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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **The workshop on the “Elimination of Violence against Women: Preventing Child and Forced Marriage” organized by Ministry of Women’s Affairs results in signing of protocol;**

The workshop on the “Elimination of Violence against Women: Preventing Child and Forced Marriage” took place on November 23-24, 2005. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs with technical support from UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) and UNDP (United Nations Development Program).

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Professor Yakin Erturk, participated in the workshop as keynote speaker. In her presentation Yakin Erturk addressed violence against women as one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations, summarized findings on the extent and types of violence against women in Afghanistan, and compared this to violence against women in other parts of the world.

Participants of this two days workshop included ministers and high ranking officials, international and national non-governmental organizations, media, academics and representatives of various UN agencies. On the first day of the workshop participants discussed child and forced marriages from the legal, social and economic perspectives, analyzed social and economic causes and consequences of child and forced marriages as well as legal implications of these practices. During the second day, policy makers and civil society engaged in discussions on possible programs and mechanisms for eliminating child and forced marriages.

As a result of these discussions, the participants of the workshop produced a protocol and recommendations that set out a system, a means of operation and activities for the elimination of child and forced marriages. The protocol and recommended activities include various legal, educational, health and cultural measures.

The Minister of Health, the Minister of Women’s Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Hajj and Islamic Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Social Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Defense, the representative from the Ministry of Justice and the representative from the Attorney General’s office signed the protocol.

The protocol sets out procedures for signatories, in line with each ministry’s mandate, which will create an enabling environment for the elimination of child and forced marriages.

The Minister of Women’s Affairs, Dr. Masouda Jalal, stated that *“this event reflects a serious commitment by the government and civil society to eradicate child and forced marriages in Afghanistan”*. Other ministries have expressed their desire to sign the protocol and will do so in very near future.

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs will take the necessary steps to facilitate the implementation of the provisions of the protocol. The Ministry of Information and

Culture will ensure public accountability to the provisions of the protocol through information campaigns aimed at the public and civil society organizations.