



Statement during the 19th Session of the UNIDO General Conference, 29 November – 3 December 2021, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations (Vienna)

Mr. President, [H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Mezghani, Permanent Representative of Tunisia]

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the President of the 19th session of the General Conference and other members for their election to the bureau of this session. Under your leadership we are confident that this session will be successful.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, H.E. Eng. Suhail Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Industry of the United Arab Emirates, and the bureau members for their outstanding work and contributions at the previous session.

We would like to also thank the Secretariat for its efforts in organizing this session.

Mr. President,

The recent developments in Afghanistan, coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, have had a devastating impact on our economy and nascent industries. Since the Taliban takeover our economy and our whole financial system has collapsed. There is a major shortage of cash where banks cannot operate and have set limits on withdrawals. Salaries have not been paid for months. Millions have lost their jobs across the entire country, in both public and private sectors.

The current state of the economy, together with a terrible drought, has contributed to making the food crisis in Afghanistan so much worse. Right now my people are facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Afghanistan is in desperate need of humanitarian aid from our allies. Regardless of who governs Afghanistan, those in unstable economic and security conditions must not be forgotten. I urge all those in the international community to continue to support Afghans both in Afghanistan and abroad.

In the long run, however, Afghanistan needs so much more than just emergency aid. Afghanistan can't stay in isolation much longer and needs to be able to trade like any other country. The Taliban do not have experience, funding, or personnel to deliver sophisticated government services. My people deserve an inclusive and functioning government to provide security, justice and services. They deserve a government that can address poverty and unemployment and is capable to have a sound economic policy.

Furthermore, the Taliban have failed to recognize the vital role women hold in advancing the country's sustainable economic development. The Taliban occupying Afghanistan are preventing women from exercising their rights to pursue education and hold jobs. They have banned young girls from attending schools and universities and women who have succeeded in their careers are being punished for pursuing economic freedom and fulfilling careers. A prosperous Afghanistan is dependent upon empowering the other half of our population. Women economic empowerment – a necessary element of gender equality – is in fact a human right as well.

Mr. President,

Considering the various socioeconomic challenges Afghanistan is facing, let me emphasize the vital importance of UNIDO's work in accelerating our path towards inclusive and sustainable industrial development. We heavily rely on UNIDO's expertise in our efforts at recovery and revival of our industrial infrastructures. We call on UNIDO to continue providing technical cooperation and assistance to Afghanistan to foster our competitiveness and sustainability in the global market.

With the unique occasion of the incoming of a new Director General in this session, I take this opportunity to stress that Afghanistan has new needs and challenges to be addressed towards achieving inclusive and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO's new leadership needs to consider the catastrophic challenges Afghanistan is facing and strengthen its engagement in the country to address the needs of the people of Afghanistan.

As I conclude, allow me to express my appreciation once again for UNIDO's continued engagement and cooperation. Our joint efforts can have a significant impact on Afghanistan's sustainable economic transformation, which is a prerequisite for global prosperity, peace, and security.

Thank you, Mr. President.