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The situation in Afghanistan

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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 [68/11](#) and Security Council resolution [2727 \(2024\)](#), 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 provides 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 13 June 2024 ([A/78/914-S/2024/469](#)).

#### II. Relevant developments

3. Amid reports of internal tensions, the Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, reinforced messaging about the need for unity and obedience from the population. The de facto authorities continued their outreach to bridge gaps between the authorities and various segments of society, including ethnic minority groups and former government officials. Attacks and propaganda by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) continued, together with some lower intensity attacks by the armed opposition. The de facto authorities implemented a salary cut for certain categories of women civil servants and announced the ratification of a new law on the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, further curtailing women's rights. In 2024, an estimated 23.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance. As at 30 August, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2024 had received only 24.9 per cent of the required \$3.06 billion in funding. As at 12 August, the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, 2023–2025, had received only 33.3 per cent of the \$2.9 billion required to meet the basic human needs of people in Afghanistan for 2024.

\* [A/79/150](#).



## A. Political developments

4. The de facto authorities entered their fourth year in power on 15 August. To mark this anniversary, they organized a large-scale event at the Bagram Airbase in Parwan Province with the participation of high-level de facto officials and Kabul-based diplomatic representatives on 14 August. In an audio message distributed on the occasion, the Taliban leader urged adherence to Islamic sharia law and the group's leaders. Additional events to commemorate this anniversary were organized across the country. As in previous years, the de facto authorities launched a series of accountability sessions to present their achievements over the past year. In the inaugural address on 31 July, the Office of the de facto Prime Minister, Mohammad Hassan Akhund, emphasized the shared responsibilities of the de facto authorities, the nation and the media for the development and prosperity of the country, highlighting the importance of efforts towards self-sufficiency.

5. During the reporting period, the Taliban leader stepped up his message of unity amid reports of alleged tensions within the Taliban structure. On 15 May, the Taliban leader reportedly made an unannounced visit to Kabul – his first outside Kandahar since September 2023 – to attend a gathering of the de facto governors of all 34 provinces. At the gathering, he reportedly referred to unity as the main prerequisite for political stability, called on de facto officials to prioritize the implementation of sharia law and urged the people to collaborate with religious scholars. On 17 June, ahead of the Eid al-Adha prayers, the Taliban leader made a public call to avoid discord and remain united, stating that “if one day everyone decides to oust me from my position by consensus, I will be happy, but I am not happy about division”.

6. The leadership of the de facto authorities continued their outreach with ethnic minority groups, religious scholars, academics and former government officials. From 26 to 30 May, the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Abdul Salam Hanafi, visited the northern provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar and Jowzjan to meet with local de facto officials, ulamas and community elders, reportedly discussing social, economic and security matters and the needs of local communities. On 16 July, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, met in Kabul with several former Republic-era governors who had remained in Afghanistan.

7. The fourth Vienna Conference was held from 24 to 26 June, with the participation of some 70 opposition figures who are based outside Afghanistan. Following the Conference, various leaders and groups issued separate statements.

8. The de facto authorities continued to appoint and reshuffle Taliban loyalists – all male – to leadership positions. At the national level, appointments included 2 de facto ministers, 7 de facto deputy ministers, 1 de facto deputy national spokesperson, the de facto Governor and the de facto First Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, and 12 national directors within de facto ministries. The new de facto Governor of the Central Bank, Noor Ahmad Agha, is a designated individual on the sanctions list established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1988 (2011). Subnational appointments included 4 de facto provincial governors, 4 de facto provincial deputy governors, 2 de facto provincial capital mayors, at least 26 subnational directors and at least 24 district governors. In the security sector, appointments included five new provincial chiefs of police, one provincial deputy chief of police, five new provincial chiefs of the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence, one deputy chief of police for a provincial capital and two district chiefs of police, and there were four reshuffles related to corps commanders.

9. On 3 July, around 70 individuals staged a demonstration in front of a United Nations compound in Kabul to protest the non-payment of pensions to those retired

from the military and civil service of the former Republic. They were seeking support from and advocacy with the de facto authorities to receive their pension money given their dire economic situation. According to the demonstrators, their repeated requests for meetings with the de facto Ministry of Finance were denied.

10. In a letter dated 29 June, the directorate of madrassas (Islamic religious schools) in the de facto Ministry of Education instructed all “jihadi madrassas” to cease new enrolments until further notice, with no explanation provided. As many as 1,000 students are reportedly taught at “jihadi madrassas” at a given time. Such madrassas are viewed by the de facto authorities as elite schools of Islamic instruction and often serve as venues for speeches by high-level de facto authority leaders. From 16 May to 8 August, nine de facto authority-run madrassas, including three for women, were newly inaugurated in eight provinces, and 366 male and 413 female religious scholars graduated from de facto authority-run madrassas. Precise information on the number of girls over the age of 12 years studying in de facto authority-run madrassas, or the curriculum covered, remained unavailable given the decentralization and non-standardization of these institutions and the reluctance of the de facto authorities to share information.

