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IEC on-course for the August 20 election finale

With less than 18 days left on the 2009 electoral calendar, the final sprint to the 20th August election day has gained unprecedented momentum within the Independent Electoral Commission of Afghanistan. Ballot papers printed from the UK have been arriving in Kabul at rate of one plane-load after every two days. Nearly 90% of the ballots have been delivered so far.

By end of July, all the 18,006,100 Presidential and 18,006,100 Provincial Council Ballots will have been delivered to IEC headquarters in Kabul – well within the movement plan forecasted for 2009 elections. The ballots for the Provincial Council elections will be very bulky (66,623,760 sheets) owing to the extraordinary large number of provincial council candidates. Packing and delivery of ballots to polling centres is expected to start right on schedule.

To date, IEC has either completed, or will soon finalise the delivery of several other electoral materials, equipment and facilities. These include voter screens (116,000); tents - 6m x 6m (3,906); polling centre kits (7,000); polling station kits (29,000); training kits (2,100); ballot boxes (95,638); ballot box seals (2,900,000); plastic furniture (34,000 tables & 58,000 chairs), etc. In addition, 4,000 mock ballots were printed (in black/white) and delivered to all districts for use in voter education activities. The packing and delivery of electoral materials to all designated polling



A UN chopper delivers election materials in Trinkot, Uruzgan Province (Photos, courtesy of Yury Ozerov: July 2009)

centres/stations is/will be a tremendously challenging logistical undertaking which will push IEC's capacity to the limit.

And while electoral logistics are being capped, IEC has equally intensified its public outreach and voter education campaign using a multi-pronged approach. A media campaign through television and radio is complementing face-to-face voter education activities already underway by more than 1,600 civic educators –25% of which are female. Thousands of electoral posters, leaflets, and signposts have also been used to deepen public awareness and interest on the August 20 elections.

The road towards the August 20 elections will no doubt be bumpy – owing mainly to security-related challenges to security

Continued—IEC on-course for the August 20 election finale

-related challenges. It indeed is becoming more likely that nearly 1,200 designated polling centres in insecure districts may not be fully operational on Election Day due to excessive security risks; the Afghan National Police may not have enough man-power to adequately secure all electoral infrastructure; while some political candidates, candidates' agents, election observers, and IEC staff have expressed serious concerns that some areas could be too insecure for them to access.

This notwithstanding, the mood inside IEC is good, staff morale and confidence is high, and the organisational preparedness, focus and commitment towards ensuring a credible and acceptable 2009 election remains unshaken. For now, IEC is on-course for the August 20 election finale – thanks to support from UNDP, UNAMA, and other international electoral support initiatives.

UNDP Afghanistan's support to the sector has entered a new phase.

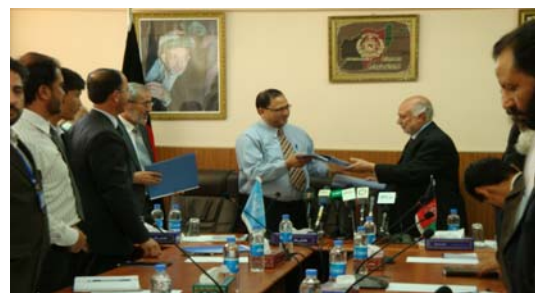


Signing Ceremony of New Justice & Human Rights Project

Kabul, 19 July 2009 -- Following continuous engagement in supporting Afghanistan's justice sector since 2002, UNDP Afghanistan's support to the sector has entered a new phase. The two former UNDP justice projects – Strengthening the Justice System of Afghanistan (SJSA) and Access to Justice at the District Level (AJDL) have been consolidated into one new project titled Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan Project (JHRA). The JHRA project document was signed on Sunday 19 July 2009 between UNDP and the three state justice institutions: the Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice and the Attorney-General

Office. His Excellency Dr. Abdul Salam Azimi, the Chief Justice, briefly touched upon the needs of the Supreme Court and appreciated UNDP's efforts in justice sector. The three-year project (2009-2012) has an estimated budget of 36 million US dollars.

The current donors of the project are the European Commission, Canada, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, and Switzerland. The JHRA will continue many activities piloted by AJDL and SJSA projects and will also add several new



Chief Justice Dr. Abdul Salam Azimi and UNDP Country Director Manoj Basnyat exchange the signed documents

activities identified as key priorities for the concerned government partners.

SEAL Project assists National Assembly in developing a Handbook for Afghan MPs



Group discussion between MPs and SEAL team

A handbook for Members of National Assembly has been designed by SEAL with the assistance and inputs from the secretariat of Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) and Meshrano Jirga (the Senate). The draft was presented to the Secretaries-General of Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga.

A presentation on the broad areas covered in the handbook was made to the Deputy Secretaries-General, of Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga.

It will be a book for ready reference for parliamentary practitioners and give a perspective about the National Assembly to newly elected Members/Senators. The book is divided into ten chapters covering the authorities of the National Assembly, its functioning, Commissions, general privileges and immunities, public relations, etc. Information regarding the Secretariat and its various Directorates, the facilities for members is also briefly touched upon.

