



Press Release

Weak rule of law hinders human development in Afghanistan

Ahmed Zia Massoud, Bo Asplund Launch
Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007

Kabul, 18 November 2007: In Afghanistan, the justice system must be rebuilt to bridge modern and traditional justice institutions, protect citizens' rights and strengthen rule of law, a pivotal step in the war-ravaged country's march to successful political transition and development. This is a key recommendation of the Afghanistan National Human Development Report 2007, unveiled here today by Ahmed Zia Massoud, First Vice-President of Afghanistan, and the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General (DSRSG) and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Afghanistan, Bo Asplund.

'Bridging Modernity and Tradition: Rule of Law and the Search for Justice' is the second National Human Development Report (HDR) for Afghanistan. A joint initiative of UNDP and the Government of Afghanistan, it explores the importance of rule of law to human development in the country. The Report identifies severe shortfalls in human and material resources in the formal justice system and calls for it to be strengthened for more effective dispute settlement.

With a Human Development Index of 0.345 measuring education, health and economic prosperity, Afghanistan ranks among the bottom five countries on the global human development index, the only country outside of Africa to make this list.

Noting the country's progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Report says since 2002, the country has maintained a steady growth rate and is likely to achieve its poverty goal by 2020. The picture, however, is dismal for most of the other goals. Some 6.6 million -- or one third of Afghans -- do not have enough food to eat. Close to half the population sees itself as food insecure. The country does better on women's political representation than its South Asian neighbours with 25 percent of seats reserved for women in the lower house of the National Assembly. Despite noticeable progress, the mortality rate for children under five years and the proportion of mothers dying in childbirth are among the highest in the world.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Massoud observed that one of the reasons for low levels of development in Afghanistan is the lack of security in some parts of the country. "I hope the recommendations of the Report are included in the framework of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and would help in strengthening democracy in Afghanistan", Mr. Massoud noted.

At the launch, Mr. Asplund pointed out, "The findings of the 2007 Afghanistan Human Development Report reveal that despite decades of war, Afghanistan has made measurable progress with regard to some key dimensions of human development. While Afghanistan still faces many challenges, this Report itself is a major step forward. The Report emphasises the need to expand prospects of life and human development across the length and breadth of the country," Mr. Asplund said.

The Afghanistan National Human Development Report was prepared with the support of UNDP by a team of independent researchers led by distinguished analysts from the Kabul University-based Centre for Policy and Human Development.

For more information on the Afghanistan National Human Development Report 2007, please visit, www.undp.org.af or www.cphd.af