

Advancing U.S. Interests Through a Restructured United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early June 2026, the UN Security Council will convene a debate on the future of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The United States has an opportunity to reshape the mission and ensure UNAMA's presence enforces accountability.

If the UN Security Council allows UNAMA to expire or downsize to functional closure without an alternative mechanism, it will create a vacuum that damages U.S. foreign policy priorities:

- Exiting Kabul yields the multilateral playing field to China, Russia, and Iran to legitimize the Taliban on their own terms without American and multilateral compliance standards.
- Closure eliminates the sole independent mechanism for ground-level verification of counter-terrorism compliance, [unlawful detention](#) of U.S. citizens, and the persecution of women and girls.
- No UN political footprint reduces U.S. diplomatic leverage in the region.

This briefing paper synthesizes the forward-looking recommendations of a wide range of Afghan social, political, and civil society leaders, based inside and outside of Afghanistan, who participated in a consultation series last month organized by the [Afghanistan Dialogue and Visioning Process \(DVP\)](#). Housed at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, the DVP is a nonpartisan and decentralized consensus-building platform that organizes its current 210 participants in 10 distinct specialized cohorts. These consultations reveal a central paradox: the people of Afghanistan are deeply dissatisfied with UNAMA's current performance, yet they view its potential departure as a risk that compounds their vulnerability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE JUNE 2026 RESOLUTION

Afghanistan stakeholders recommend three forward-looking pillars focused on accountability to make the UN presence on the ground effective:

1. Structural Accountability for Political Impact

- *Streamline via a one-year political mandate:* Extend UNAMA for a one-year period but de-couple its political core from operational tasks. By delegating humanitarian coordination to specialized agencies like the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the U.S. can reduce UNAMA's budget while protecting its core political and monitoring functions.
- *Expedite appointment of a special representative:* Fill the vacant Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) position, prioritizing political clout and diplomatic competence over identity considerations. The individual needs to come from outside the immediate neighborhood surrounding Afghanistan to eliminate regional conflicts of interest and withstand Taliban intimidation.

2. Operational Accountability Through a "Dual-Track" Diplomatic Architecture

- *Adopt a dual-track engagement mechanism:* Protect the physical safety of the mission inside the country while engaging non-Taliban forces. UNAMA can continue to focus exclusively on ground dynamics inside Afghanistan. The UN Headquarters Afghanistan Desk or a regional hub should oversee diaspora and political opposition engagement. These two tracks can jointly run an inclusive National Dialogue working group that platforms a new generation of Afghan leaders.
- *Implement the "Independent Assessment" end-state:* Explicitly tie the June 2026 resolution to [Resolution 2721 \(2023\)](#), which provides a comprehensive assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. This ensures any dual-track UN footprint to remain legally bound to the ultimate goal: an Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbors, adhering to international obligations, and moving toward an acceptable constitutional order.

3. Tactical Accountability Through Strategic Enforcement of Issue Linkages

- *Advance a political process:* Task UNAMA and the new SRSG with facilitating a formal political process based on the Independent Assessment. Launching this process is important—even if the Taliban initially refuse to participate—because it influences their strategic calculus, creates diplomatic leverage, and generates political momentum for non-Taliban groups.

- *Strategically enforce technical-to-political issue linkages:* Ensure engagement within the [Doha Process technical working groups](#) is leveraged for political dialogue among Afghans and for human rights compliance.

The DVP as a strategic asset is prepared to partner with the U.S. Administration and Congress to implement these recommendations and advance a U.S. policy framework that serves the people of both countries.

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About the DVP: The Afghanistan Dialogue and Visioning Process (DVP) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to develop a shared vision for a peaceful future in Afghanistan. Through in-person and virtual convenings, DVP creates opportunities for a broad range of people from Afghanistan, who are based inside and outside the country, to bridge divisions and contribute to the mission of building a peaceful and free Afghanistan. More information about the DVP can be accessed here: kroc.nd.edu/dvp.