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AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UN SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA MEETING

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Peace Process in Afghanistan

Written statement submitted by the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations in New York

Australia thanks Security Council members Estonia, Germany and Indonesia, and additional co-sponsors Afghanistan, Finland, Norway and Qatar, for the opportunity to outline Australia's support for the Afghan peace process.

Australia welcomes the ongoing Afghanistan peace negotiations. This is the best chance to end the conflict in Afghanistan, and we call on all parties to embrace this opportunity to create and implement a sustainable, inclusive political settlement. We support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, that preserves and builds on the political, economic and social achievements of the past 19 years.

These efforts will not succeed without difficult negotiation and compromise, and we call on both parties to engage constructively. We note with concern the unacceptably high number of casualties, including among women and children, as a result of the conflict. We strongly condemn all terrorist activity and all violent and unlawful attacks, especially those on health and education facilities. All parties must immediately reduce the level of violence so the peace negotiations can progress, and to respond to the growing COVID-19 crisis.

We encourage all parties to include Afghanistan's diverse voices – particularly those of Afghan women – throughout the negotiations. Australia continues to promote women as key agents of change, and encourages their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in Afghanistan's peace, security and stability decision-making – for the benefit of all Afghans.

We recognise that Afghanistan has made progress on its development pathway and we support Afghanistan's continued progress towards self-reliance. We will confirm our

commitment to this effort at the International Conference on Afghanistan, 23-24 November 2020, in Geneva. Prerequisites for ongoing international financial support will be Afghanistan's commitment to democracy, rule of law, human rights and gender equality, as embedded in the Afghan Constitution, along with respect for Afghanistan's international commitments. We also expect a commitment by all Afghans to fight corruption, which will ensure critical international resources are provided to those most in need. International partners, including Australia, have outlined these expectations to both parties through the various conference papers, including the key principles paper, Afghanistan Partnership Framework and political communique.

The prospect of peace offers a transformational opportunity for the people of Afghanistan. We encourage all Afghans to seize this moment to end the bloodshed. We support all Afghans in the desire for peace, security, and the opportunities for a prosperous country and the benefits that would bring to all.