



H.E. Ambassador ISHIKANE Kimihiro
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

January 5, 2023

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you as the incoming President of the Security Council on behalf of the Women's Forum on Afghanistan, a network of Afghan and global women leaders. We have watched events in Afghanistan unfold over the past year with deepening concern. We welcome the efforts of the Security Council to promote peace and security in Afghanistan, and its recognition that political inclusion and respect for women's rights are critical components of sustainable peace and real security. Meanwhile, the entire world is watching the situation deteriorate in Afghanistan, the only country in the world where girls and women are officially banned from access to education.

We were glad to see the strong and immediate statement issued by the Security Council following recent announcements by the Taliban further restricting women's access to higher education and employment. As we have learned over the past year, however, statements are simply not enough to have any impact. As you note with alarm in your recent statement, the situation is only getting worse.

For this reason, we appeal to you to organize an urgent Security Council visit to Afghanistan. We note that previous Security Council visits were made to Afghanistan in 2010 and again in 2018, to enable the Security Council to see with its own eyes what is happening and to engage in discussions that have been beyond the reach of UNAMA, despite its best efforts. Your leadership is desperately needed at this critical moment.

We recognize that a Security Council visit could be perceived as giving legitimacy to the Taliban, who seized power by force and have not been recognized by any government in the world. In light of this concern, we believe that a joint mission designed to promote dialogue between women leaders and the Taliban, undertaken in conjunction with Afghan women leaders, would be the best way to engage in such an initiative. Such action could be taken in furtherance of the mandate you have given to UNAMA in Security Council Resolution 2626, adopted in March 2022, to facilitate an inclusive political dialogue in Afghanistan and promote participatory governance "with the full, equal with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women..."

UNAMA has focused its work largely on humanitarian aid. It has been unable to make progress in the implementation of the political component of its mandate. For this reason intervention at a higher level is justified and needed to initiate the political dialogue envisioned by Resolution 2626.

We would be glad to discuss this idea with you - we feel it is urgent and necessary for the United Nations to respond further and at the highest level, in a proactive manner, to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the inability of UNAMA to make meaningful progress in promoting a political dialogue and respect for fundamental women's rights.

Sincerely,

Margot Wallström, Chair
Women's Forum on Afghanistan
Former Foreign Minister of Sweden