11. The de facto authorities took further action to address local governance and administrative concerns. During the reporting period, the de facto authorities organized two meetings in Paktiya and Bamiyan Provinces, at which they presented to local stakeholders their progress on the issues of urban development, public services and governance, and requested the local people to cooperate with the de facto authorities and support their efforts. The de facto authorities also created two new districts with the stated aim of improving governance. On 13 June, on the basis of an earlier decree of the Taliban leader, the de facto Governor of Nuristan Province formally announced that Kantiva Valley in Western Parun District had been upgraded to Kantiva District and introduced the new district’s governor. On 25 June, through an official notice, the Taliban leader approved the creation of Farashghan District in Laghman Province.

12. On 2 June, 60 young women private defence lawyers graduated from a six-month online capacity development course organized by a local organization. Female defence lawyers are hired to assist male defence lawyers in preparing cases. On 17 June, the International Bar Association admitted the Afghanistan International Bar Association in Exile as a member. As at 26 June, the de facto Ministry of Justice had issued licences to 1,982 male defence lawyers, comprising 1,437 renewals and 545 newly issued licences. On 27 June, the de facto Heads of the departments of justice were reshuffled across 23 provinces. On 3 July, the de facto Supreme Court made personnel changes, including new appointments that affected 59 judicial personnel in 13 provinces.

13. From 16 May to 8 August, UNAMA field offices facilitated 133 outreach activities involving a wide range of actors. Various actors stressed, among other issues, the need for the following: education for both men and women, including education in modern sciences; access to information for the media; improved facilities in the areas of health, business and agriculture; and respect for human rights. From 15 May to 8 August, 14 local conflicts, including disputes related to family and community issues and to land and water rights, were reportedly resolved through mediation by local community elders, religious scholars and the de facto authorities. According to local sources, all parties involved in the conflicts were satisfied with the conduct of the reconciliation process.

14. From 30 June to 1 July, the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan was held in Doha and was chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The meeting, which included representatives from the de facto

authorities, was focused on issues of mutual concern and was aimed at beginning a more structured and coordinated process to address the wide range of challenges faced by the people of Afghanistan. On 2 July, the Under-Secretary-General also chaired a meeting of the special envoys with members of Afghan civil society, including human rights and women's rights advocates. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA took part in those meetings.

## **B. Security**

15. Between 14 May and 31 July, the United Nations recorded 2,127 security-related incidents, a 53 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2023. There were 35 incidents of disputes over land, an increase from 28 reported during the same period in 2023. Land disputes were most frequent in the southern (19 incidents) and south-eastern (7 incidents) regions. Armed clashes increased from 37 in the same period of 2023 to 80, and detonations from improvised explosive devices increased from 7 to 13.

16. Between 14 May and 31 July, the armed opposition continued to pose no significant challenge to the Taliban's hold on territorial control. The verified overall number of attacks by the two opposition groups, the Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front, was 73. The Afghanistan Freedom Front and the National Resistance Front carried out 21 and 52 attacks, respectively. The perpetrators of an additional 19 attacks remained unidentified. A total of 58 attacks were carried out in the central region, including 46 in Kabul Province, followed by 15 attacks in the western, 11 in the north-eastern, 4 in the eastern, 2 in the northern and 2 in the southern regions. The National Resistance Front and the Afghanistan Freedom Front employed hit-and-run tactics against de facto security forces, attacking their posts and vehicles, and carrying out ambushes and targeted killings.

17. Between 16 May and 31 July, ISIL-K claimed four attacks. On 17 May, in the central market area of Bamyan city, gunmen opened fire on two vehicles transporting a group of tourists, killing two Afghans and three Spanish nationals, and wounding two Afghans and four foreign nationals from Australia, Lithuania, Norway and Spain. The de facto authorities reported having made seven arrests in relation to this attack but provided no further information. On 20 May, an improvised explosive device attack against a de facto forces vehicle in Kandahar killed one civilian and injured three. The casualty figures among the de facto security forces remain unknown. On 31 July, ISIL-K claimed responsibility for an attack involving the use of small arms fire on a bus transporting de facto security forces and resulting in several casualties in Kabul city. The de facto authorities reported that one attacker had been arrested and three others had escaped. In addition, the de facto authorities reported having arrested at least 30 suspected ISIL-K members. On 7 July, de facto security forces carried out an operation in Nangarhar Province targeting a former ISIL-K commander.

18. ISIL-K continued its propaganda against the Taliban and the international community. On 26 May, ISIL-K released a video in which it threatened all foreigners and the United Nations in Afghanistan and ridiculed the Taliban's claims of successfully maintaining the country's security. On 3 June, the Al-Azaim media outlet controlled by ISIL-K released a video in which the Taliban was criticized over its engagement with, and condemned for accepting financial support from, the international community. In the video, reference was made to several faith-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations entities, the Taliban's relationship with the United Nations was condemned, and all foreign and Afghan NGOs working with the Taliban were designated as legitimate targets. Identical claims that had been made in the 17 May issue of the Khorasan Ghag publication, also controlled by ISIL-K, in which reference had been made to the same NGOs and

United Nations entities, were repeated in the video. On 7 June, the Al-Qaida-run media outlet Al-Sahab published a pamphlet in Arabic in which Muslims from around the world were invited to migrate to Afghanistan and support the Taliban with their experiences and investments.

