

# **Afghan Women's Leaders' Priorities for Stabilization**

## **Statement and Recommendations**

**January 27, 2010**

We, Afghan women leaders and representatives of women's civil society organizations, concerned about the absence of women's perspectives on proposals being discussed at The London Conference on Afghanistan have created recommendations for stabilization that bear in mind the obligation to consult women and address their priorities and needs. These recommendations were developed during consultations with women leaders in Dubai on January 24<sup>th</sup> and in London on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Afghan women are the first to benefit from stability and pay the heaviest price for the resurgence in violence. They are mobilized as never before to protect the gains they have made with the help of the international community since 2001 and to contribute to the peace process by promoting security and good governance grounded in respect for human rights and equality. We call for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions calling for women's full participation in peace building as part of all initiatives to accelerate conflict resolution and recovery in the country.

### **Security**

Fundamental to progress in Afghanistan will be enhanced security on the ground. But achieving true security will require more than military stabilization; it will require access to basic services—police protection, health care, education, and clean water. Additionally, it will necessitate social change in private as well as public life; rampant domestic violence and other abuses of women's rights exacerbated by conflict are major contributors to women's insecurity. Women experience instability differently from men; they therefore have specific perspectives on how to achieve security for all Afghan citizens. To fully engage all Afghans in efforts to create a secure environment, we recommend:

1. **Ensuring women's representation in peace processes.** Consistent with constitutional guarantees for women's representation, women must comprise at least 25% of any peace process including any proposed upcoming peace jirgas. They must be represented in any national and local security policy making forums, such as the Afghan President's National Security Council.
2. **Guaranteeing that reconciliation protects women's rights.** The government and international community must secure and monitor women's rights in all reconciliation initiatives so that the status of women is not bargained away in any short-term effort to achieve stability.
3. **Implementing gender-responsive security policy.** All efforts to enhance security in Afghanistan must better serve women. This can be achieved by:
  - a. training national and international security personnel regarding women's rights and security needs;
  - b. recruiting women to security services, especially national police, UNPOL, international peacekeepers, civilian and military staff of PRTs; and
  - c. expanding the number of Family Response Units in local police districts to enable more culturally sensitive and responsive engagement with women.

### **Governance and Development**

In 2001 the number of women in government increased dramatically. Further investment to expand women's engagement and effectiveness in public decision-making, in electoral politics, public administration, and in civil society help to deepen democracy, tackle corruption, increase the legitimacy

of government, and concentrate the focus of public sector management on providing basic services. To strengthen women's leadership skills and to promote gender-responsive public sector performance we recommend:

1. **Implementing existing national gender equality policies.** International donors should make aid contingent on accelerated implementation of existing policies for the advancement of women in Afghanistan, especially the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, and the cross-cutting gender component of the Afghan National Development Strategy.
2. **Promoting governance for gender equality.** Good governance reforms should advance gender equality and the capacity of public services to respond to women's needs by:
  - a. Creating gender offices or focal points in all national institutions;
  - b. Extending the current 25% parliamentary quota to provincial, district, and village-level governance structures;
  - c. Special measures to help women overcome obstacles to effective political competition (e.g.: measures to prevent political violence against women, measures to overcome access barriers to public debate, training, and resources);
  - d. Applying the 25% constitutional quota to civil service positions;
  - e. Strengthening of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and ensuring it participates in all decision-making clusters to ensure attention to gender and women's needs.
3. **Tracking aid for women's rights.** Donor aid to address women's needs should increase [by 20%] and all aid should be monitored to track its effectiveness in promoting women's rights and gender equality. Financing for Afghan women's organizations should increase to strengthen women's implementation of the development agenda and civil society participation in reconstruction.
4. **Addressing gender bias in traditional dispute resolution.** Traditional dispute resolution systems have historically been gender biased; if used, they must comply with national and international human rights standards. Use of these systems must be monitored to ensure compliance with national and international standards and to provide the opportunity to appeal decisions inconsistent with international norms.
5. **Expanding peace education through schools and shuras.**

### **Regional Frameworks/International Architecture**

We commend the regional cooperative forums focused on trade, refugees, and drug trafficking for their efforts to involve women. As regional mechanisms are developed to address cross-border security challenges, we advise:

1. **Building on existent women's regional peace coalitions.** Any regional efforts should engage women and leverage the relationships they have built through existing networks.
2. **Involving women in efforts to shape new regional mechanisms.** Women should help design any new approaches to and structures for stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan as well as efforts to create regional forums for cooperation. Any such processes and structures should engage women at all levels of decision-making and should implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related Security Council resolutions calling for women's participation in conflict resolution, prevention of violence, and protection of vulnerable groups.
3. **Using regional forums to stop labor and sex trafficking.**