

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

Afghanistan Country Office, Shah Mehmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul



Japan supports initiatives for peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan

Kabul, 6 July 2005: Japan signed a USD\$17 million agreement with UNDP today; an expression of Japan's commitment to simultaneously address peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

The link between peace and economic development is a strong one. When UNDP published the *National Human Development Report* in February this year, key findings emphasized Afghans' desperate need for human security and resounded as a heartfelt plea from every sector of society. Human security is not just about the absence of guns. Security in Afghanistan, as elsewhere, has a human element that includes the ability to survive, a chance to live with dignity and the possibility of an adequate livelihood. Bringing an end to insecurity requires a comprehensive strategy that ensures the promises of development are met, and the promotion of human rights.

The funds provided by the Government of Japan will go towards UNDP's National Area Based Development Programme, under the leadership of MRRD, which will facilitate long-term macro economic planning in the regions and the training of government staff. In addition, the immediate need for urban employment, increased agricultural productivity, and the reduction of the landmine threat will be addressed in partnership with the Ministries of Urban Development and Housing, and of Agriculture, together with the UNDP-supported Programme Implementation Unit, FAO and the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA).

The agreement today ensures continuity to programmes which started three years ago when Japan supported UNDP's Recovery Employment Afghanistan Programme (REAP), generating employment opportunities for more than 30,000 Afghans in Kabul and Kandahar at the very early stages of the peace-building effort in Afghanistan. Japan also played an important role in UNDP support to the democratic process in Afghanistan, through constitution-making, voter registration and the historical presidential elections in 2004, as well as a major commitment to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. As of today, more than 50,000 combatants have been reintegrated into communities, and the DDR process is nearing completion.

The UNDP agreement was one of three agreements that were signed today by Japan, totalling USD\$31.36 million. UNICEF received USD\$4.7 million for its immunization programme and the Ministry of Education received USD\$9.56 million to construct 32 schools in the provinces of Kabul, Parwan and Kandahar.

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