19. During the reporting period, at least four Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commanders and fighters were reportedly killed in Kunar, Paktika, Khost and Kabul Provinces by unconfirmed elements, and one clash between two TTP groups in Khost Province was recorded. Armed clashes, including indiscriminate shelling, between de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces also took place on at least 13 separate occasions along the border area in six separate districts in Kunar, Pakhtiya and Khost Provinces.

20. Between 14 May and 31 July, the United Nations documented 24 safety and security incidents directly affecting its personnel, including 1 theft, 10 incidents of harassment, movement restrictions or intimidation and 2 arrests. This represented a decrease of seven incidents from the previous reporting period. Five other safety incidents, including fires, flooding and road traffic accidents, affected United Nations compounds, offices and property.

### **C. Regional cooperation**

21. On 8 June, the special representatives for Afghanistan of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and the Russian Federation met in Tehran, where they reportedly expressed their support for the United Nations-led meetings in Doha and advocated for regional countries to play a leading role in them. The meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held in Astana on 4 July concluded with the issuance of a declaration in which the Council reiterated its stance that the establishment of an inclusive government involving multiple representatives of all the ethnic and political groups of Afghan society remained the only way to attain lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

22. High-level de facto officials continued to travel abroad to engage in regional cooperation and participate in bilateral meetings. From 8 to 11 June, the de facto Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs participated in a conference of ministers of hajj and endowments of Islamic countries in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. On 8 and 9 June, the de facto Minister of Higher Education participated in a forum entitled “Shaping the future” in Kazan, Russian Federation.

23. On 22 May, a delegation including the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the funeral ceremony of the former President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, and met with the Acting President, Mohammad Mokhber. On 27 May, the de facto Minister of Labour and Social Affairs met with his Qatari counterpart in Doha and reportedly discussed labour migration and other issues. On 4 June, the de facto Minister of the Interior and the de facto Head of the General Directorate of Intelligence met with the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi and reportedly discussed bilateral relations and economic cooperation. On 23 July, the de facto Minister of Public Health met with the Minister of State for International Cooperation of Qatar in Doha and reportedly discussed bilateral relations, particularly in the health sector. On 30 July, the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs attended the inauguration ceremony of the newly elected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, in Tehran.

24. Regional representatives also visited Afghanistan to engage with the de facto authorities. On 23 and 24 May, a delegation led by the Minister of State for Foreign

Affairs of Qatar visited Kabul, meeting with the three de facto Deputy Prime Ministers, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs and the de facto Minister of the Interior. On 26 July, the Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism of China met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs in Kabul and discussed the promotion of bilateral cooperation.

25. Economy, trade and transit remained at the forefront of regional engagements. From 5 to 8 June, the de facto Minister of Labour and Social Affairs participated in the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum, where he also met with the Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Russian Federation. From 3 to 5 July, the de facto Minister of Economy participated in the China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation in Nyingchi, China. Also from 3 to 5 July, the de facto Minister of Commerce and Industry visited Uzbekistan to meet with government officials to discuss trade, investment and economic relations and to participate in a private sector exhibition and business conference. From 18 to 20 July, a high-level delegation including the de facto Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation and the de facto Minister of Commerce and Industry attended a forum on the International North-South Transport Corridor held in Aktau, Kazakhstan. From 29 June to 1 July, a delegation of Uzbek investors visited Afghanistan, where they met with the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs to discuss investment opportunities in Afghanistan. Afghan businesspeople, accompanied by a de facto authority delegation, participated in the twenty-eighth China Kunming Import and Export Fair from 23 to 28 July.

26. UNAMA continued to promote regional cooperation with the de facto authorities and regional countries and convened regular meetings with Kabul-based diplomatic missions. UNAMA engaged bilaterally and multilaterally with Kabul-based diplomatic representatives in person and with diplomatic representatives outside the country online in preparation for the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, held in Doha.

### **III. Human rights**

27. Unexploded ordnance resulted in civilian casualties, with children making up the majority. A total of 39 civilians were killed (7 men, 2 women, 26 boys and 4 girls) and 63 wounded (14 men, 4 women, 37 boys and 8 girls). On 6 June, in Kapisa Province, a 9-year-old boy was killed and three other children from the same family were wounded when an unexploded ordnance they were playing with detonated.

28. On 17 May, in Paktiya and Khost Provinces, cross-border armed clashes between de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces resulted in civilian casualties (8 killed and 15 wounded). On 29 May, in Gurbuz District in Khost Province, as a result of armed clashes between the de facto security forces and Pakistani security forces, one girl was killed and three others were wounded. The Embassy of Pakistan in Afghanistan informed UNAMA that it had no recorded exchanges of fire between Pakistani security forces and the de facto security forces on either 17 May or 29 May that resulted in civilian casualties. On 1 July, in Kunar Province, the firing of mortar rounds from across the border area resulted in the death of one woman and the wounding of one man and one boy.

