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Your Excellency Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members and Delegates,

Honorable Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is indeed an honor for me to be here today to represent Afghan women. I am very hopeful that the UN security council had a very clear picture of the situation in their last visit to Kabul, and surely this will pave the way for new opportunities to reiterate their support for the people of Afghanistan especially women. Life of women have changed remarkably in the last 17 years.

There are two indicators that have changed the women's life in Afghanistan over the past 17 years. One of the factors is the tireless efforts and persistent struggles of women themselves, and another one is the Afghanistan's constitution in which exceptional articles in the favor of the women are placed that have enabled women to get engaged in political and social issues in the country.

In addition to the Afghanistan's constitution -which provides for equal rights for both Afghan men and women, Afghanistan also joined the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women on 5th of March 2003. There are also other laws such as the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Prevention of the Sexual Harassment of Persons.

Today, Afghanistan is considered rich with national policies and international commitments in supporting women's empowerment. Afghanistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for both women and men before the law. Similarly, Afghan constitution guarantees women's access to education, health and social inclusion. After 17 years, Afghanistan has key legislations, policies and national plans which further increases government's obligation towards strengthening women's participation and equal rights.

Afghan women's inclusion in some of key decision-making roles in the central and provincial level is remarkable. Women's presence in the cabinet, ministries, parliament, senate, HPC, provincial councils, security sector, and civil society is remarkable today.

A Deputy Attorney General for Prohibition of violence against women has been established, and there are currently 242 women prosecutors working in different departments, including the EVAW Officers, and there are also 300 female judges who are working to ensure the rule of law and prevent violence against women. In addition to that, 800 out of 4000 defense attorneys at the FRU actively working in the whole provinces.

A total of 3144 female police officers are working in the Ministry of Interior Affairs, targeting for 5000 women. And 1500 women are currently playing active role in the Ministry of Defense.

The government's initiations have led to significant advancements in education and training, which indicates an increase in the number of girls attending school from 3.5 million girls in 2013 to 3.6 million in 2015, that is 40% of the total number of students attending school. Young girls continue to pursue higher education after graduating from school, either in the country or abroad.

The professors of governmental universities increased from 3159 to 5582 in three years, in which 774 of them are female.

It is worth mentioning that the National Unity Government has not limited women just to the the Ministry of Women Affairs and role of women in the governance has expanded to all departments, for example, the 50% presence of women in the Citizens Charter National Priority Program (CCNPP), and the National Action Plan (NAP 1325) for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).

The (NAP 1325) is organized under the main (UNSCR-1325) themes: Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief and Recovery. In July 2015, the government of Afghanistan launched its first National Action Plan (NAP-1325). This is established and collaborates with other government agencies, civil society organizations, and international organizations to implement of (UNSCR-1325).

In government leadership level, there are 3 female Ministers and 11 female Deputy Ministers, but what's worth mentioning is the significant presence of women at the middle management level.

Afghan women have made significant progress in small and medium-sized businesses. For example, the Chamber of Commerce for Women is established to empower and support Afghan women in the business.

We are proud of the growth of women in civil society, although they are still young, their advocacy skills are commendable. An estimated number of 2000 female employees are actively working in the media industry, in which up to 50 printed, video, and audio media are run by women.

In addition, women participation in sports section is another tangible achievement. The number of Afghan girls in sports are more than 12 thousand, and in the last three years they have won 50 foreign medals. The sports-women have been well dressed in various sports, especially Bamyan Mountain Peace Cup Bike-racing championship.

Women are actively engaged in the peace process, out of the total 65 members in High Peace Council 1 is in the leadership position, 4 in the executive, and 12 in the General Assembly are women. 63 women out of 320 are also the members of Provincial Peace Committee (PPC).

Right now, women are represented at all layers of the High Peace Council. In HPC, the leadership and all members including myself as a Deputy Chairperson of this Council have always maintained the concept, and have always respected the idea that peace without women's meaningful participation is impossible. Therefore, we are committed to boosting women's role at all the levels of peace-building process, ensuring women's participation in leadership, and safeguarding of women rights.

We are also creating women advisory board where rural women from 34 provinces in addition to our provincial Committee members will meet on quarterly basis, they will share their concerns and ideas for improving our operations, and we are committed to increase female members at the PPC level from 1 to 3 in each province.

In the 2nd Kabul Process the Afghan government shared the roadmap for peace. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered talk with Taliban without pre-conditions. He added: “The Taliban would be recognized as a political party in the structure of constitution and Afghan government if they obey the rule of law and respect the women’s rights which is one of the strategic priorities for Afghanistan’s international partners”. Also, one of the subjects mentioned in the proposal is the provision for rights and safety for all citizens of Afghanistan, especially women, in accordance with the constitution.

Recommendations:

- Ensuring that women’s rights are non-negotiable in any level of the peace dialogue. Commitment to including women’s meaningful participation is part of all the agendas on negotiation tables and in decision-making in the peace, and reconciliation processes;
- Ensure that the female members of the Provincial Peace Committee (PPC) have the capacity for negotiation and lobbying;
- Ensure specific and sufficient allocation of budgets and corresponding financing mechanism for effective implementation of NAP-1325;
- Include women in initiatives related to improving livelihoods and community-based projects to improve the development outcomes and address the risks.

Therefore, Afghan women expect their partners to stand by them and bring peace and security and uproot the pervasive phenomenon of terrorism, because if today we are the first-hand victims, surely tomorrow you will also be.

Thank You!