



**AMBASSADOR KHOJESTA FANA EBRAHIMKHEL STATEMENT
FOR JOINT CND & CCPCJ VIRTUAL EVENT "BEIJING+25: REALIZING
GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN
AND GIRLS"**

High-level event commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and discussing how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting women and girls, jointly organized by the Vienna-based functional commissions of the ECOSOC

Friday, 12 June 2020, at 15:00 hrs, in Board-Room D, VIC

In the name of God, the Merciful

**H.E. Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director UNODC/Director-General UNOV
H.E. Ambassador Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Chair of the CND at its 63rd session,
H.E. Ambassador J. Marcondes, Chair of the CCPCJ at its 29th session,
Honorable Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Esteemed International Gender
Champions, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me first express my most sincere condolences for the losses during the COVID-19 crisis. It is a critical time to cooperate and communicate, not only by sharing our experience and vision, but also by taking decisive action together as an international community.

It is an honor for me to address this important gathering commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Ms. Waly and the UNODC Secretariat for your continued efforts in maintaining all core functions and activities of the UNODC despite the difficult situation due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Let me extend a special thanks to UNODC for supporting Afghanistan in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me also thank the distinguished panelists and Ambassador H.E. Ms. Alicia Guadalupe Buenrostro Massieu for their insightful contributions on the topic.

Dear colleagues,

In September 1995 we gathered in Beijing, today, twenty-five years later, we come together again to commemorate the occasion, acknowledge progress made and challenges ahead.

As a first female Ambassador of Afghanistan in Vienna, I'm greatly honored to have joined the *International Gender Champions*, which gives me the opportunity to continue my work in promoting equal rights for men and women.

In fact, one of the main priorities of the strategic plan of the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan in Vienna is women empowerment. Women empowerment is a priority for the Government of Afghanistan, and we stand committed to promoting and protecting human rights – especially women's rights.

My new commitment as an International Gender Champion for the year 2020 is to join in co-leading the ICG Vienna Representation Impact Group, together with the UNIDO Director General H.E. Li Yong and the Ambassador of Finland.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Dear colleagues, we are facing an unprecedented global crisis that has a strong gender dimension. Women are most effected by the COVID-19 pandemic. No other country knows it better than Afghanistan, which has faced nearly four decades of imposed conflict, that extreme circumstances cause the already vulnerable groups of society, especially women and children, to suffer.

Women are the victims of the pandemic but at the same time they play a crucial role in combatting its spread. Let me emphasize the important role women have in Afghanistan and in all societies, in particular in crisis response and management of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Participation and leadership of women in decision making mechanisms is essential. Leadership is a professional social interaction and is a two-way process, involving exchange and transformation, and demands a special skillset and diverse opinions – qualities we see particularly in female leaders. It comes with no surprise that statistics show that the response to the corona virus from governments led by women has been significantly more successful.

Even in non-leadership positions, Afghan women have been essential in the coronavirus response. Let me give you just one example: Five teenage members of the Afghanistan's prize-winning girls' robotics team are making ventilators from used car parts to help their country battle the coronavirus pandemic.

Ladies and Gentleman,

To implement the goals of the Beijing Platform:

My country has developed a **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**. The NAP is the result of an inclusive and collaborative work and process including all relevant stakeholders – civil society, local people and the international community. This plan focuses on women empowerment in four pillars.

To mention just few examples:

In the **Participation** Pillar, we have made a concerted effort to substantially increase women's role and contribution in senior government positions.

As part of the **protection pillar**, we have adopted the law on Elimination of violence against women (EVAW law) and a National Strategy for Elimination of violence against women and its implementation plan.

In the **Prevention** Pillar, we have established Special Courts to combat violence against women.

In the **Relief and Recovery** Pillar, we have implemented and amended policies to remove legal and societal barriers to women's economic participation. The government has also increased the number of family support centers trained in the field of women counseling.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Please allow me to touch upon another new development that most probably is going to have an impact on the situation of women in my country. Afghanistan is well aware of the complexities associated with the task of peace-building. After all peace-building is about compromise. But we would like to underline that our compromise will have a limit!

Afghanistan is giving huge importance in guaranteeing women's rights in this process. The protection of women's human rights is a priority of the Afghan

government in these peace negotiations. Women's rights will not be compromised. Afghan women will not accept to be de facto prisoners again.

To me, the Afghan women are real heroines who will motivate future generations of women to demand equal rights and to never give up. No outside forces, nor a pandemic will stop our progress towards peace and protection of women's rights.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Despite the tremendous gains that have been made, Afghan women still disproportionately feel the burden of chronic conflict.

We gather here today to commemorate this special occasion, to celebrate a cause, to celebrate progress, but more importantly to realize that our job is not finished – to realize that there are remaining and arising new challenges.

While women are disproportionally affected by the pandemic, it is, as I said before, important to leverage their participation in the response to this crisis. We need to stay vigilant and focused on advancing women's rights and encourage women's participation at all levels.

I thank you.