29. The de facto authorities imposed localized restrictions on the commemoration of the holy day of Ashura', instructing people not to have large public gatherings and to avoid certain shrines. On 19 July, in Sar-e-Pul, an individual riding a motorcycle threw a hand grenade at Ashura' mourners, wounding eight civilians (five men and three boys). No claim of responsibility was made. Other Ashura' commemorations around the country were held without any reported incidents.

30. Contrary to the general amnesty announced by the de facto authorities, human rights violations against former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to be reported. UNAMA documented at least four extrajudicial killings, nine arbitrary arrests and detentions, and six instances of torture and ill-treatment of former government officials and former members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. UNAMA also recorded one extrajudicial killing and seven arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals accused of affiliation with the National Resistance Front.

31. The de facto authorities implemented judicial corporal punishment in public, at times against large groups of people. For example, on 4 June, in the sports stadium in Sar-e-Pul city, 63 individuals (15 women and 48 men) were publicly lashed after being convicted of various crimes, including armed robbery, extramarital relationships, running away from home and pederasty.

32. In a letter issued on 2 June, the de facto Directorate General of Administrative Affairs announced a significant reduction of the salaries of women civil servants hired by the former Republic administration, to 5,000 Afghanis (approximately \$70) per month. On 7 July, the de facto Ministry of Finance issued a letter to clarify that the order applied to women civil servants “who do not attend work daily or do not perform their duties according to their job description” and did not apply to women who reported to work and performed their duties in line with their job descriptions. In late July, a senior de facto official informed UNAMA that the salary reduction affected at least 5,000 women civil servants who had been ordered to stay at home. From August 2021, the de facto authorities had ordered women civil servants to stay at home, with some exceptions for women working in the health, education and security sectors.

33. On 22 July, the de facto Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs informed the International Labour Organization that women would be barred from attending the National Labour Conference in Kabul on 23 and 24 July. In protest, representatives of the United Nations in Afghanistan who had previously confirmed their participation did not attend. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA, in meetings with the de facto Deputy Prime Ministers for Political Affairs and Administrative Affairs on 23 and 24 July, protested the decision to exclude women and, on 24 July, sent a letter of protest to the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs.

34. On 21 August, the de facto authorities published in the Official Gazette a law on the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice. In its 35 articles, the law codifies a number of current restrictions that had been promulgated by decree and introduces additional restrictions on both men and women. Under the law, women are required to wear clothes that completely cover their bodies, including their faces, are banned from using public transport unless they are accompanied by a male relative and are prohibited from speaking loudly in public. The law assigns the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice as the executive authority for enforcing the law. It sets out the requirements and qualifications of the “inspectors” who are to enforce the law and outlines the discretionary punishments that can be administered.

35. The de facto authorities continued to impose limitations on the operation of independent media outlets. On 7 June, the de facto Ministry of Justice publicly announced the suspension of the Tamadon TV station due to its affiliation with a political party and the location of its premises on land allegedly belonging to the de facto authorities. As of mid-August, the station remained in operation. On 8 July, in Laghman Province, the de facto authorities suspended the operation of the private radio station Kawoon Ghag.

36. On 9 July, UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report concerning the de facto authorities' policies relating to moral oversight. The policies, which were devised and implemented mainly by the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, were found to have negatively affected the enjoyment of human rights in various aspects of life, especially in the case of women. The de facto authorities responded that the approach taken in the report of "evaluating Afghanistan through a Western lens is inappropriate" and claimed that the criticism in the report was "baseless".

37. On 10 July, the de facto Office of Prison Administration issued its latest instruction to prisons countrywide to ensure respect for the rights of detainees, reminding all de facto prison directors of their duty to ensure that their subordinates respect the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment. As at 20 June, the de facto Prison Administration reported that up to 20,000 persons, including 1,500 women and 60 foreign nationals, were in its custody.

38. The United Nations in Afghanistan continued to receive, including through the quarterly consultations involving the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Organization for Migration and UNAMA, consistent information collected periodically from around the country on the effects of the de facto authorities' gender policies on both women and men. The information suggests a deteriorating trend in women's perception of their own safety outside their houses and in community attitudes towards women working outside the home. Women continued to report being denied entry to public spaces such as mosques, parks and social and health centres. They also continued to report that those challenges had caused severe negative effects on their mental health.

39. On 10 June, UN-Women released the *Afghanistan Gender Country Profile 2024*,<sup>1</sup> providing a comprehensive snapshot of the situation of gender equality in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls. The document contains an analysis of the previous legal and institutional frameworks in the period from 1978 to 2021 and the current decrees, policies and practices shaping the gender equality landscape under the rule of the de facto authorities, as well as detailed gender analysis and pertinent statistical data.

