



## Press Release on the launch of Afghan People’s Dialogue on Peace

### AFGHANS CALL ON THEIR GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP A ROAD MAP FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

**Kabul, Afghanistan, 4 December 2011** – A comprehensive report released today, *Afghan People’s Dialogue on Peace: Laying the Foundations for an Inclusive Peace Process*, summarises the findings of an initiative of 14 Afghan organisations, conceived by Afghan civil society, to give voice to Afghan men, women and youth on key issues affecting their lives: peace, security and the Government’s need to develop a roadmap for peace that includes all Afghans.

Coming from all walks of life from across Afghanistan, the 1,500 Afghans involved in the Dialogue identified a deteriorating security situation, injustice, weak rule of law institutions, pervasive corruption, lack of economic progress and social justice, and limited protection of human rights, including women’s rights, as the main obstacles to sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

*“Afghans all over the country told us that the Government needs to focus on addressing the key drivers of the prolonged conflict if we are to achieve lasting peace and stability. Addressing these problems can form the main pillars of a durable peace,”* said Naim Nazari, director of the Afghan Civil Society and Human Rights Network.

Afghans involved in the Dialogue stated that the Government needs the support of Afghan people to achieve meaningful and durable peace. As students in Kunduz said, *“We are the ones who will make the future of Afghanistan”*. Afghans also strongly affirmed that any efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace must be inclusive, promote national unity, and be Afghan-led.

*“There is no one strategy for Afghanistan; only different countries, different ideas, different agendas. We need one plan, one set of goals”* said a teacher from Khost province, echoing the view expressed by many Afghans of the need for one road map towards sustainable peace.

The report stresses that the armed opposition should not harm civilians and respect the laws of war. *“We are expecting the armed opposition – if they are really Afghans – to not receive orders from out of the country and to reach an agreement with Afghan Government on establishment of peace. They should lay down their weapons and contribute in the reconstruction of their own destroyed country.”* Reiterated men and women during a discussion in Baghlan province, this view was expressed throughout the country.

All Afghans involved in the Dialogue expressed the view that the security situation in the country has steadily deteriorated. Trapped in the middle between insurgents and Afghan and international military forces, the report noted that people are calling on international military forces to cease night raids, large-scale arrests and arbitrary detentions which they believe, further fosters the insurgency.

Afghans also stated that international assistance provided to Afghanistan over the past 10 years has not had the intended effect of boosting security, prosperity and service provision. Rather, a massive proportion of international financial assistance has been misused by corrupt officials. A *shura* member from Kunduz province summarized the views of many Afghans that lack of rule of law is the “cancer of Afghan society” and that corruption at all levels of government has exacerbated poverty.

Reflecting the views echoed throughout the country, one resident in Badghis province said, *“We are really tired about the situation of this country, everyone is corrupt and there is no justice for people. A killer may walk freely in the bazaar and the victims remain powerless. We cannot do anything. Women get killed by the decisions of the local community courts and there is no attention of the Government to the issue.”*

The report also identified lack of economic progress and social justice as a driver of instability and states that poverty, slow and unequal geographic development, mass unemployment, and inequality in the allocation of resources are problems the Government had failed to address over the last ten years.

*“People noted improvements in the form of schools, roads and hospitals, but that such achievements were not equal to the billions of dollars poured into the country. People also highlighted a huge divide between urban and rural development; in some areas people have no schools or access to medical facilities – there is a need for ‘balanced development’”* said Samira Hamidi, director of the Afghan Women’s Network.

The report stated that protection and promotion of human rights including women’s rights is a critical component to establishing a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. A woman from Baghlan province said, *“All Afghan citizens including women, should be equally treated by their Government and they should be able to enjoy from their citizenship rights individually, not based on their gender, tribe or ethnic group; women should not be considered as second level citizens, and their appearance in social or political affairs should not be symbolic or based on their gender; they should be empowered in all aspects of their life, and all human rights standards must be respected by our law enforcement authorities.”*

The report also noted a general consensus that there should be no impunity for individuals who have committed serious violations of human rights throughout Afghanistan’s turbulent past.

