

# PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

Afghanistan Country Office, Shah Mehmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul



Afghanistan



## Italian Ambassador marks occasion of Afghan Culture of Justice

14 February 2005; Kabul Afghanistan: This evening at the Italian Embassy, His Excellency Ettore Francesco Sequi, Italian Ambassador to Afghanistan, welcomed representatives from across the Afghan Justice Sector, the European Commission and the UNDP, as well as many representatives of the donor and development community, to celebrate another cooperative step in the human rights direction. "It is vital", stated His Excellency, "that the Government of Italy continue to work closely with the United Nations in delivering and developing access to justice and human rights to the Afghan people, and we are proud to be the lead partner in this initiative."

The initiative is the "Access to Justice at the District Level" project, which represents an 6 million euro joint action of the European Commission, Italian government and UNDP to support further development of Afghan justice and human rights. "Functional Justice is a prerequisite to any development in Afghanistan including social and economic improvements," remarked Eduard Auer, Head of Political Economic and Information Section for the EC. "The EC is particularly pleased to be a main stakeholder in this programme, building a culture of Justice and Human Rights at the community and district level."

The project aims to promote people's access to justice in select 60 districts of Afghanistan by focusing on the development and support of the informal – traditional and communal – justice system that currently operates in the districts. 80% of the justice in Afghanistan is administered through an informal system. "If the Justice Programme in Afghanistan were only to focus on developing the formal justice sector, we would be marginalized in our efforts and our achievements", remarked Ambassador Jolanda Brunetti, the Government of Italy's Special Coordinator for the Justice Programme. "This is neither a fast process nor a simple process," she explains, "We cannot develop justice without developing the culture of justice at the same time."

Designed by the European Commission and UNDP, the project will be implemented by UNDP in close partnership with the Afghan Justice Institutions. It will deliver awareness programmes and further infrastructure development to more remote areas. "In designing this project, we recognized the necessity to develop structures and capacities to deliver justice where it is needed – at the level of the individual citizen", stated Karen Jorgensen, Country Director a.i. for UNDP, "The EC/UNDP Access to Justice at the District Level project addresses these community needs by creating both the institutional capacity to deliver justice services as well as the community capacity to seek and demand justice services."

The awareness programme includes an education component that targets families, women and children in communities where informal justice has traditionally been administered. Siphosami Malunga, UNDP Project Manager of the Justice Programme offered a glimpse into the the educational component at district schools, stating "children are an excellent conduit for community awareness, because they bring home what they learn in school. Therefore, we intend to work closely with the districts schools to improve community understanding about the constitution and the human rights that every individual enjoys under the constitution."

For more information, please contact Gary S. Holub, Communications Officer UNDP, [gary.holub@undp.org](mailto:gary.holub@undp.org)

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