

RECOMMENDATIONS



WOMEN AT THE FLASHPOINT: 2010 AND BEYOND **Women's Voices from Afghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries**

To be presented at the London Conference on Afghanistan to be held on 28th January 2010

At the initiative of Gender Concerns International, a Dutch NGO based in the Netherlands and in close cooperation with women NGO/CSO partners from Afghanistan and its neighbours, a **Regional Gender, Conflict and Development Platform** has been formed in Kabul in July 2009.*

The following are the *key* recommendations from the Kabul Declaration and which are endorsed by the members of the above-mentioned Regional Platform got together on 14th January at the Peace Palace in The Hague:

I. Women's Participation in the Peace and Security Process

- Given that peace is defined beyond the military structures of the police, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community should ensure that peace, security and development are provided in a more comprehensive form, especially considering the special needs of women and children.
- The international community should insist on the participation of women representatives in the Afghanistan and regional delegations in any future peace negotiations (international and national) and ensure that there is space in the negotiations to hear their opinions and needs.
- That those international women organisations that have been working closely with Afghan and regional women and women's organisations should be given representation in international forums and negotiations. The inclusion of international women's organisations must be visible and should be an integral part of the Afghan and regional gender-focussed policy and implementation strategies of the international community.

II. Women's Political Participation

- The Government should strengthen its current efforts to increase the percentage of qualified and committed women in political leadership and decision-making positions, in conformity with the targets set in the Afghan National Development Strategy, and the international community should strongly advocate this objective with the Government.
- The capacity of the Parliament should be strengthened to better understand and support gender matters in order to effectively monitor and hold accountable the executive agencies of Government, for example, special training programs for women parliamentarians need to be put in place.

- Election monitoring from a gender perspective is an important tool in securing women's electoral participation. The international community must support and encourage international and regional women's joint election monitoring missions in upcoming elections in the region.

III. Women's "Fair Share" of Development Assistance

- The international community should allocate at least 40% of its development funds to women-specific development priorities. The increased development resources should be allocated specifically to local and international organisations and networks that have women and development *as a core activity*.
- That the Regional Platform will form an international women's committee to ensure that the above-mentioned resources are allocated to women of the region and that there is a sound monitoring and reporting system in place for this process. *Resources must be available to increase women's advocacy and organisational capacity.*
- The international community should make stronger efforts to mainstream gender concerns in all the programmes/projects that it supports in Afghanistan and its neighbours. *This work can be done through direct funding available to core women organisations.*

IV. Women and Security

- Given that security has many complex dimensions (physical, psychological, societal and military), the Government with the support of the international community, is urged to speed up the formulation of a national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 which can then constitute the framework for development assistance to women in Afghanistan.

V. Cross-Cutting Recommendations

- The Government of Afghanistan and the international community should pay special attention to capacity development needs, to affirmative action and to special protection measures for women and children. The regional platform members and Gender Concerns International can assist in identifying these needs.
- Efforts in advocacy for improving the situation of women in Afghanistan and its neighbours need to be continued and linkages between the women of the region and their international partners need to be continuously strengthened. *Women's international organisations should be given enough direct resources to help them forwarding the international gender agenda.*
- It is proposed that the United Nations assign a special rapporteur for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. This rapporteur should be supported by the Regional Platform and Gender Concerns International for the region consisting of Afghanistan and its neighbours.

The Hague, 14 January 2010

**Presented by
Regional Gender, Conflict and Development Platform**

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*As signatory to the Dutch Schokland Treaty and to the Dutch National Action Plan on 1325, Gender Concerns International is committed to highlighting the gender dimension of the Afghan conflict within a broad regional context. This initiative is a direct response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which calls for the enhanced contribution of women in peace, security and development processes especially in conflict and post-conflict areas.

Despite the efforts of the international community to improve the situation of women in Afghanistan, there has been an absolute lack of inclusion of women's own regional and international vision at the higher policy and implementation levels. At the last International Conference on Afghanistan held in the Hague on 31st March 2009, Gender Concerns International publicly lobbied for the inclusion of regional and international women's organisations at the Hague conference. As a result and with the help of the Gender Desk at the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation and the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul a first regional women stakeholders meeting took place in Kabul from 6-7 July 2009. This meeting was attended by women NGO/CSO representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan (including Kashmir), India, Iran and Uzbekistan. The participants unanimously endorsed *a regional approach and strategy for addressing the challenges of women in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries*. At the end of the discussions the **Kabul Declaration** was drafted and agreed on by all the participants. Furthermore and in order to safeguard that the Declaration is observed a Regional Gender, Conflict and Development Platform was formed. It was then decided that approximately 6 months after the Kabul Conference a follow-up meeting should be convened in The Hague.

It is within such a context that a second regional stakeholders meeting was held in The Hague, Netherlands from 12-14 January 2010. The recommendations from this meeting were presented to the international community at a public meeting on 14 January. "At this meeting, it was agreed that the recommendations of the regional platform members would be passed to the British Foreign Secretary in anticipation of the forthcoming international conference on Afghanistan to be hosted by the British Government on 28 January 2010."