#### **IV. Economic development, donor coordination and aid effectiveness**

40. The Afghan economy continued to face deflation, reflecting stagnant economic activity and weak demand, albeit at a slower rate than previously. According to the World Bank, year-on-year headline and core inflation reached -5.9 per cent by June 2024. The merchandise trade deficit widened to \$3.9 billion in the first six months of 2024, a 34 per cent increase from the same period in 2023. Exports declined by 14 per cent, to \$700 million, driven primarily by a 76 per cent reduction in coal exports to Pakistan. Imports surged to \$4.6 billion in the first six months of 2024, a 23 per cent increase from the same period in 2023. On 10 June, the Office of the de facto Spokesperson reported the existence of trade relations with 80 countries. The Afghani remained stable throughout the first seven months of 2024. Despite slight depreciations against the United States dollar and some regional currencies, it was 21.3 per cent stronger against the United States dollar in July 2024 than in August 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/gender-country-profile-afghanistan](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/gender-country-profile-afghanistan).

41. State revenue for the first four months of the current fiscal year, beginning in March 2024, reached around \$1 billion (69.7 billion Afghanis), reflecting year-on-year growth of 11 per cent and exceeding the target by 3 per cent. This is driven primarily by a 30 per cent year-on-year increase in the revenue derived from the Revenue Department, while the Customs Department experienced a 2 per cent year-on-year decline in revenue due to lower taxes on coal exports and reduced customs duties on certain goods. Inland revenue saw a robust increase, to around \$204 million (14.4 billion Afghanis), in the first two months of the fiscal year, a 22 per cent increase from the same period in 2023, but collection reportedly lagged 13 per cent behind the target. The de facto authorities have not made any detailed announcement on budget allocations since reporting the approval of the budget for the current fiscal year on 21 May. On 6 August, the de facto Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs announced new tax cuts for gas stations and for some hotels and restaurants.

42. On 6 June, the de facto authorities launched a private sector support fund to finance initiatives. On 1 July, at the third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan, held in Doha, the de facto Ministry of Commerce and Industry presented measures to support investments and domestic production, including protective tariffs, lower tariffs on raw materials for local industry, tax exemptions or cuts, incentives for returning businesspeople, the favouring of domestic procurement and the facilitation of private sector exhibitions to expand markets, including regional ones. According to a media report on 27 May, the de facto Ministry of Mines and Petroleum confirmed that eight mining contracts, including two large-scale ones, had been signed with domestic companies since the start of the fiscal year.

43. As part of efforts to counter money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, the de facto authorities strengthened regulations on money changers, who continue to process most financial transactions given the existing challenges in international transfers. On 8 June, the de facto Central Bank announced an official ban on unlicensed and roving money changers. On 11 July, the de facto Ministry of Justice announced a new law that had been approved on 30 June on currency exchangers and money services, which regulates their operations, standardizes their services and makes licensing mandatory. Reports suggest that the de facto authorities conduct regular inspections of money changers and close the operations of those without a valid licence. On 7 August, the de facto Central Bank published a statement on social media to announce the further easing of withdrawal limits on individual and corporate accounts.

44. UNAMA continued its engagement with Member States and the Afghanistan Coordination Group, including by participating in the meeting of senior officials on Afghanistan held in Brussels from 11 to 13 June, which covered political and humanitarian concerns. Discussions focused on the principled delivery of humanitarian assistance and support for basic human needs in an evolving operational context. The Afghanistan Coordination Group continued to hold consultations on possible options for targeted and principled engagement with the de facto authorities. The United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, 2023–2025, had, as at 12 August, received only 33.3 per cent (\$966 million) of the \$2.9 billion required to meet the basic human needs of people in Afghanistan for 2024 and should therefore be urgently prioritized.

45. From 31 July to 1 August, Norway, with substantive and technical support from UNAMA, convened technical talks on climate change between the de facto authorities and international stakeholders in Doha. The talks were aimed at providing an opportunity for the exchange of information to improve the understanding of climate change in Afghanistan and its associated impacts, facilitating ongoing action, assessing future response needs and identifying priority areas for action and improved coordination, such as off-budget climate finance. Participants acknowledged a shared

concern over the critical and urgent need for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures as well as the need for more engagement and coordination in that area.

46. As at 14 July, the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan had mobilized \$232.7 million since its inception on 20 October 2021 and had reached over 5 million beneficiaries, 46.8 per cent of whom were women. In line with the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, 2023–2025, the Steering Committee of the Fund, at its meeting on 19 June 2024, approved two new joint initiatives for the same period. Under the first initiative, \$12.5 million was allocated to provide durable solutions for internally displaced persons and returnees in the eastern region of Afghanistan. Under the second initiative, \$3.1 million was dedicated to drug use prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in the south-eastern region.

47. The United Nations common risk-management approach continued to be strengthened. The United Nations in Afghanistan jointly identified areas of high risk of aid diversion, fraud and corruption in two system-wide surveys in July. As part of the first survey, the mechanisms and tools used in the due diligence process for identifying new contractors, implementing partners and service providers were mapped, while the second survey was focused on efforts to mitigate the risk of aid diversion. The conclusions and recommendations from the surveys will serve as input for a joint United Nations and World Bank risk management workshop with donors and key partners to be held on 30 September, before the Afghanistan Coordination Group meeting to be held on 2 and 3 October.

