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## PRESS RELEASE

**H. E. Dr. Suraya Dalil, acting Minister of Public Health, and Dr. Laurent Zessler,  
the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative inaugurate the  
National Conference on Family Planning**

**28th February 2012**

**Kabul, Afghanistan** – H. E. Dr. Suraya Dalil, acting Minister of Public Health, Dr. Laurent Zessler, the UNFPA Afghanistan Representative, members of parliament, representatives of the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs and Ulama Council opened the first National Conference on Family Planning.

*“According to the 2010 Afghanistan Mortality Survey, 90% of currently married women know of a method of contraception yet only 22% use any family planning method. I hope this conference will help us to plug this gap. My government and people of my country, are looking forward to the outcomes of this conference since it provides a platform to share our experience and knowledge and prepare for a final push to achieve the Millennium Development Goal number 5 which calls for reduction of maternal mortality by three quarter and ensuring universal access to reproductive health by 2015”,* said H. E. Dr. Suraya Dalil during the opening ceremony.

International and national guest explore family planning challenges and opportunities in Afghanistan during two days of debate and roundtables. The conference brings together participants from other Muslim countries who will share their experiences on birth spacing and family planning with the Afghan audience.

**Access to family planning can save lives.** Family planning reduces maternal and newborn mortality rates and improves the health and well-being of women and their existing children and families. This is the main message emerging from the Conference opening ceremony.

*“By galvanizing greater commitment to family planning as part of a comprehensive package of reproductive health supportive interventions, we can reduce poverty, improve maternal health, advance women’s empowerment and gender equality, and make greater progress towards achieving all eight Millennium Development Goals. Family planning is the best documented practice to reduce maternal mortality. By ensuring access to modern contraceptives, we can reduce maternal mortality by up to 40 per cent”,* said Dr. Laurent Zessler, UNFPA Afghanistan Representative.

The Conference on Family Planning is organized by the Ministry of Public Health with the technical support of the United Nations Population Fund and the International Council on Management of Population Programmes (ICOMP). The conference is funded by the Government of Iceland.

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**Contact:**

**MoPH, Dr Gh. Sakhi ”Kargar Norughli” [k.norughli@moph.gov.af](mailto:k.norughli@moph.gov.af)**

**UNFPA, Dr G. “Chiti Strigelli” [chitistrigelli@unfpa.org](mailto:chitistrigelli@unfpa.org)**