including by donors, in targeted alternative livelihoods, rural infrastructure, access to markets and harm-reduction programmes remains essential to ensure that gains in counter-narcotics efforts are sustainable.

81. The scale and pace of largely involuntary returns from neighbouring countries continue to pose a major challenge. Many returnees lack adequate shelter, livelihoods and documentation, while host communities face mounting pressure on housing, land and basic services. Without sustained reintegration and livelihood support, large-scale returns risk exacerbating poverty, social tensions and protection risks, particularly in urban areas. I call upon Member States to uphold their international obligations in relation to protection, including the principle of non-refoulement, and ensure that

returns are voluntary, safe, dignified and accompanied by sustained support for returnees' reintegration into communities.

82. The persistent funding shortfalls across humanitarian and basic human needs responses constrain the ability of partners to deliver principled, needs-based assistance, and remain of concern. I reiterate the need for sustained, predictable and flexible international support, together with robust coordination across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, to address immediate needs, support recovery and prevent further deterioration of living conditions for the Afghan people.

83. As the Security Council considers the renewal of the Mission's mandate, it is appropriate to recall the general objective of the international community regarding Afghanistan, as stated in the November 2023 independent assessment on Afghanistan (S/2023/856, annex) and affirmed by the Security Council in its resolution 2721 (2023), as an end state "where Afghanistan is fully reintegrated into the international system without passing through a further cycle of violence, while respecting all legal obligations". The United Nations-convened Doha Process seeks to advance this objective, and UNAMA has been playing an essential facilitating role. The past four-and-a-half years have demonstrated that the de facto authorities remain firmly in control of the country. The relative stability that exists provides a potential foundation for economic development, which, however, cannot be fully met as long as the de facto authorities remain indifferent to the full potential of the human capital of all Afghans, women and men.

84. I call upon all members of the Doha Process and the de facto authorities to engage further in the proposed comprehensive approach to demonstrate the dividends of a more coherent, coordinated and structured engagement for the benefit of the Afghan people and the eventual reintegration of the country. The de facto authorities are urged to establish a mechanism to engage more structurally with UNAMA on the comprehensive approach. In the absence of progress or an alternative approach, the risks increase of further consequences for the Afghan population and regional stability. The Mission's efforts to shape and inform international engagement remain crucial.

85. I extend my deep appreciation to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of my Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Special Representative (Political), Georgette Gagnon, and my Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Indrika Ratwatte, for their continued dedication and service to the people of Afghanistan in an extremely challenging environment.