48. The United Nations prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network in Afghanistan successfully met its financial targets in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan on 21 June, resulting in a fully funded work plan that enables coordinated efforts of the United Nations, NGOs and civil society organizations in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse, including by creating referral pathways for victim services and increasing awareness and capacity. From 23 to 27 June, the network held a data validation workshop in Kabul. From 27 July to 2 August, the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Christian Saunders, visited Afghanistan, where he engaged with a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

## **V. Humanitarian assistance**

49. Humanitarian needs in Afghanistan remain staggeringly high. More than half the population – 23.7 million people – will require humanitarian assistance in 2024; some 12.4 million people are acutely food insecure; and 6.6 million people remain internally displaced. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, facing protection risks and denial of their rights, leaving them at greater risk of exposure to violence, poverty and exploitation. Heavy windstorms and flash floods in mid-July had resulted in 58 fatalities and 380 injuries as at 21 July. The humanitarian community continued to closely monitor the situation with local authorities for coordinated response efforts. Gender alerts issued by UN-Women continued to show that women in Afghanistan had limited preparedness knowledge, putting them at an increased risk of death or injury during climate disasters. During the flood response, restrictions imposed on Afghan women humanitarian workers, including on their movement and their participation in operational planning, had negative consequences for the affected women and girls targeted by the response.

50. Between January and June, humanitarian partners reached 12.1 million people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance and up to 1.9 million people with three different forms. A total of 9.6 million individuals were reached with food and livelihood support, 4.3 million people with health care, 3.1 million children and

pregnant/lactating women with nutrition assistance, 3.1 million people with protection support, 2.6 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene, 735,000 people with emergency shelter and non-food items, and 554,000 children with education. As at 30 August, the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2024 had received \$762.4 million, or 24.9 per cent, of the required \$3.06 billion in funding. In comparison, the Plan for 2023 had received \$906 million by 31 August 2023.

51. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification figures, the projected number of severely food insecure people (phase 3 or above) for the post-harvest period (May–October) has decreased compared with the previous year. A total of 12.4 million people are projected to be severely food insecure in the period from May to October 2024, compared with 15.3 million people in the same period in 2023. Overall improvements were driven by the scale of humanitarian food and emergency agricultural assistance and the improved harvest in 2023. However, Afghanistan still faces high and fragile levels of food insecurity. In 2024, approximately 4 million malnourished children and pregnant and breastfeeding women will require services for the treatment of acute malnutrition, while almost 3 million children and 1 million pregnant and breastfeeding women will require targeted supplementary feeding to prevent acute malnutrition.

52. Between April and June, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations supported 913,416 beneficiaries through a wide range of interventions, including emergency livelihood assistance for 22,002 people. It also rehabilitated 11 water resources and irrigation structures spanning 20 km. The transmission of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever was addressed by disinfecting 6,000 stables, animal markets and entry points. The cross-boundary movement of locusts was reported in Takhar Province, and anti-locust campaigns were conducted in 11 provinces, covering 40,870 hectares of land.

53. Between 1 January and 24 August, according to the World Health Organization, 120,278 cases of acute watery diarrhoea with dehydration (55.6 per cent involving children under 5 years of age) were reported, compared with 144,543 cases (57.3 per cent involving children under 5 years of age) in the same period in 2023. There were 38,225 suspected measles cases (80.1 per cent involving children under 5 years of age), compared with 17,744 suspected cases (71 per cent involving children under 5 years of age) in the same period in 2023. Between 1 January and 16 July 2024, nine cases of wild poliovirus type-1 were recorded, compared with six cases in 2023.

54. The number of conflict-induced trauma cases, both treated and referred, increased by 21.4 per cent, reaching 34,988 cases in the period from January to July 2024, compared with 28,816 during the same period in 2023. Between January and July 2024, a total of 349,747 children under 5 years of age suffering from severe acute malnutrition were admitted and treated in 142 in-patient and 3,381 out-patient medical facilities. In addition, 723,222 children under 5 years of age with moderate acute malnutrition and 476,662 pregnant and lactating women were reached through a targeted supplementary feeding programme. In July, 355 mobile health and nutrition teams reached populations in remote areas, providing more than 392,000 primary health-care consultations. Mobile teams remained critical for providing health and nutrition services to populations in underserved areas.

55. Between 15 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, humanitarian partners assisted more than 686,703 undocumented Afghan returnees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in International Organization for Migration reception centres. As at the end of August, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had provided protection support to over 41,000 Afghan returnees, 49 per cent of whom were women and girls. Returnees interviewed by

UNHCR raised concerns about the lack of shelter, food, livelihoods, documentation and access to basic services in return areas. Community-based protection monitoring conducted by UNHCR revealed that 59 per cent of respondents reported that at least one person in their households did not have access to civil documentation, with women and girls most affected, critically limiting their access to essential services. On 10 July, the Government of Pakistan announced the extension of the proof of registration of 1.45 million Afghan refugees until 30 June 2025.

