



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANIZHA BAKHTARI FOR THE OSCE 976th MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION (FSC)

Security Dialogue: UNSCR 1325: Full, equal and meaningful participation of women in security and armed forces

Wednesday, 19 May 2021 at 10 a.m. (only via video teleconferencing/ZOOM)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

First, let me thank the Armenian FSC Chairpersonship for organizing this security dialogue on this important issue and to have made the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda* one of their priorities during their Chairpersonship. I would also like to join others in commending the panellists for their valuable presentations and their contribution to the discussion.

Since my first day in this new position in Vienna, ensuring the safety and encouragement of women has been a priority. Their safety and participation in society are rights granted to them by our Constitution. And these rights must be preserved. At the same time, women's safety and participation are also imperative for Afghanistan's continued advancement.

Women are essential figures in our lives. So, maintaining and securing our connections with them is vital. Some of you are aware of our recent collaborative efforts with the OSCE to establish and create a Network of Powerful Women empowering Afghan Women in Peace & Security. Let me reiterate the extreme importance we attach to the consolidation of our networks. At this critical point in the peace negotiations, reinvigorating our momentum is critical. Recent events confirm that we Afghans, particularly women, face uncertainty.

Though negotiations demand compromise, sacrificing women's rights will always be a nonstarter. Let us continue to show solidarity for the women who are doing invaluable work to achieve a post-conflict society in Afghanistan.

Despite the overwhelming adversity Afghan women face, victimhood does not define them. And neither these women nor the Government of Afghanistan will limit them to this definition. We all understand their individual potential and value to our society. That's why, like democracy and the rule of law, we have positioned women's empowerment as a governing principle in our national agenda.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has developed the **Afghan National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**. This plan upholds the UNSCR 1325 in four key areas: **Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief**. And we have proceeded with security sector reform following these four principles.

1. First, we ensure women's **participation** by actively recruiting them across our ministries. The Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Defence, General Directorate

of National Security, and the National Security Council have all intensified recruitment efforts. Already, women make up 2.32% of the National Police, 1.15% in the Ministry of Defence, and 50.27% of civil servants. Of course, Kabul is amending legislation to support this recruitment process.

2. In this vein, we are also amending laws to ensure the **protection** of women. Notably, we have implemented laws concerning domestic violence, human trafficking, abduction, and forced marriages. These efforts are enshrined in the *Law of the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. Complementing these legal reforms, we have also promoted legal understanding so that women can take advantage of these laws. Our digitization campaign also coincides with this goal as our online databases facilitate filing legal complaints.
3. And of course, we address violence against women pre-emptively through public outreach. We have launched several awareness campaigns through radio, TV, workshops, advertising, and conferences to **prevent** violence and discrimination against women. The involvement of young men, military officials, and religious leaders encourage us.
4. Lastly, Afghan leadership also raises the importance of **relief and recovery**. Mainly, economic independence and empowerment are important conditions for women to flourish in our society. So, we are enhancing the capacity of women in production and marketing activities. For instance, we have promoted special working conditions to facilitate women's entry and participation in the workforce. We have also allocated resources to optimize our response to the needs of women in conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A country cannot advance without its women. If women are excluded, then the impact of any society's accomplishments is only hollow examples of what could have been achieved. Afghanistan acknowledges this fact. And in our case, it's a pressing concern.

Today let me once again say firmly that myself, my colleagues, and my country are all committed to this fight. And we will not stop until the fight has been won.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the International community, our friends and allies countries for their great and continued support to Peace, Stability and Security in Afghanistan.

Thank you.