

USG DiCarlo highlights Afghan women's concerns at Doha III meeting

Remarks by Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo

Press Conference following the Third Meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan

Doha, 1 July 2024

I want to first express our deep appreciation to the Government of Qatar for hosting this third meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan.

This is the third Doha meeting, but it is also a first. Indeed, this is the first time such a broad cross section of the international community and the de facto authorities have had the opportunity to hold such detailed discussions.

These discussions were frank and, I believe, useful.

They were based on priority areas listed in the independent assessment the UN Security Council recognized last November.

That assessment called for a more structured process, with clear conditions and expectations for all sides.

So, we are pursuing a principled, step-for-step approach with a clear understanding of the outcomes and commitments from all sides.

We are still at the beginning of this process.

At the opening yesterday the special envoys and the de facto authorities aired their expectations. Today we looked at the private sector and counternarcotics.

The Afghan private sector faces enormous obstacles to its development and growth, which adversely affects the economy and livelihoods. Afghanistan also needs support in building on progress made in curbing drug production.

Running through all the discussions was the deep international concern - from special envoys and from me - about the ongoing and serious restrictions on women and girls. Afghanistan cannot return to the international fold, or fully develop economically and socially, if it is deprived of the contributions and potential of half its population.

We also discussed the need for more inclusive governance and respect for the rights of minorities.

There was broad agreement on the need to chart a clear way forward. And we at the UN are committed to continue to facilitate this process.

Now, I am fully aware of the criticisms leveled at this meeting. And I understand. I would like to stress a few things:

- The concerns and views of Afghan women and civil society were front and center. For the United Nations, the meaningful inclusion of women in political and peace processes is a guiding principle.
- I raised these issues at all our sessions with the de facto authorities. And we will have focused discussions tomorrow with Afghan women and civil society. I will have a chance to brief you on those talks tomorrow.
- This is part of a process. And while women and civil society were not sitting across the table from the de facto authorities the last two days, they made their voices heard. Civil society has a rightful role to play in shaping Afghanistan's future.
- We faced a very tough, maybe impossible, choice in organizing this meeting. We have a mandate to support this process. Our brief was to bring the de facto authorities and the special envoys together for direct talks. Regrettably, the de facto authorities will not sit across the table with Afghan civil society in this format. But they heard very clearly the need to include women and civil society in all aspects of public life.
- I would also like to emphasize that this meeting and this process of engagement does not mean normalization or recognition.

My hope is that the constructive exchanges on the various issues over the last two days have moved us a little closer to resolving some of the problems that are having such a devastating impact on the Afghan people.

Above all, the discussion confirmed the international community's unity in its resolve to continue engagement with Afghanistan.

We agreed to continue this process and, again, I am really grateful to the Government of Qatar for their support. We are considering setting up working groups on various areas that are contained in the independent assessment.

To conclude, I'd like to reiterate the United Nations commitment to continue to support this process of principled engagement for the benefit of all Afghans.

Thank you.