



Japan



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



UNAMA

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## Joint Press Statement on DDR

*Kabul, 7 July 2005:* Today Afghanistan marks the formal end of the disarmament and demobilisation components of DDR – one of the key elements of the peace process started in Bonn in December 2001.

The Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration programme began in October 2003 with the aim of replacing the former armed forces of Afghanistan with a new, professional Afghan National Army. In the space of just over 20 months it has seen 250 units decommissioned, which has included ten corps, with their divisions, brigades and supporting elements. It has also allowed almost 63,000 former combatants to trade in their weapons for the chance to build a future in civilian life. This makes DDR in Afghanistan among the largest DDR efforts completed worldwide.

As of today there are 62,901 fewer combatants in Afghanistan, while the Ministry of Defence has collected 34,726 light weapons. The major achievement of the process has been the containment under central government control of over 9,085 heavy weapons. This has a far-reaching impact for future security, stability, and expansion of the rule of law. For each soldier now in a job, the civilian economy is growing. For each gun collected, Afghanistan is becoming safer. DDR has also resulted in savings to the government of over \$120 million per year in salaries and other payments, allowing the government to focus its resources on the Afghan National Army and National Police. Weapons recovered through DDR are sorted and provided to the national army and police wherever possible. Furthermore, it has provided the basis for a national programme to ensure the consolidation and disposal of large quantities of ammunition.

One of the key aims of DDR has been to support ex-combatants in obtaining alternatives to military life. This is a complex and lengthy process, and many of its broader benefits are only now starting to be seen. The reintegration component will continue for another year until all disarmed ex-combatants have received the full benefits. We will continue to examine the impact of reintegration activities with a view to improving further their effectiveness.

DDR is an important phase in the disarmament of Afghanistan. It was not intended to completely disarm the nation, but the demobilisation and disarmament of the former army is an important first step. It is now paving the way for wider disarmament efforts that are being pursued in the Disbanding of Illegal Armed Groups initiative. As a result of lengthy conflict, large stocks of military weapons remain in private hands. With the continued support of the international community, full disarmament will remain a central objective of the Government of Afghanistan.

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The successes that DDR is able to claim under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan must be credited also to the strong support of donor governments – especially the Government of Japan; to ISAF and Coalition Forces; and to the effective work carried out by the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme in cooperation with the Afghan authorities and the United Nations. But above all, the progress so far in disarmament has been possible thanks to the support of the people of Afghanistan, whose clear wish is to see peace fully restored and their country free of illegal weapons.