

UNAMA**United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan**

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

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UN WELCOMES AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S ENDORSEMENT OF ROAD MAP TO END RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN IN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES

KABUL / NEW YORK, 1 August 2014 – The United Nations today welcomed the Government of Afghanistan's commitment to end and prevent the recruitment of children in the Afghan national security forces.

The Afghan Government recently reconfirmed its commitment with the endorsement of a 'Road Map Towards Compliance,' which details 15 measures to fully implement an Action Plan signed with the United Nations in 2011. The road map was supported by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in their roles as co-chairs of the UN-led Country Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict.

"I congratulate the Government on the endorsement of this Road Map which clearly signals the Government's commitment to end the recruitment of children into the security forces and spells out measures the State will take to implement these commitments," said the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, Ján Kubiš.

Measures outlined in the Road Map include the criminalisation of the recruitment and use of children by the security forces, the development of a policy to ensure that children arrested and detained on national security-related charges are treated in line with international juvenile justice standards, and improved age-verification mechanisms.

"I am encouraged by Afghanistan's commitment to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children in its national security forces and look forward to the full implementation of the measures outlined in the Road Map – this will make a real difference in the lives of Afghan children," said the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui.

The Afghan National Police (ANP) has been listed in the annexes of the Secretary-

General's annual report on children and armed conflict since 2010, with an additional reference to the Afghan Local Police (ALP) since 2012. Afghanistan is one of seven countries whose national security forces are listed by the Secretary-General for recruitment and use of children.

In response to this listing, the Government developed and signed an Action Plan in 2011. Since then, Afghanistan has set up measures to end and prevent the recruitment of children. High-level focal points have been assigned by the security forces to promote the protection of children, but mechanisms to hold child recruiters accountable still need to be put in place across the country.

Afghanistan has agreed to screen all ANP and ALP units in order to release all underage recruits, and to establish a system to investigate, prosecute and take disciplinary action against those responsible for the recruitment of children aged under 18.

"The measures outlined in the Road Map will, if fully implemented, serve to ensure accountability, and with proper screening and verification procedures will end child recruitment amongst the security forces and the ANP and ALP in particular," Mr. Kubiš noted.

In March 2014, Ms. Zerrougui and UNICEF launched 'Children, not Soldiers,' a global campaign to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by government security forces by 2016. Afghanistan publically supported and endorsed this campaign.

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