Council of the European Union

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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Joint Statement by the Ministers of Education on the situation of women in Afghanistan in relation to the right to education *- Information from the Presidency*

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency on the above subject, which has been placed under 'Any other business' on the agenda of the upcoming Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 29-30 November 2021. The statement has been co-signed by the Ministers of Education of Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

ANNEX

Joint Statement by the Ministers of Education on the situation of women in Afghanistan in relation to the right to education

We are gravely concerned by the violations of the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, particularly the severe restrictions on the education rights of Afghan women and girls. The exclusion of women and girls from the public sphere is jeopardising the positive changes achieved over the last two decades and has serious consequences for wider society as well as the individuals whose rights are being denied.

Education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, endorsed also by Afghanistan. Every person in Afghanistan has the right to education. Equal access to education is a cornerstone of universal values, including freedom of expression, the principle of non-discrimination and gender equality.

Equal access to education benefits wider society. Education is also an investment in the future, which promotes the well-being of individuals and the overall progress of our societies. Education helps fight social exclusion and reduce poverty. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all is one of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were also endorsed by Afghanistan.

Afghanistan cannot compromise on the right to education, as to do so would compromise its own future. Women and girls in Afghanistan should not be subjected to discrimination or any form of limitation of their right to education.

We call on those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan to guarantee, in words and deeds, the right to education of Afghan women and girls across all levels of education, to ensure their right to participate in, complete and benefit from quality education without discrimination, and to ensure that female educators may carry on their professions.

We will continue to follow closely the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, including the upholding of their right to education. We will do everything in our power to promote an equal access to education for Afghan women and girls, and prevent any form of human rights violation or discrimination in this area.