JOINT STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN

Delivered at UNGA 81 Third Committee

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

Thank you, Chair. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Albania, Australia, México and my own country, Spain, and 51 Member States[1] and observers of the United Nations.

We thank the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Richard Bennett, for his comprehensive report and reiterate our unwavering support for his mandate.

We commend the Special Rapporteur for highlighting the distinct and horrific human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. We express our grave and growing concern over the Talban' s institutionalized and systematic gender-based oppression, which the UN Secretary-General, the Special Rapporteur, and many other members of the broader international community have characterised as gender apartheid.

Since taking power in 2021, the Taliban have issued more than 160 oppressive edicts targeting women and girls. We forcefully condemn the continued ban on girls' education beyond grade six, the severe restrictions on women's right to work, freedom of movement, and access to public life, as well as the "Law on the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice". As highlighted in the Special Rapporteur' s recent findings, these restrictions continue to escalate, including through the devastating ban on women entering medical institutes and health training, as well as sweeping bans on books authored by women. These institutionalized measures systematically erase women+from public life, dismantle the female healthcare workforce, strip women and girls of their human rights, and cause severe, lasting damage to their mental and physical health.

We are concerned by reports that the severe, widespread, and systematic nature of these violations and abuses may amount to gender persecution and may also constitute crimes against humanity under international law. In line with this, we support all legal and international efforts to recognize and hold accountable those responsible for these violations and abuses.

The ongoing situation in Afghanistan cannot become a "new normal". We firmly reiterate that preventing the normalization of Taliban rule remains a fundamental principle underpinning international engagement. No political engagement or diplomatic path should take place that normalizes or legitimizes the Taliban' s repressive policies and edicts at the expense of women' s and girls' human rights and fundamental freedoms. Any

[1] Afghanistan, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Brasil, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Danemark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Ukraine, Uruguay, and the European Union.

future engagement must be principled, centered on human rights, and amplify the voices of Afghan women, girls, and civil society.

We call on the Taliban to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally reverse all edicts and restrictive decrees targeting women and girls, restoring their access to education and employment, and freedom of movement.

2. Remove all constraints on humanitarian access, ensuring that aid can safely reach all beneficiaries, particularly women and children.

3. Uphold all international human rights obligations under treaties to which Afghanistan is a party, including CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The international community must not stand idle. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the courageous women and girls of Afghanistan, holding the line for justice, equality, and full accountability.

Thank you.