

**Human Rights Council 48th session. General Debate, Item 2. Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Afghanistan by Italy, on behalf of a group of countries.**

Madame President,

I am delivering this cross regional joint statement on behalf of ...

We are deeply concerned by the reports of serious international humanitarian law violations and human rights violations and abuses in areas across Afghanistan, and condemn all arbitrary and extrajudicial killings of civilians and peaceful protesters, violence against civilians, sexual and gender based violence, child, early and forced marriage and sexual slavery, as well as the destruction of critical infrastructure and looting of cultural heritage committed by the Taliban and/or terrorist groups. These developments threaten to reverse the political, economic and social achievements of the Afghan people over the last two decades.

We are particularly worried for those who are in the most vulnerable situations and are exposed to higher risks: women and girls, children, human rights defenders and civil society leaders, journalists and other media workers, persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTI persons as well as local staff working for international organisations and other foreign entities, including diplomatic missions, and persons working for civil society organizations.

Afghan women and girls, as all Afghans, deserve to live in safety, security and dignity and to enjoy the full respect of their rights to education, work and freedoms of movement and expression. Any form of violence and discrimination should be prevented. The protection of Afghan women's and girls' human rights must be an integral part of the political solution and we call upon those holding power and authority on the ground to create and support an enabling environment and structures for all women to have a full, equal and meaningful participation in this process.

Recalling that Afghanistan is a State Party to many core international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, we urge those holding power and authority on the ground to protect civilians and respect human rights and international humanitarian law. Accountability for serious human rights violations and abuses and international humanitarian law violations must be ensured. No crime should go unpunished.

We remain convinced there is an urgent need to set up an independent mechanism, that should have unhindered access to the Afghan territory, to investigate and promote accountability for violations and abuses committed by all Afghan parties and to monitor the human rights situation moving forward. To preserve its role and credibility, the Council

must act in a manner commensurate with the gravity of the situation to prevent future and further deterioration of human rights.

We will continue to support democracy, good governance, human rights and social and economic development in Afghanistan, as well as the work of the High Commissioner and her Office and other UN entities in Afghanistan.

Thank you Madame President.