

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

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Afghanistan

UNDP and Afghan Civil Service Commission SEAL a deal for Parliament

22 February 2005; Kabul Afghanistan: Today, UNDP solidified a partnership to support the establishment and functioning of the Afghan legislature. A day after the official launch of the first ever National Human Development Report for Afghanistan, which emphasizes the importance of efficiency, transparency and accountability in government as prerequisites for human development in Afghanistan, UNDP entered into an agreement with the Government of France and the Afghan Civil Service Commission that will ensure that the incoming parliament is given proper support to do its work.

Mr Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of UNDP, and Dr. Ahmad Moshahed, Chairman of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission of Afghanistan, endorsed the project document for “Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature” (SEAL) project.

SEAL is a two year, two phase project that aims to put in place the necessary stable democratic foundations for the Afghan Legislature. Phase one will focus on meeting start-up needs and costs for the Parliament before elections. Post-elections, Phase two focuses on continuing to support and to sustain the functions of the parliament in its role as legislator.

Dr. Moshahed addressed his remarks to the future Afghan parliament and referred to its responsibility to the people of Afghanistan. “With the establishment of a parliamentary system”, he stated, “we hope that Afghanistan will witness the emergence of a modern and civil life and the establishment of peace and security.”

Once elected, the Upper and Lower Houses of parliament will be situated at the former parliament compound on Dar-Ul-Aman road – renovation and rehabilitation to the structures is underway through a project of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. While structural preparations for the incoming parliament proceed, the SEAL project aims to train a core group of civil servants to populate the parliament building, and to put in place the legal framework as well as the coordination and programming mechanisms that will support the new government. In order to facilitate proper communications with all branches of government, the new facilities will be outfitted with office equipment, information and communications technologies, and an effective public outreach strategy will be designed.

“I am pleased to continue to promote the important role of parliament”, stated Mr Diabré, “Parliament is a place of debate and the foundation of what will ensure strong leadership in this country.” Prior to his appointment as Associate Administrator of UNDP, and among his other leadership roles in his native Bukina Faso, Mr Diabré served as Minister of Finance and as a parliamentarian.

Together with several senior representatives from ministries, UN agencies and the donor community, the document signing was witnessed by His Excellency Jean-Pierre Guinhut, Ambassador of France to Afghanistan. While the Government of France is currently the lead donor for the SEAL project, His Excellency Guinhut promptly pointed out that, in terms of initiative towards democratic governance, “there is only one leading nation – and it is Afghanistan.”

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