

lations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law and, in particular, the grave human rights violations against women and girls; condemned the killing of Iranian diplomats and the correspondent of the IRNA by Taliban combatants, as well as the attacks on, and the killing of, UN personnel in Taliban-held territories; and called upon the Taliban to fulfil their stated commitment to cooperate in urgent investigations of these crimes, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

The GA noted with deep concern: the worsening pattern of human rights violations in Afghanistan; the continuing and substantiated reports of human rights violations against women and girls, including all forms of discrimination against them, notably in areas under the control of the Taliban; the intensification of armed hostilities in Afghanistan and the increasingly ethnic and religious nature of the conflict; the continued displacement of millions of Afghan refugees to Iran and Pakistan; the lack of major reconstruction in Afghanistan; and the sharp deterioration of the humanitarian situation in several areas, particularly in Hazarajat, and the worsening security conditions for UN and other humanitarian personnel.

The GA also urged all Afghan parties, *inter alia*, to: cease hostilities immediately, and work and cooperate fully with the Special Envoy and the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan with a view to achieving a ceasefire leading to the establishment of a broad-based, fully representative government through the full exercise of the right to self-determination of the Afghan people; respect fully international humanitarian law, halt the use of weapons against the civilian population, stop the laying of landmines, stop forced conscription and the drafting and recruitment of children as soldiers and ensure their reintegration into society; provide efficient and effective remedies to the victims of grave violations and abuses of human rights and of humanitarian law; bring the perpetrators of such violations and abuses to trial in accordance with internationally accepted standards; treat all suspects and convicted or detained persons in accordance with relevant international instruments; refrain from arbitrary detention, including detention of civilian foreign nationals; and release non-criminal civilian prisoners.

All the Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, were also urged to bring to an end, without delay, all human rights violations against women and girls and to take urgent measures to ensure: the repeal of all legislative and other measures that discriminate against women; the effective participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life; respect for the right of women to work and their reintegration in employment; the right of women and girls to education without discrimination, the reopening of schools and the admission of women and girls to all levels of education; respect for the right of women to security of person and that those responsible for physical attacks on women are brought to justice; respect for freedom of movement for women; and reinstatement of full access to health care for women and girls.

The GA also, *inter alia*: invited the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to proceed without delay to investigate fully reports of mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians, rape and other cruel treatment in Afghanistan; called upon the Northern Alliance and the Taliban to fulfil their stated commitment to cooperate with such investigations; invited the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to give consideration to the proposal to deploy human rights observers in Afghanistan and to make detailed recommendations to that effect to the General Assembly; expressed deep concern at reports of attacks on, and looting of, cultural artifacts and requested all states to take appropriate measures to prevent the looting of cultural artifacts and to ensure their return to Afghanistan; and urged all the Afghan parties to extend their cooperation to the Commission on Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan and to all those Special Rapporteurs who are seeking invitations.

SECURITY COUNCIL

Reports of the Secretary General

At its 1997 session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/211 in which it requested the Secretary-General to report every three months on the progress of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSM) which is mandated to facilitate national reconciliation and reconstruction. The Security Council made a similar request.

The reports of the Secretary-General (S/1998/222, 17 March 1998; S/1998/532, 19 June 1998; S/1998/913, 2 October 1998) refer to efforts to establish a political dialogue between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, various attempts to achieve a cease fire that would hold, and the fact that inter-factional fighting continued to complicate the process. Commentary is also provided on conditions, situations and incidents related to human rights.

The reports note that the humanitarian situation deteriorated sharply in Bamyan Province, where several hundred thousand people suffered from severe food shortages because of poor harvests caused by bad weather, a blockade of the Ghazni-Kabul trade route in the south of Bamyan and the lack of supplies coming in from the northern route owing to insecurity and looting. Other points noted included: the contamination of large areas by landmines and unexploded ordnance continued to be a major hindrance to rehabilitation and development, as well as a deterrent to the return of refugees; earthquakes in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces, causing destruction of villages, homes, deaths and injuries; severe spring flooding in the central, western and south-western regions, which have wiped out large agricultural areas; the need for rebuilding efforts aimed at education and rural and urban rehabilitation, noting that such improvements are fundamental to the achievement of sustainable peace; and deteriorating security conditions for UN personnel, hindering delivery of humanitarian aid, including much needed food.