



## AFGHAN WOMEN'S DECLARATION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN IN BONN

05 December 2011

### PREAMBLE

1. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) consulted 500 women leaders representing 500,000 women from more than 20 provinces of Afghanistan. Their recommendations and perspectives on issues of national and international interest are incorporated in this Declaration. This Consultation was the culmination of AWN's year-long mobilization and advocacy campaign for women's inclusion during the Bonn process and beyond.
2. The Afghan women who participated in this consultation reaffirmed their support for the international community's long term engagement in Afghanistan, and emphasized that Afghan women's achievements of the past 10 years should be promoted and strengthened through the commitments of Afghan government and the international community at the Bonn Conference.
3. Afghan women are not where we were in 2001. Over the past ten years, we have struggled, fought and earned our achievements with the support of the Afghan government and its international allies. From a position of virtual oblivion in 2001, over 4 million young girls are attending schools and higher education institutes today. Seventeen percent of civil servants across the country are women, who actively contribute to national reconstruction and economic development. The women who hold over 25% of seats in parliament daily assert the need for accountability and transparency mechanisms in a reformed governance structure and hundreds of women organizations are striving to end violence and discrimination against women and girls in the most remote valleys of the country<sup>1</sup>.
4. Afghan women affirm that our future can and must evolve in a different Afghanistan from the past, in which our daughters and their daughters will be able to actively engage in peace building and nation building in an equitable environment. This optimism, expressed by most of the women during this consultation and particularly from South and South Western regions, is the source of our strength, perseverance, and pride. This declaration is our testament to that belief.
5. The women who participated in the consultation process stated their appreciation for the leadership and mobilization of women activists and groups under the Afghan Women's Network (AWN). They expressed their strong support for the

<sup>1</sup> These figures are based on estimates from the government and Afghanistan Independent Civil Service Commission.

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recommendations outlined in the Afghan Women Position Paper, launched by AWN in October 2011. They stand in solidarity with their sisters, who will be participating on their behalf at the International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn on 05 December, 2011.

### **The Women's Declaration**

6. We, the women of Afghanistan, demand from our elected government a **confirmation of its plans and commitments in protecting and promoting women's human rights** during the transition and post-transition processes. We expect to see more practical measures implemented by the government to comply with its human rights obligations as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution.

### **WOMEN & GOOD GOVERNANCE**

7. Afghan women call upon our government and its international allies to **strengthen measures against the widespread corruption and embezzlement** within the government system. This corruption is the one of the main obstacles working against women's inclusion and participation in leadership and decision making. Our experiences reveal that the lack of transparency and accountability in national flagship programs, and processes such as peace and reintegration, have obstructed our inclusion and participation in governance at the national and provincial levels.
8. The focus of the Afghan government has been much on the political aspects of peace and transition processes with little on governance reform and service delivery. Tribal commanders and middlemen peace brokers mainly control provincial government functions. These elements have previous records of women's rights violations. Communities fearing these elements don't allow their daughters to continue their education and work. We call for a **dedicated and forthright effort by our Government to end these abuses.**

### **WOMEN & TRANSITION**

9. Afghan women demand that **women's security become a measurable indicator of transition monitoring and evaluation.** Women from the first round of transition provinces confirm that their mobility has been impacted – in particular, in provinces such as Laghman. In some areas, female government employees have been threatened. We fear that women in provinces yet more debilitated by conflict will experience these trends more acutely as transition progresses across the country.
10. Afghan women call for a **systematic approach to consultation with women in communities** and women groups before and during the transition process, to ensure our voices and perspectives are part of the implementation and monitoring of transition.
11. Afghan women firmly believe that a **strong rule of law and accountable justice system** will provide the best remedy for the increasing lack of trust among Afghan citizens and their government. We believe that widespread corruption has paralyzed the rule of law, mostly in provincial government functions. Afghan women should be given the chance to participate in leading a concerted effort to strengthen the rule of law, with more women in the judiciary and in the Supreme Court Executive Council.

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## WOMEN & PEACE AND REINTEGRATION

12. Afghan women consider **peace and reconciliation to be a critical means to end violence and instability**. A long lasting peace in Afghanistan requires national dialogue and national consensus building, and our contributions in household and community conflict resolution put us in a strong position to lead and manage a national dialogue towards national reconciliation. If the legacies of civil war and internal unrest are addressed through an inclusive, Afghan-led process, we believe Afghans will become more united to confront insurgency.
13. Afghan women call for a **high standard of transparency in the reintegration process**. Our experiences indicate that insurgents who are reintegrated in our communities take advantage of reintegration packages and power sharing deals while their families are far away in the neighboring countries. Therefore, the reintegration process should become a community-based initiative in which insurgents reintegrate together with their families. This way, community members will monitor their post-reintegration activities as well.
14. Afghan women demand a **25% quota of women on the High Peace Council and Provincial Peace Councils**. In most provinces, the only female representative is a government employee.

## WOMEN & THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

15. Afghan women appeal to the international community to **strengthen and continue supporting women's groups and civil society organizations** during the transition process and beyond. Women's groups and civil society organizations are the main agents of change and inclusive democracy in Afghanistan.
16. Afghan women believe that Afghanistan urgently needs **national security forces whose capabilities and qualifications extend beyond counter-insurgency** to include law and order, community safety, and safeguarding women and children from abuse. Significant investments should be made to strengthen these aspects of their training and overall responsibilities.
17. Women's Rights Defenders and Human Rights Activists are at an increasing level of threat as political settlements take shape in Afghanistan. Afghan women call on the United Nations and International Human Rights Organizations to **formulate emergency and long-term protection strategies to support Women's Rights Defenders at risk**.
18. Afghan Women further appeal to Islamic countries to promote improvements in Afghan women's **skills and expertise in Islamic law and jurisprudence** in their development and diplomatic engagements in Afghanistan. These skills and qualifications are necessary for Afghan women to work in high level positions in the judiciary.

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