Through the report, the civil society organisations that sponsored the Dialogue aim to carry the voices of Afghan people to tomorrow’s Bonn Conference and ensure that the views of Afghan people are reflected in all efforts to achieve sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

**To achieve peace and stability, Afghan people in the Dialogue offered the following recommendations:**

**To the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:**

- Develop an integrated strategy and road map for securing peace in Afghanistan with clearly defined goals that has the commitment of all partners, and is focused

on establishing security, economic development, rule of law, and justice and human rights as critical components of a durable peace.

- Uphold human rights values in all negotiations and efforts aimed at achieving reconciliation and lasting peace, in particular ensure that gains made in human rights, particularly the rights of Afghan women and girls, are guaranteed and are not a 'casualty' of any peace efforts.

**To the International Community:**

- Ensure that all donor aid reaches intended beneficiaries; fund programmes focusing on rural and remote areas; ensure that aid does not have unintended consequences such as fueling conflicts or ethnic divides; measure aid effectiveness in terms of quality of service provision, not just quantity; focus on community-based development, based on the needs of the people; ensure, through appropriate mechanisms, that donated funds are not misused and that all those found to be misusing or appropriating funds face criminal sanction and are relieved of their posts.

**To the Armed Opposition:**

- Protect civilians – respect the laws of war, cease targeting civilians, residential areas, religious places, hospitals and schools, and end the campaign of assassinations.
- Enter into talks with the Government of Afghanistan aimed at achieving sustainable peace.

**To Civil Society:**

- Raise the voice of ordinary Afghans – ensure that the views of men, women and youth are regularly communicated and reflected in initiatives and forums aimed at achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan, including at the Bonn Conference; initiate country-wide discussions with people, with specific focus on rural and remote communities, women and youth.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. The full report can be downloaded in Dari, Pashto and English from the following websites:

[www.sanayee.org.af](http://www.sanayee.org.af)  
[www.cshrn.af](http://www.cshrn.af)  
[www.aihrc.org.af](http://www.aihrc.org.af)  
[www.acsf.af](http://www.acsf.af)  
[www.afghanwomennetwork.af](http://www.afghanwomennetwork.af)

2. The Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace [People's Dialogue] is an initiative in which ordinary Afghans express their views through inclusive public discussions on prospects for peace, reconciliation, security, economic development, human rights and the rule of law. The People's Dialogue aims to empower people by raising awareness among the Afghan population about peace and reconciliation processes, ensure that people's legitimate grievances, concerns and aspirations are heard, amplified and incorporated by policy-makers into all processes and plans for achieving sustainable peace in Afghanistan.
3. A steering committee guided the work People's Dialogue; members include: Afghan Civil Society Forum [ACSF], Afghan Civil Society & Human Rights Network [ACSHRN],

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Afghan National Union of Labour [AMCA], Afghanistan Organization of Human Rights & Environmental Protection [AOHREP], Afghan Women's Network [AWN], Afghan Women Skills Development Center [AWSDC], Afghan Youth Social Cultural Organization [AYSCO], Civil Society Development Center [CSDC], Sanayee Development Organization [SDO], Transitional Justice Coordinating Group [TJCG], Armanshar Foundation, Women Political Participation Committee, 50% Campaign [WPPC]. Members of the Steering Committee used their offices in the regions/provinces and/or members of their networks to facilitate focus group discussions.

4. The Dialogue held 78 focus group discussions in: Bamyan, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Badghis, Daikundi, Faryab, Farah, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunduz, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Laghman, Logar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Nangahar, Nimroz, Nuristan [participants travelled to Jalalabad], Panjshir, Paktika, Paktiya, Sar-e-Pul, Samangan, Takhar, Uruzgan, Zabul. More than 500 women participated in dialogues/discussions throughout the country.