

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

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Afghanistan

EC Contributes Further \$10.6 Million to Elections in Afghanistan

The European Commission has signed a new agreement with UNDP for "Further Support to Elections in Afghanistan", to contribute an additional Euro 9 million (US \$ 10.6m approximately), helping to finance substantially the funding gap of the National Assembly and Provincial Councils Elections project. This agreement, signed on 31 January 2006, raises the total EC contribution to the Voter Registration programme, 2004 presidential elections and 2005 National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections to US \$43.4 m. This is in addition to bilateral contributions made by EU member states.

This latest agreement is signed on behalf of the transitional phase extension of the elections process and is designed to support the Independent Electoral Commission until the beginning of the next Afghan financial year on 21 March 2006, when the costs of the IEC will begin to be covered by the National Budget.

This generous contribution comes at a critical time for the project and the Independent Electoral Commission, as the bridging of the shortfall for the 2005 elections is required to ensure a smooth transition for the IEC in the assumption of its constitutionally-mandated activities. It represents the collective support of the EU member states.

The National Assembly and Provincial Councils Election Project, which is estimated to have cost some US\$ 168m, still has a funding gap of some US\$ 11m.

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