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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

Statement by H.E. Tegan Brink, Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

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Australia is pleased to co-sponsor the resolution today. We thank colleagues, particularly from Germany and Afghanistan for their leadership in developing this year's Resolution, which represents a resounding show of continued international support for Afghanistan and its people as they seek peace and development.

Alongside our international partners, Australia remains committed to Afghanistan's security and development as it works towards self-reliance. We reaffirm Australia's commitment to NATO's Resolute Support mission, which is building the capacity of the Afghan security forces to protect Afghanistan's future.

The Australian Government strongly condemns violence in Afghanistan, which has continued unabated in 2018. This year's growing toll on civilians is a stark reminder of the suffering of the Afghan people.

Australia offers its condolences for these tragic events, including from recent conflict in Ghazni and from shocking attacks in Kabul, which previous speakers have touched upon.

We also honour the sacrifices of members of the Afghan Security Forces as well as those members of the NATO and partner forces who have lost their lives in support of their Afghan partners.

Australia supports the Afghan Government's determined pursuit of peace in 2018, from its February offer to the Taliban of negotiations without preconditions, to its announcement in November of the formation of a negotiating team and of its negotiating principles.

We also welcome the outcomes from the 28 November Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, where the Afghan Government renewed its commitment to reform, and which enhanced the momentum for an Afghan-led and owned peace process.

We call on the Taliban to commit to a ceasefire and join their fellow Afghans, especially the Government of Afghanistan, at the negotiating table.

We reaffirm Australia's support for the Kabul Process and encourage all parties to focus their efforts through this mechanism to achieve an inclusive and durable political settlement.

Durable peace will mean finding ways to preserve progress, protect rights, provide economic opportunities and include all Afghanistan's people in its future.

Afghanistan's neighbours have an especially important role to play.

We welcome positive steps taken by Afghanistan and its neighbours through the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process to facilitate regional cooperation and encourage sustainable trade and investment.

We encourage enhanced engagement between Afghanistan and Pakistan and urge priority be given to strengthening this bilateral relationship to ensure regional stability.

As partners in peace, the international community continues to support Afghanistan's efforts to establish the conditions that can sustain a negotiated settlement.

We look forward to Afghans further expressing their commitment to democracy in the 2019 Presidential elections as Afghanistan progresses towards self-reliance.

Since 2001, Australia has provided some \$1.4 billion dollars in development assistance, including a \$5 million dollar contribution to provide emergency assistance to the over 1 million Afghans who are on the verge of acute famine. We are meeting our Brussels ministerial conference commitments to provide \$320 million between 2016-2020, and will continue to invest in a secure and stable Afghanistan beyond 2020.

Alongside our international partners, Australia stands with Afghanistan as it charts a course toward a more secure and prosperous future.

We encourage all Member States to do the same and support the resolution.