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United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
Strategic Communication and Spokespersons Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan

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**UNAMA CONDEMNS ATTACK ON INDEPENDENT ELECTION COMMISSION,
STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN POLLS**

KABUL, 25 March 2014 – The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) condemns today's lethal attack on an office of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) in Kabul, while welcoming the IEC's and Afghan security agencies' efforts to create conditions which permit the broadest possible participation in upcoming elections.

Nobody should threaten civilian electoral institutions or their fellow countrymen and women who choose to exercise their inalienable right to vote. UNAMA extends its condolences to the families of all those killed and wishes a speedy recovery for those injured.

"The IEC and its civilian workers are conducting a public service so that Afghans can vote - it is reprehensible that they have been deliberately targeted," said the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom.

Civilians are reported to be among those killed in today's incident. UNAMA reiterates that such attacks on civilians are serious violations of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

"These are extremely important elections for Afghanistan," said Mr. Haysom, who is also the acting head of UNAMA. "Afghans from all parts of the country should have an equal opportunity to have their say on the future direction of their country."

"Afghans want to vote and to have the chance to forge their national destiny," said Mr. Haysom, "They have a right to vote and those Afghans that believe they have a patriotic duty to participate in the elections must be given the chance to do so."

The promotion of inclusive participation in the elections is a shared responsibility that extends beyond Afghan electoral and security institutions. Candidates, community leaders, elders, and civil society all have a role to play in encouraging Afghans to exercise their hard-won and universal right to vote. In this respect, UNAMA welcomes recent declarations by groups of Afghan *ulema* stating that democratic elections are

totally in line with teachings of Islam, as well as their calls encouraging women to participate.

"Security remains a challenge to the goal of achieving an inclusive election," Mr. Haysom said. "Continued efforts by the Afghan security forces to reinforce the security of candidates, election workers and voters are vital. It is just as important that the IEC and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission take every measure to reassure those Afghans who make the noble choice to participate that their vote will be respected."

Afghanistan is slated to hold Presidential and Provincial Council elections on 5 April.

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