

Joint Statement of Female Foreign Ministers on the occasion of the re-opening of schools in Afghanistan

Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Kosovo, Malawi, Mongolia, New Zealand, Sweden, Tonga and the United Kingdom

March 25, 2022 – Ottawa, Ontario

“Every spring, the re-opening of schools in Afghanistan comes along with great hopes and expectations of millions of students: to meet classmates and friends again, to resume learning and training, and to take another step forward in life.

“As women and as foreign ministers, we are deeply disappointed and concerned that girls in Afghanistan are being denied access to secondary schools this spring. The Taliban’s decision to suspend secondary classes until further notice is particularly disturbing as we repeatedly heard their commitments to open all schools for all children.

“We urge the Taliban to live up to their commitments to the Afghan people and to adhere to the international conventions that Afghanistan has subscribed to. We call upon the Taliban to reverse their recent decision and to grant equal access to all levels of education, in all provinces of the country. Practical difficulties in implementing a non-discriminatory educational policy must be overcome.

“We will watch closely whether the Taliban deliver on their assurances. We will measure them by their actions, not by their words. The scope and extent of our countries’ engagement in Afghanistan beyond humanitarian assistance will be tied to achievements in this regard.

“Access to education is a human right to which every woman and every girl is entitled. Individually, girls’ education and women’s empowerment lead to a better life, help to alleviate economic challenges for their families, and are the basis for exercising social rights and political representation. Collectively, girls and women contribute with their education to the country’s development and welfare, and to peace, security and social justice. No country can afford to not take advantage of the potential and talent of its entire people.

“The undeniable rights and opportunities achieved for - and by - girls and women in Afghanistan in recent decades must be preserved and expanded. Let their hopes and expectations flourish, as truly equal members of Afghan society.”

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