Mr. President,

Almost 8 years ago, the General Assembly adopted the sustainable development goals and committed to achieving gender equality by 2030. Yet, since August 15, 2021, the world is facing the worst backlash on women’s rights in recent years, as almost 20 million Afghan women and girls have been deprived of their basic human rights.

Afghanistan is the only country in the world to have an official ban on women’s and girls’ access to education: It is estimated that over 80% of school-aged girls and young women are currently out of schools and universities. While the Taliban regime has also restricted women's employment, the breakdown of the health system has limited women's and girls’ access to reproductive health services, including contraception. States must keep condemning all such violations in the strongest terms.

This year, 28 million people will need humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian relief programmes thus remain fundamental, but they should be efficiently monitored, to guarantee that the aid is distributed based on needs assessments, avoid corruption and ensure that women are not only considered as mere recipients but also as active participants at all levels of the process.

Mr. President,

The Council must step up its efforts to address the human rights situation in Afghanistan. While collaboration with the Special Rapporteur is crucial, the Council must reconsider the establishment of a strong accountability mechanism, providing justice to the victims and ending the culture of impunity, particularly for the widespread violations of women's and girls’ rights.