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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

Strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in Afghanistan

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1. The International Organization for the Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) thanks the the United Nation High Commissioner for Human rights for her comprehensive report, A/HRC/49/24, on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, focusing on, inter alia, the accountability of all perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses in the conflict. On this regard, IOLDCs requests the members of the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner to take into consideration the below comments and recommendations while considering the report.

2. In the light of the worsening humanitarian situation and the political instability in Afghanistan, the International Organization for IOLDCs herewith advocates a series of recommendations for the Human Rights Council based on reports of serious violations of international governmental norms in the country. These violations follow decades of prolonged conflict and a seizure of power by the Taliban regime which has brought about endemic aid dependency, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, drought and severe winter conditions.

3. During the 48th regular session of the Human Rights Council, IOLDCs delivered an oral statement regarding the regression in Afghanistan of several goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (such as the prevention of poverty, the promotion of gender equality, and stimulation of peace, justice, and strong institutions) due to the fall of the the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the establishment of the Taliban regime.

4. The ongoing liquidity shortage, inflation, and other economic factors hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan continues to be a cause for great concern. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 24.4 million Afghans, including 12.9 million children, are currently in need of humanitarian assistance.

5. Moreover, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on Afghanistan, issued in October 2021, notes that 55% of the population will experience crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity, with as high as a 35% increase over the first few months of 2022. In a 14 December 2021 statement, a spokesperson for the World Food Program (WFP) stated that recent WFP surveys found that an estimated 98% of Afghans currently experience insufficiency of food. Meanwhile, the disbursement of humanitarian aid is severely hindered by the Taliban regime.

6. In terms of the formation of government in Afghanistan, 33 mullahs have been appointed, many of whom are subject to UN sanctions or are wanted for terrorist activities; the Minister of Interior has extensively documented links with terrorism. While the governing structure is an all-male organization, the ongoing safety of Afghan women and girls continues to be under threat. The regime has made it known that it does not foresee women participating in leadership roles in Afghanistan and continues to use lethal force to disperse women's rights protests and to refuse women and girls access to education. Women's rights and gender equality are consequently rapidly deteriorating in Afghanistan.

7. The majority of women have been prevented from returning to the workplace, universities or schools, and their access to healthcare and overall participation in civic and political life has been shuttered by the current authorities. Women have been consistently excluded from government and education, and they face systemic and brutal oppression in most aspects of day to day living.

8. Alongside the continued threats to women's rights, there are reports of: executions of civilians more generally and of members of the Afghan national security forces;

recruitment of child soldiers; repression of peaceful protests and expressions of dissent; and intolerable restrictions of, and attacks on, human rights defenders, religious and ethnic minorities, journalists, writers, academics, artists, civil servants and members of the media.

9. All of this coincides with the possibility of a collapse of the education system in Afghanistan, with children (predominantly girls) being denied the educational opportunities that have been built progressively in the country over the past twenty years. The collapse of education structures, and with them the dissipation of freedom of expression, will have seriously detrimental long-term implications not only on Afghan society but the region at large.

10. While the Taliban continues to seek recognition, legitimacy and support from the international community, the regime has repeatedly failed to guarantee basic societal freedoms; on the contrary, the regime continues to attack real or perceived opposition to its control in brutal and unacceptable ways.

11. The IOLDCs expresses solidarity with Afghan refugees and with those who remain in the country; it acknowledges the importance of the situation as a humanitarian and human rights crisis in which the safety and rights of Afghan civilians must be prioritized. On the basis of reports of repeated violations under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the IOLDCs makes the following recommendations to be upheld by the Human Rights Council:

i. The Taliban must be required to demonstrate respect for the human rights of all Afghan citizens, in particular women; the establishment of an inclusive and representative transitional government; and the reinstatement of an inclusive educational structure and curricula benefitting all children and young people in Afghanistan. The Taliban must be held to international standards in allowing peaceful protests and in protecting women's rights to education, work, sport, free movement, assembly and association.

ii. The international community must support Afghan women and girls who have left Afghanistan and who wish to continue their education in other countries; in this regard, innovative ways to include Afghan women and girls in educational systems should be sought, for example by providing scholarships assuring access to university and further education.

iii. Humanitarian assistance must be clearly addressed to the civilian population in need and channeled through the relevant international organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations. The safety of the civilian population and unhindered access to local and international NGO assistance must be ensured together with the delivery and disbursement of humanitarian aid to all of those in need.

iv. Member States must ensure a coordinated effort to pursue a humane asylum policy in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention. Steps must continue to be taken to resume coordinated evacuations from the country under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), notably through the creation of safe corridors and the permanent reopening of Kabul International Airport and Afghanistan's land borders. In particular, support for women, girls and people at risk leaving Afghanistan must be allowed safe passage.

v. Priority should be given to provide additional support to Afghanistan's neighboring refugee-hosting countries, preferably through the UN and its agencies, as well as international organizations on the ground, including an expansion of resettlement for those who are most at risk and most vulnerable, as well as further complementary pathways, such as humanitarian visas and a special visa program for Afghan women seeking protection.

vi. Member States should reassess current and recent asylum applications, including rejected applications in the light of recent developments, and should not force Afghan refugees to return to the country under any circumstances.

vii. There needs to be a legislative proposal for humanitarian visas and equal responsibility-sharing among the Member States to coordinate efforts and to apply all possible diplomatic leverage and tools to ensure access to land borders, safe passage, and access to diplomatic facilities until and unless the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan diminishes.
