



Statement

H.E. Dr. Hussun Banu Ghazanfar

Acting Minister of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan

at the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Honorable representatives of Member States of the United Nations, Heads of national machineries, Ambassadors, esteemed Civil Society Leaders, and advocates of women's empowerment and gender equality, it is an honor and privilege to be represented in this assembly of distinguished delegates working for women's advancement and gender equality.

Afghanistan is in the threshold of a new beginning. A few months ago, we held a Consultative Process in Paris in which 600 local and international scholars, tribal councils, civil society, and business community gathered to discuss our framework of sustainable peace. This event registered a 29 percent participation of women which was unprecedented in the field where there had been no traditional *unwikhie* and *maroanzaen*. Recognizing that peace cannot be achieved through military measures alone, our government, with the support of the international community, have considered a new strategy to win and govern within a framework of reconciliation and reintegration, supported by economic, social and institutional reforms that provides an environment to moderate incentives to return to the civil society. Moreover, we have established a new peace framework where women comprise 12 percent of the total members, an increase of nearly 100 percent, previous records of women's participation in peace processes. A gender strategy, policy and action plan are also being developed within the national peace and reintegration program to ensure qualitative and quantitative representation of women in this program, which takes upon the promises of the government.

Under a highly participative political environment and country-wide peace process by the stabilization efforts of our government elements, we succeeded in holding two national elections where women actively participated as candidates, breckoff staff, poll watchers and observers. Two women ran for the Presidency and 10 percent of all candidates for the provincial council elections were women. This is an impressive figure, as it represents a 20 percent increase from the data of the previous elections. Likewise, women comprised nearly 40 percent of all registered voters in the provincial parliamentary elections, there were 417 female candidates representing 4 percent of the total number of voters in our new Parliament, women comprise 27.7% of the House of Representatives and 17.5% of the Senate of Afghanistan.

On the whole, the status of Afghan women has gone a long way through years of the Taliban rule. Afghan women are now equal with men under the law. Likewise, gender based violence and discrimination

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Women in National Parliaments article of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, ranking 147 countries on the representation of women in their Parliaments as of 31 December 2010.



... have returned to public life and we have a comprehensive ten-year plan that systematically advances women's status. We have steady advancements in education and service delivery provisions and we continue to honor and implement our commitments to International agreements, conventions and treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals and UN Resolution 1325.

However, the poor state of our economy, political and security situations continues to negate the development gains by many of our people, women and men alike. We continue to be second at the bottom with the lowest Human Development Index in the world and our per capita income is the lowest in the Sub-Saharan region. Forty-five percent of our population has limited peoples' access to health and social services, leading to poor education, low nutrition levels and substandard living conditions. Fifty percent of our population is unemployed and more than half are vulnerable to poverty, while 37 percent is in borderline of food insecurity and hunger.

Friends and colleagues, Afohan government is profoundly grateful to the support that the international community generously gives to our country, especially to the advancement of African women. We face multiple challenges with our government elements, corruption, social inequalities, unemployment, illiteracy, maternal and infant deaths, and many more.

Our people may be lacking in technical skills that we need to deal with these problems, but we are a strong nation. Having survived nearly three decades of conflict, we have the inner strength, courage, determination and tenacity that equips us to face the challenges we face with continuing support of international communities.

In closing, I wish to thank the UN Women and its first Executive Director Madam Michèle Bachler, as well as the countries who are members of the Board. A stronger UN Women means a stronger support to the countries of the world.

I wish you all more power and greater success in this enormous challenge of making life a little bit better for the women of the world.

Thank you