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UNAMA

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

Press Statement

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UN CALLS FOR FULL AND SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW ON ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,

Kabul, 08 March 2012 – On International Women’s Day, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and UN Women urged the Government of Afghanistan to fully and promptly implement the law on Elimination of Violence against Women.

“As long as women and girls in Afghanistan are subject to violence with impunity, little meaningful and sustainable progress for women’s rights can be achieved in the country,” said Georgette Gagnon, Director of Human Rights for UNAMA. “Ensuring rights for Afghan women – such as their participation in public life, including in the peace and reconciliation process and equal opportunities in education and employment – requires not only legal safeguards on paper, but critically, speedy and full enforcement of the EVAW law.”

In November 2011, UNAMA and the United Nations Human Rights office released a 33- page report, *A Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women law in Afghanistan* which found both positive progress and gaps in implementation of the law. The report noted that although enforcement of the law is clearly growing, there is a long way to go before Afghan women are fully protected from violence and their equality is effectively supported through the Elimination of Violence against Women law.

Enacted in August 2009, the landmark Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law criminalises child marriage, forced marriage, selling and buying women for the purpose or under the pretext of marriage, *baad* (giving away a woman or girl to settle a dispute), forced self-immolation and 17 other acts of violence against women including rape and beating. It also specifies punishment for perpetrators.

In spite of these legal protections under the EVAW law and other constitutional safeguards for women, violence against women and girls remains pervasive in Afghanistan with an inconsistent response from Afghan authorities.

UNAMA found that judicial and law enforcement officials were implementing sporadically the two-year-old law and were not yet applying the law to the majority of cases of violence against women. The report determined that many cases of violence against Afghan women were withdrawn or mediated including serious crimes that would require prosecution with a low number of cases prosecuted.

"I have knocked all doors to get rid of violence but all my complaints had fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the prosecutor accused me of lying and warned me of dire consequence," 15-year-old Sadat said while undergoing treatment in a Herat hospital. She had set herself on fire due to repeated and unaddressed domestic violence. Sadat later died in a hospital in Turkey where she was taken for further treatment.

"For the last decade UN Women has worked in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan on legal and social improvements with the aim of eliminating violence against women. We reiterate our support to the Afghan government and civil society in their efforts against the social malice of violence against women that is undermining law and justice in the country," said Ingrid Solrun Gísladóttir, Country Director, UN Women Afghanistan. "UN Women believes that both Afghan women and men must be supported to take responsibility for their own future and the best contribution to peace and long-term stability is to empower women to participate in public life."

To improve implementation of the ERAW law, UNAMA reiterated its 32 recommendations to the Government and its international partners, including measures to greatly increase efforts to raise awareness of the law among Afghan women and men and within all levels of the Government; for the Supreme Court, Ministry of Interior and Attorney General's Office to instruct all officials to apply the law consistently, rapidly and efficiently; and, to further train police, prosecutors and judges on how to apply the law. UNAMA and UN Women called on international donors to support and fully fund the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and the National Priority Programs including on *Law and Justice for All* and *Capacity Development to Accelerate NAPWA Implementation* and other efforts to eliminate violence against women.

Link to UNAMA report "*A Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women law in Afghanistan*": <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4654>

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