

Ministerial Statement on the Situation for
Women and Girls in Afghanistan on International Women's Day

The following is a statement from the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United States and the High Representative of the European Union.

Begin text:

On the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8, 2023, we united in calling attention to the situation in Afghanistan, which, over the past year and a half, has seen one of the steepest declines globally in the respect for the human rights of women and girls. Afghan women and girls have been denied access to secondary education, to higher education, to public and political spaces, and to employment opportunities. Services for supporting victims of gender-based violence have been largely dismantled. Unless reversed, the harmful effects of these reprehensible measures will be devastating and irreparable for Afghanistan's economy and society – effects that will be felt by every Afghan. The full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and their equal and meaningful participation in society are not only goals in themselves but also are prerequisites for sustainable economic and political development, social cohesion, stability, and peace in Afghanistan.

We unite in acknowledging the extraordinary courage of women and girls in Afghanistan. Despite mounting restrictions and intimidation by the Taliban, they continue to support and contribute to their families and communities. We applaud the many Afghan communities and individuals who have strongly and bravely stood up in support of Afghan women and girls.

We support the calls by the people of Afghanistan for women and girls' full access to quality education at schools and universities and women's unrestricted ability to work in all sectors, including humanitarian assistance and basic services delivery, equitable and comprehensive delivery of which is impossible without full participation of women.

We note the December 2022 statement from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that the decision to prevent women and girls from accessing education runs contrary to Islamic law. We are deeply concerned that Afghanistan is experiencing one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with millions on the threshold of starvation. The Taliban's edict barring women from working for national and international nongovernmental organizations, and the effects of the edict on some governmental organizations, is already jeopardizing the efforts of humanitarian organizations to reach the more than 28 million Afghans who depend on humanitarian aid to survive.

We acknowledge the key role of the UN in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Barring women and girls from receiving an education and excluding women from working in crucial sectors will also severely inhibit the much-needed economic recovery of Afghanistan.

This support for the Afghan people is particularly relevant, as we fear that the Taliban will implement further measures restricting women and girls' exercise of civil, political,

economic, cultural, and social rights, with a dire impact on the future of Afghanistan and its people.

Together we urge the Taliban to respect all people of Afghanistan, deliver on their commitments to the Afghan people and the international community, and reverse all decisions and practices restricting women's and girls' exercise of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

End text.