56. During May and June 2024, 193 humanitarian access-related incidents were recorded, a 42 per cent decrease from the same period in 2023. The primary challenge was interference in humanitarian activities, which accounted for 63 per cent of incidents. Other challenges included the physical environment (44 incidents), ongoing military operations (2 incidents), movement restrictions (10 incidents) and the detonation of an improvised explosive device (1 incident, resulting in the death of one humanitarian worker and serious injury to another). In addition, 14 incidents of violence against humanitarian workers, including 6 detentions, were recorded. These incidents led to the temporary suspension of 114 activities across various regions. Some 32 gender-related incidents were reported, a 50 per cent decrease from the same period the previous year. Of the 193 recorded incidents, 59 per cent were resolved, with efforts ongoing at the national and subnational levels to address the remaining incidents.

57. Between May and July, 13 km<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared of explosive ordnance, facilitating the safe return of displaced families and enabling the resumption of agricultural activities, road construction, the development of residential areas and safe grazing. The United Nations-led Mine Action Technical Cell conducted 440 quality management visits to ensure compliance with international standards. The Cell also carried out 20 community impact evaluations and 86 community liaison visits, strengthening the relationship between mine action organizations and local communities, and ensuring that the needs and concerns of the latter were effectively addressed. Efforts to mitigate explosive ordnance threats to returnees continued in seven high-displacement provinces. Such efforts included the clearance projects funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund and enabled by the Mine Action Service near schools in Kunduz, Baghlan and Faryab Provinces. Resource mobilization for the mine action sector remains a significant challenge, and the number of operational teams decreased from 317 in May to 287 in July.

## **VI. Counter-narcotics**

58. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), following a 95 per cent decrease in opium poppy cultivation in 2023, evidence from the field indicates that poppies continued to be cultivated during the reporting period, mainly in Badakhshan, Herat, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Takhar Provinces. The de facto authorities eradicated approximately 860 hectares of poppy fields across various districts of Badakhshan over the same period. Between May and July, opium prices exhibited minor changes, with the national average price for dry opium increasing by 0.1 per cent, from \$737 to \$738 per kg, but down from \$802 per kg in December 2023.

59. During the reporting period, the UNODC alternative development programme benefited over 935 households with immediate income-generating support through the provision of improved inputs for vegetable and cereal crops production, animal husbandry and poultry farming in eastern and southern provinces. On 26 June 2024, UNODC held a series of events to commemorate the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, including the following: a friendly cricket match,

organized in partnership with the Afghanistan Cricket Board, to raise awareness of drug use prevention and treatment; a half-hour radio programme on prevention and treatment, which was aired on a popular radio station led and managed by women, and involved experts on drug use risk factors and the role of families and communities in prevention; and a conference organized by the de facto Ministry of Public Health and the national drug demand reduction task force, with the participation of United Nations entities, national and international NGOs and service providers, aimed at promoting evidence-based initiatives to prevent and treat drug use and raising awareness of the harms of drug use.

60. From 14 May to 18 July, the United Nations Development Programme supported 1,651 households affected by the poppy ban in six provinces by distributing agricultural inputs to help to mitigate the effects of lost income. The same households received additional support through the provision of 50 hectares of land for growing high-value crops and the rehabilitation of 50 greenhouses to facilitate off-season vegetable production.

61. On 12 June, the working group on counter-narcotics, co-chaired by UNAMA and UNODC, convened its fifth meeting, gathering Kabul-based representatives of Member States and international organizations to assess preparations for the meetings held in Doha in June and July. In July, UNAMA visited several treatment and rehabilitation centres across Afghanistan to identify needs in order to tailor and scale-up effective treatment for drug addicts, including by providing medicine, medical equipment and any other assistance.

## **VII. Mission support**

62. As at 30 June 2024, the vacancy rates in UNAMA were 9 per cent for international staff, 3 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 23 per cent for National Professional Officers and 17 per cent for national staff, compared with approved rates of 9.5 per cent, 12 per cent, 10.5 per cent and 9.5 per cent, respectively. The proportion of women staff was 34 per cent for international staff, 41 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 10 per cent for National Professional Officers and 9 per cent for national staff. The national United Nations Volunteers programme remains a critical pipeline for young Afghan women wishing to join the United Nations workforce.

## **VIII. Observations**

63. The people of Afghanistan continue to face serious challenges, ranging from a weak economy, persistent poverty and significant deprivation of rights and freedoms to the consequences of natural disasters and climate change. While most of these problems are long-standing, many have been exacerbated and severe ones have been introduced through restrictive policies and practices imposed by the de facto authorities. Competing humanitarian crises globally and the insufficient compliance of the de facto authorities with the country's international obligations, particularly respect for the rights of women and girls, continue to pose challenges to resource mobilization efforts.

