

Statement from the Participants of the Post-Peace Jirga Symposium of Afghan Women *June 22, 2010*

Background

On June 21 and 22, 2010, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) facilitated an event in Kabul entitled the *Post-Peace Jirga Symposium of Afghan Women*. Seventy-three (73) women from 33 provinces attended the event – these included provincial councilors, members of the National Assembly (Upper and Lower House), civil society representatives and the media.

The purpose of the symposium was to create an opportunity for women leaders throughout the country to share information and discuss issues important to Afghan women. The symposium was organized as part of NDI's Women in Politics and Governance (WIPG) program in Afghanistan, and was supported through funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

At the event, the women participants reached consensus on 13 conclusions and recommendations to support peace-building in Afghanistan. The women agreed to bring up these points with the Afghan government and the international community, and to advocate for the political participation of women as well as the protection of women's rights.

Statement from the Symposium Participants

The following are the conclusions and recommendations put forward by the participants:

1. The women gathered at the *Post-Peace Jirga Symposium of Afghan Women*, held in Kabul on June 21 to 22, 2010, facilitated by NDI and supported by CIDA, express strong support for efforts towards building peace and stability in Afghanistan as the main national priority that would benefit all the people of Afghanistan. The symposium gathered women councilors from 33 provinces, parliamentarians, senators, civil society activists and journalists.
2. Women, who represent half of the population in Afghanistan and 58% of eligible voters in the country, demand to be a party sufficiently represented in any future peace negotiations. They insist on the precondition that **peace cannot be negotiated at the cost of diminishing women's rights**.
3. The women call for a unified alliance of all Afghan women to strengthen their voice in defending the rights and the role of women as equal partners in Afghan society and in contributing to all peace and nation building efforts.
4. The women call on the Afghan government and all members of the opposition not to allow any changes in the Afghan Constitution that would in any way limit or diminish the rights of women that have already been attained and are protected by the current Constitution. Afghan women also state that continued international assistance is especially important for women as a guarantee that their rights will be respected during and after the Afghan reconciliation process.
5. Afghan women express a strong desire to do more to connect the central level with the periphery – namely Kabul and the national level with the provincial, district, and village

levels so that women can share information, problems, priorities, experiences and efforts invested towards peace and stabilization of the country.

6. Afghan women who participated in the Post Peace Jirga symposium call on NDI and other international organizations and donors to facilitate regular monthly meetings of Afghan women to enable further networking of representatives from national and provincial levels.
7. Afghan women call on President Karzai and all senior officials of the national and local administration to speak up with supportive messages for the enhancement of the role of women, as provided in Article 22 of the Afghan Constitution.
8. Security, safety and freedom of movement are assessed as the most critical problems for women throughout Afghanistan, especially for women in the provinces. Women call on the government of Afghanistan to do more to secure free and safe movement of women.
9. Women call on the Afghan national and local government and on international forces to devote special attention to thorough investigations and sanctioning of all incidents involving violence against women. Perpetrators committing violent acts against women need to be brought to justice. Accountability and transparency of this process is a very important factor in securing basic rights for a safer life for the women of Afghanistan.
10. Women call on Afghan authorities and the international community to assure that more international assistance goes to projects that target women's needs – such as hospitals and medical assistance to women, and projects that create employment opportunities for women and assist in the networking of Afghan women throughout the country.
11. Women call on President Karzai to guarantee a minimum 25% quota of women in all public structures and at all levels, including those related to the peace process and negotiations – as well as stronger women's representation in the Supreme Peace Council (so far only two women have been appointed to the Council). Women's participation must be raised to 30% representation in decision making related to any negotiations with the Taliban – given the Taliban's opposition to the role and participation of women in public affairs. Women appointed to the Peace Council should be proposed by women, should be credible, and should have broad support among Afghan women for their position on women's rights.
12. Women call on the Afghan government and international donors to provide more safe houses for women victims of violence and intimidation; they also recommend establishing emergency phone lines that women can use when their safety is directly threatened.
13. Women call on Afghan government to assign a quota for women to be entitled to annual free pilgrimage (Hajj) – currently, a government sponsored service already allocates a quota for male Afghan citizens.