

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

Afghanistan Country Office, Shah Mahmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul



ICT Project Phase II Launched: E-Governance a Major Priority

Sep 07, 2004 Kabul - The Ministry of Communication and the UNDP confirmed their mutual commitment to an additional two-year partnership on 5 September 2004. The **ICT Capacity Building Project – Phase II** focuses on developing ICT expertise and efficiency in government, as well as local and regional institutions, and expanding access to ICT technologies and training to more Afghans.

The signing ceremony for the ICT Project – Phase II was held at the Ministry of Communication between H.E. Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, Minister of Communication, and Ercan Murat, Country Director of UNDP Afghanistan. UNDP committed US\$1 million to support Phase II operations, while financial support for the remaining 60 percent of the proposed budget of US\$3.48 million is currently being sought from the donor community.

His Honorable Minister Stanekzai drew attention to the project as a major “first step towards the establishment of a vibrant Information Based society in Afghanistan, which will make Afghans free from the bureaucratic processes of the government sector.”

e-Governance

Mr Murat highlighted the importance of Phase II, not only to continue to enhance Afghanistan’s ICT capacity but to foster good governance practices, referring to the Phase II objective of creating e-Governance initiatives. “The UNDP is proud to be partner to a government that recognizes access to information as a fundamental human right and that accepts its responsibility in closing the digital divide between Afghanistan and the rest of the world”, Mr Murat stated, “UNDP is a proud partner to a government that holds itself accountable to the people of this country and welcomes transparency.”

The global information revolution took place at a time when Afghanistan was isolated and mired in conflict. War and neglect damaged or destroyed all forms of infrastructure. Moreover, the country critically suffered as most of its educated and skilled people had to take refuge in other countries, leaving behind a significant gap in human resources. Women especially have suffered almost total exclusion from formal education, the work place, and public life in the years leading to 2001.

Phase II aims to continue to support the MoC in its role as policy maker and regulator, to build a foundation for **e-Governance initiatives** through the computerization of all central government entities, to further develop specialized ICT capacity within the government through sustained training programmes, to establish and support the National ICT Council of Afghanistan (NICTCA), and to prepare the groundwork for the creation of the National Data Centre. Once established, the Data Centre will serve as the central hub for development of all related and integrated e-Governance initiatives.

His Honorable Minister Stanekzai praised the achievements of the ICT Project Phase I, stating, “I believe the first phase of the project enabled the Ministry of Communications to complete its policy and provided the public and civil servants with the facilities to build their capacities in the ICT sector.”

Funded and supported by Cisco Academy, the European Commission, the French Trust Fund, and UNDP, the **ICT Capacity Development Project – Phase I** launched the partnership between MoC and

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UNDP in July 2002 that aimed to establish a national policy governing telecommunications, to train a new cadre of ICT professionals and rebuild communications networks in Afghanistan. Two years on, the achievements have been remarkable: MoC has developed national ICT and Telecommunications policies; close to 3 000 civil servants, students and professionals – 32 percent female – have completed or enrolled in Basic ICT Training Courses; more than 400 Afghans have enrolled in network training through the Cisco Networking Academy Program at Kabul University; more of 65 000 visitors have been registered in 9 Internet Tele-Kiosks located in post offices in Kabul; and the “.af” country domain has been secured for Afghan e-mail addresses and websites, generating a total amount of US\$62 045 from registrations.

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