64. The meetings convened by the United Nations from 30 June to 2 July in Doha were aimed at addressing these challenges. The meetings allowed special envoys on Afghanistan from 27 countries and representatives of international institutions to meet with representatives of the de facto authorities and members of Afghan civil society. Participants raised a range of issues and concerns affecting Afghanistan. The meetings included in-depth discussions on private sector engagement and counter-

narcotics. Human rights figured prominently in all discussions. The Doha meetings are envisaged as part of a process to achieve the goal of an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours, fully integrated into the international community and meeting its international obligations, including on human rights, particularly those of women and girls, as expressed in the report of the independent assessment pursuant to Security Council resolution 2679 (2023) (S/2023/856, annex). The United Nations will continue to work with all stakeholders to advance this process, with the interests and concerns of the people of Afghanistan always at the centre.

65. The way forward will be long and arduous. Success will require patience and a willingness to find step-for-step approaches, with the aim of building confidence over time. Human rights are and must remain integral to this endeavour, in observance of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the international obligations and responsibilities of Afghanistan, and the rights, freedoms and expectations of the Afghan people.

66. Counter-narcotics requires immediate attention and action to help to ensure security and promote livelihoods for the people of Afghanistan. Although public protests and violent clashes over narcotics-related issues reported in the previous period subsided as the harvesting season passed its peak, the lack of alternative crops remains unresolved. Where the de facto authorities have made efforts and shown their willingness to work with the international community, some support has come from donors and international partners, but the issues of alternative livelihoods and prevention and treatment for drug use disorders remain inadequately addressed due to continued limited resource allocations.

67. The livelihoods of the Afghan population greatly depend on the ability of the private sector to recover from the economic contraction of recent years and create job opportunities, in particular for young Afghans. While the de facto authorities are taking steps to strengthen the banking sector and regulate money markets and to develop microfinance regulations and Islamic financing instruments, the banking sector's ability to play an effective financial intermediation role in the economy remains severely constrained. Further policy reforms are required to address institutional and legal uncertainty and gender-specific challenges encountered by female entrepreneurs. Additional areas for further dialogue and possible interventions include promoting job creation and entrepreneurship, strengthening the microfinance sector, improving access to capital, banking services and markets, and enhancing the education and skills that Afghan men and women need to be able to meaningfully contribute to the prosperity of their families and communities.

68. The severe restrictions on girls' and women's rights to education, work and earned income are further entrenching poverty and inequality among Afghan women, preventing the progress and development of the entire country. Three years since the takeover, the de facto authorities have not clarified their intentions regarding the conditions for women civil servants' return to work. Meanwhile, girls' secondary and tertiary schools remain closed, with no evidence of progress towards their reopening. I continue to strongly urge the de facto authorities to remove all discriminatory restrictions against women and girls, including by allowing women to return to work and by reopening schools for girls above the sixth grade.

69. The de facto authorities' restrictions, particularly those enforced by the de facto Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, limit human rights and fundamental freedoms in both the public and the private spheres, especially for women. Pursuant to the international human rights instruments to which Afghanistan is a party, the de facto authorities are legally obliged to protect and promote the human rights of women, men, girls and boys living in the country and to rescind restrictions that impede the enjoyment of human rights. The promulgation of further restrictions

on the Afghan people, particularly women, together with grounds for discretionary law enforcement measures, is concerning. Their full implementation would have far-reaching consequences, particularly for women, but also for society as a whole.

70. It is deeply concerning that the de facto authorities continue to suspend independent media outlets without due process and to interfere with their operations as a means of curtailing civic space. The de facto authorities are urged to respect free media, whose functioning is fundamental for the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression and other human rights. It is vital that Afghan journalists and media organizations be able to do their work without intimidation, violence or the risk of arbitrary detention. Freedoms for journalists and the media will help to ensure transparency and accountability.

71. The continued targeting of former government officials and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces members, despite the de facto authorities' publicly stated commitment to their general amnesty, is also of great concern. It is important to ensure the protection of these individuals and, when violations of the amnesty occur, to carry out transparent investigations leading to accountability for perpetrators.

72. The implementation of corporal punishment constitutes a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as repeatedly stated by numerous human rights bodies. The de facto authorities are called upon to immediately cease the implementation of such punishment, which is in violation of the international human rights obligations of Afghanistan.

73. The ongoing loss of life and injuries caused by unexploded ordnance, with children making up the vast majority of casualties, is deeply concerning. These incidents are preventable, and I urge the international community to continue its support for mine clearance efforts and awareness-raising in Afghanistan.

74. Despite resource constraints exacerbated by recent crises, humanitarian partners continue to provide principled assistance, particularly to women, children and older persons. I remain concerned about the challenges in scaling up capacities to absorb returnees and enable their sustainable reintegration, especially should potential returns be forced or unprepared. It is essential that the humanitarian appeal be funded sufficiently to help to address the immense needs of the Afghan people, particularly the most vulnerable. The de facto authorities must lift the restrictions placed on women aid workers in Afghanistan and refrain from interfering with humanitarian operations. Violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities in Afghanistan has created a hostile environment for aid workers. The de facto authorities must ensure unimpeded access for aid workers and their safety, and must also do their part to ensure that assistance is allowed to reach the designated beneficiaries.

75. I extend my deep appreciation to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan under the leadership of my Special Representative, Roza Otunbayeva, and her team, and to NGO partners for their continued dedication and service to the people of Afghanistan in an extremely challenging environment.