

European Conference Declaration: “AFGHAN DIASPORA CALL TO ACTION”, 16 May 2022

From 15-16 May 2022, nearly 100 members of the Afghanistan diaspora, representing more than 70 organizations, gathered in Brussels for a European Conference entitled “Diaspora Action for Afghanistan” to exchange and strategize ways to strengthen protections for persons from Afghanistan. The event brought together leading academics, activists, women’s rights leaders, and representatives from diaspora organizations – each committed to deepening engagement to improve the situation inside Afghanistan and in the diaspora. During the two-day conference, key recommendations were endorsed to address some of the most immediate challenges that the people of Afghanistan are facing. As such, we call on the EU and its Member States (MS) to take the following actions in accordance with its five benchmarks for engagement with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan¹.



1. Step-up EU’s humanitarian and development support on the ground

Over previous years, the EU and its Member states have consistently demonstrated their commitment to the people of Afghanistan. However, despite the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Afghanistan requiring US\$ 4.4 billion, so far the EU and Member States have contributed with USD 597,2 million. Whilst we acknowledge the significance of this amount, this falls short of addressing urgent needs in Afghanistan.

- Significantly **increase multi-year humanitarian and development funding** for Afghanistan and refugee-hosting countries. Without an increase, protection risks will be compounded, achievements made over the previous decades will be lost, and durable solutions will be rendered inaccessible.
- Utilize available diplomatic and resource leverage among the de facto authorities to support principled humanitarian access and programming to the most vulnerable and mar-

ginalized, and ensure effective mechanisms exist to safely monitor and report aid delivery and distribution.

- Channel funding to ensure the delivery of essential public services and improve access to financial systems for non-state actors to avoid the collapse of Afghanistan’s economy without compromising on EU benchmarks or recognizing the de facto authorities. Consider efforts in reviving Afghanistan’s economy by enabling local financial, commercial, transportation and economic institutions to access global financial and commercial systems.
- Consult with and support civil society in Afghanistan and diaspora organizations in coordination, planning, and response as we play an essential role in responding to the emergency and provide access to capacity-building and structural funding to develop our capacity to respond in accordance with humanitarian and development standards.



2. Make women’s rights one of EU top priorities pushing back on unacceptable restrictions to access to education & freedom of movement

Women are disproportionately impacted by the current crisis in Afghanistan with unacceptable limitations to their rights to freedom of movement, education, work, and participation in public life.

- Utilize diplomatic and resource leverage to ensure that women and girls in Afghanistan can move freely, access quality education, social engagement, and work opportunities, including in senior leadership positions, throughout the entire country.
- Ensure that protection monitoring is conducted by women and can focus on women at risk of domestic violence, im-

prisonment, psychological and physical torture, and early marriage, to address the adverse impact of the de facto authorities’ requirements, such as those of Mahrams.

- Allocate specific programme funding to local civil society and the diaspora in the fields of education, monitoring of human rights violations, livelihood opportunities for women, media, and advocacy.
- Ensure that all European delegations visiting Afghanistan include women in all engagements with the de facto authorities, to send the important message that women are as much part of society as men and must be at the table.

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3. Engage strategically with de facto authorities to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of the people of Afghanistan, including those of marginalized groups

EU's engagement with the de facto authorities must seek to ensure their commitment and cooperation in providing access for the principled delivery of humanitarian assistance. During discussions with the de facto authorities, the EU should clearly emphasize the importance of respecting, upholding and effectively realizing the fundamental rights of all persons in Afghanistan including marginalized groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities who face ongoing discrimination, violence and persecution.

- Ensure that the interests of the people of Afghanistan, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalized, are at the center of any engagement with the de facto authorities.
- Publicly and consistently pressure the de facto authorities to respect internationally recognized human rights and humanitarian law, including by: ending arbitrary executions and enforced disappearances; conducting investigations; and, holding those responsible for abuses accountable.

- Impose targeted conditions on any direct assistance for non-humanitarian purposes and all other forms of engagement with de facto authorities until they take credible steps towards EU benchmarks.
- Strengthen, protect, and support efforts of international and civil society organizations, including those in the diaspora, to safely monitor and report human rights violations affecting marginalized groups in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.
- Pressure the de facto authorities to respect the rights of marginalized groups and protect them from targeted terror attacks and other forms of violations.
- Ensure regular and formalized consultations with local civil society and the diaspora on policies that affect the people of Afghanistan, including via support for the development of confidential reports to allow civil society inside and outside Afghanistan to convey evidence safely and discretely to the agreed parameters of the EU benchmarks.



4. Provide protection for Afghan asylum seekers in the European Union and continue support for evacuations and increased safe and legal channels for protection and integration in the EU

We welcome the EU and MS' evacuation efforts as well as their engagement with the de facto authorities on the provision of safe routes. With recognition that Afghanistan's neighboring countries continue to host the majority of Afghan refugees, we commend support by the EU and MS towards neighboring countries to address the protection of refugees. We remind the EU and its MS that the conditions inside Afghanistan are deteriorating and thus not conducive to the safe and voluntary, nor forced, return of refugees.

- Continue critical efforts to establish and implement safe and regular pathways to asylum in the EU complemented by the provision of clear information and communication regarding their rights as refugees and EU asylum procedures, including for those unable to access third countries to process their documents.

- Family members deemed 'at-risk' by clearly defined and agreed criteria should be considered for family reunification, as a safe and legal pathway to come to the EU. Do not deport Afghan refugees until the conditions on the ground are evidenced to be safe and in line with UNHCR's non-return directive.
- Refrain from approaching Afghanistan's neighboring countries as migration control mechanisms into the EU and instead focus policy primacy on supporting refugees' rights and access to durable solutions in the region, including in alignment with the Global Compact on Refugees regarding burden and responsibility-sharing.

¹ 5 EU Benchmarks (September 2021): (1) Afghanistan's soil would not be served as a base for the export of terrorism to other countries; (2) The respect for human rights, in particular women rights, the rule of law and freedom of the media. (3) The establishment of an inclusive and representative transitional government through negotiations among political forces in Afghanistan. (4) Free access for humanitarian aid, respecting EU procedures and conditions for its delivery. (5) Fulfilment of the Taliban commitment about the departure of foreign nationals and Afghans at risk, who wish to leave the country, in line with what was already decided by United Nations Security Resolution 2593.

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