

# Asma Jahangir receives Flowers For Peace

27th May 2010

## Summary report of exclusive Discussion Session with Asma Jahangir



### Introduction

On 27 May 2010, Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief and distinguished human rights lawyer, addressed a discussion event hosted by Gender Concerns International in The Hague, and was presented with Flowers for Peace as part of the campaign to support women in Afghanistan with their struggle for political participation.

During Asma Jahangir's visit to the Netherlands to receive the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award, Gender Concerns International was honored to facilitate an exclusive session with her, providing a forum for discussion of human rights, women's issues and related themes from a gender viewpoint. Director Sabra Bano welcomed Ms. Jahangir and H. E. Ambassador Chaudhry. Notable guests included representatives, from the Embassies of Australia, Pakistan, Sweden and the USA; women's organizations: General Secretary of the Netherlands Women Council and the Netherlands UN Women's Representative; the justice and legal community; and the NGO sector.

### Building an enabling environment for women

Asma Jahangir's presentation focused on the need to create an enabling environment to allow gender to be mainstreamed within development. This involves promoting a more tolerant, pluralistic society, and a political environment that is not hostile to women, and treats them with dignity and respect. Freedom of expression and rights for women will create opportunities for them to fulfill their potential – empowerment requires a change of mindset. It is not enough to

have a few female parliamentarians and lawyers if the wider system does not successfully promote women's rights.

Highlighting key issues for Afghanistan and Pakistan, she stressed there can be no reconciliation without justice, and the need to end impunity for warlords and people who have committed crimes against humanity.

Specifically, progress is needed on:

- putting the criminal justice system in order in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and
- Instituting political reform.

*“There is no alternative to having a strong women’s movement.”*



## **Hearing women's voices**

Women's voices and perceptions are notably absent in budget planning. Women's priorities tend to be education for their children, health care, and communities. She also spoke about the benefits of using diplomacy, in addition to legislation, as an effective means of tackling religious issues; and the importance of educating and sensitizing Western public opinion to political realities in the region.

Asma Jahangir stressed that to contribute to bringing about effective change, *“There is no alternative to having a strong women’s movement.”*

The event concluded with a presentation of Flowers for Peace to Asma Jahangir by Sabra Bano, Director of Gender Concerns International. These represent the virtual roses sent in the Flowers for Peace campaign to support women’s participation in building peace and security in Afghanistan.

