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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MOWA REPORTS ON STATUS OF NATIONAL PLAN FOR WOMEN**

**Kabul, 28 September** – Within the past three months, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) has made significant strides in finalizing the NAPWA with the support of UNIFEM. The Ministry has brought the Government of Afghanistan closer to having a strategic framework that will enable it to fulfill its goals of empowering women and promoting gender equality throughout the country.

In June and July this year, MOWA conducted regional consultations on the first draft of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) which is a high level benchmark of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). NAPWA is a 10-year government plan that will lay down the measures to be pursued by government and partners to address women’s concerns in a more organized, coordinated, systematic and sustainable way. It will serve as a common frame of reference for developing gender sensitive policies and programs; mobilizing and prioritizing the allocation of resources for women’s projects; monitoring actions of government; tracking the changes in the lives of women; identifying capacity building needs; designing trainings on gender; and conducting advocacy in various fields.

The consultations were conducted with the support of the NGO coalitions and oversight bodies such as ACBAR, ANCB and AWN in the provinces of Herat, Bamyan, Balkh, Jalalabad and Parwan, with 375 government and NGO participants from 26 provinces. They validated the content of the I-NAPWA, generated additional analysis and recommendations on women’s issues, and increased awareness and support to NAPWA at the sub-national level. Governors from such provinces expressed overwhelming support for the NAPWA and provided MoWA assurances that they would implement it to the best of their abilities.

On 26 September, MOWA met with senior officials of government ministries to report on the completion of the regional consultation process as well as the highlights of recommendations from those consultations. Very strong commitments of support were expressed by representatives from the ministries of commerce, border and tribal affairs, public works, information, youth and culture, health, labor and economy, transportation, finance, water and energy, and higher education. They called for the creation of a gender mechanism and the adoption of an implementation plan on NAPWA in every ministry. They also reported certain initiatives that have been done to improve the status of women in their ministries.

With the help of UNIFEM, MOWA will conduct a consultation on NAPWA with the international community before the end of October. Following this, the draft will be revised, subjected to technical review by senior officials of ministries, and presented to the Cabinet for approval. It is expected that NAPWA will be finalized and adopted by December 2006. In the meantime, MOWA will soon consult with ministries to identify priority NAPWA projects that could be jointly piloted. These projects are designed to strengthen public understanding, acceptance and support to NAPWA and develop ministry mechanisms and capacities for implementing NAPWA. The projects were selected based on their potential to respond to both strategic and practical needs of women, and generate policies or practices that will improve the situation of women in the priority areas identified in NAPWA.

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