AUSTRALIA'S ROLE PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF AFGHAN WOMEN THROUGH TRANSITION AND POST-2014

"Security of Afghanistan is security of the world – and you can't have a secure Afghanistan unless Afghan women are safe"

Afghan delegate, AADO Roundtable, 13 February 2013

Australian Government Briefing, 14 February 2013

The recommendations contained in this brief have been endorsed by a delegation of eminent Afghan MPs and civil society leaders in Australia to draw attention to the precarious situation facing women and girls in Afghanistan (see participants in annex 1).

The recommendations have emerged out of a roundtable discussion hosted by the Afghan Australian Development Organisation in Melbourne from 12-13 February on *The Role of Afghan Women in the Peace, Reconciliation and Transition Processes and the Future for Afghan Women Post-2014.* The roundtable involved fifty participants with an active involvement in Afghanistan – including representatives of Australian NGOs, public sector, Afghan diaspora and academia.

Overarching recommendations for Australia:

1) Make women's rights in Afghanistan a core priority for Australia's Security Council term. Australia should ensure Women, Peace and Security provisions are embedded into all UN Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan during its term, including the UN mandate for NATO/ISAF coming up for renewal in October 2013.

2) Make Afghanistan a priority country for implementation and monitoring of Australia's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. An implementation plan for Afghanistan should be developed detailing how each Australian department will implement their respective NAP commitments in Afghanistan by 2018. This process should be accompanied by a budget measure.

3) Prioritise gender equality in AusAID's new Country Strategy for Afghanistan, focusing on investing in Afghan institutions and women's organisations. This includes supporting existing Afghan mechanisms such as the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan (NAPWA) and the forthcoming NAP on Women, Peace and Security.

Thematic recommendations for Australia:

1) Australia's Leadership on the UN Security Council

Australia should prioritise Afghan women's rights and security outcomes during its Security Council term. Australia to:

1.1 Ensure Women, Peace and Security provisions are incorporated and implemented across all UN Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan during Australia's term on the Council, including the UN mandate for NATO/ISAF coming up for renewal in October 2013. This includes supporting provisions to increase women's representation, participation and leadership in the security sector in Afghanistan; the provision of effective gender sensitive training and mentoring of military and police; and the full implementation of laws that protect women and girls, such as the Afghan Elimination of Violence Against Women law.

1.2 Advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda on the Security Council, including by establishing mechanisms to monitor levels of women's representation and participation and in all peace negotiations and processes.

1.3 Encourage the Security Council to address regional conflict drivers in Afghanistan.

1.4 Host Open sessions or Arria Formula briefings to discuss the impact of transition on Afghan women, involving Afghan women civil society members and Parliamentarians to participate. This should be a key focus for Australia's first Presidency in September 2013.

2) Representation and participation

2.1 Provide support to Afghanistan to achieve 25% representation of women at elected bodies as per Afghanistan's Constitution; as well achieve 30% representation of women in leadership in all government bodies as per Afghanistan's commitment to the MDGs by 2020.

2.2 Provide direct technical and capacity building support to women to facilitate their involvement 'at the table' in the peace and reconciliation process. Women's presence is not enough – to meaningfully participate women need an enabling environment and capacity building support, both at the national and provincial levels.

2.3 Fund research partnerships that help build the evidence base for advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Afghanistan, giving greater visibility to the courageous work Afghan women are doing to strengthen peace and prevent conflict. Use this mechanism to support wider education and advocacy of the benefits of women's participation in the peace and reconciliation processes from the High Peace Council and Provincial Peace Councils, to local Shuras.

3) Afghan National Security

3.1 Ensure the exit of combat troops is matched by increased support to gender sensitivity training and mentoring of Afghan National Army and, in particular, Afghan National Police. Australian security sector training and mentoring should specifically focus on Afghan laws that protect women; human rights law; and gender sensitive reforms. Provide funding to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) after the main withdrawal of international troops to build ANSF's capacity to implement laws that protect women.

3.2 Support increased participation of women in Afghan National Security Forces, in high level and local level decision-making and especially National Security Council

3.3 Improve transparency and oversight of military expenditure in Afghanistan and ensure that Australia does not support the further proliferation of local militia groups ('Afghan Local Police') in Uruzgan Province.

3.4 Help to put in place mechanisms to hold ALP in Uruzgan accountable for violations as part of transition planning.

4) Education
As the majority of Afghan women and girls are illiterate. Australia to consider:

4.1 Support, fund and resource initiatives that increase the participation and access of women and girls to education, including literacy and accelerated learning programs that address interrupted schooling, particularly in rural areas. Australia to also ensure the ongoing provision and expansion of community-based education, by government and non-government stakeholders, to address security threats associated with girls attending schools.

4.2 Fund the recruitment and training of teachers to a professional standard with an emphasis on secondary education and rural areas.

5) Justice

5.1 Australia should focus its $17 million budget measure for eliminating Violence Against Women in Afghanistan on supporting Afghan civil society to monitor the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women law in Afghanistan. This includes assisting civil society to monitor progress of EVAW law cases; advancing capacity and participation of women in the judicial system- particularly in the Supreme Court; training of women in justice systems (lawyers, advocates, judges); providing all judges and prosecutors with gender-sensitive training of EVAW law; supporting the Afghan government in establishing family courts in every province; and supporting and advocating for the reform in Family Law which is still only a component of the civil law and needs to be separated.

5.2 As per recommendations from AusAID's aid effectiveness review, Australia should support immediate and long-term measures to effectively address weak government and administration in Afghanistan, as well as corruption at the national and international levels.

<u>Background</u>

These recommendations have been informed by discussion at the AADO roundtable on *The Role of Afghan Women in the Peace, Reconciliation and Transition Processes and the Future for Afghan Women Post-2014,* held in Melbourne on 12-13 February. The roundtable aimed to develop strategies and recommendations for how Afghan women's rights can be protected during transition and post-2014, and how women's participation in Afghan peace processes can be ensured.

The roundtable agenda was guided around the key pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, which also form the basic framework of Australia's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security:

- **Prevention** of violence against women and girls and supporting women's role in conflict prevention
- **Participation** of women at all levels of decision-making relating to management and resolution of conflict
- **Protection** of women and girls and ensuring their safety and dignity
- **Relief and Recovery** measures that are gender sensitive and address the needs of women and girls.

On the first day working groups at the roundtable explored each of these pillars to identify the key challenges, risks and factors undermining progress in Afghanistan, as well as the opportunities that exist for future gains. Four key issues emerged as crosscutting themes across the pillars: Security, Education, Justice and Participation and Representation. The second day focused on extrapolating recommendations for action out of these pillars and crosscutting themes.

The recommendations contained in this brief reflect the particular priorities identified by the Afghan delegation for the Australian Government. This document is not a comprehensive outcome document of the roundtable. These recommendations will be further fleshed out and added to a range of other recommendations in an official outcome document of the roundtable that will be produced in the coming months.

Afghan delegates participating in roundtable

Ms. Shinkai Karokhail, independent member of Afghan parliament since 2005 for Kabul Province, member of the budget committee of the Lower House.

Mr Noor Akbary, independent MP and representative of Daikundi Province since 2005, currently deputy of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Lower House.

Ms. Malalai Shinwari, Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Economy, Director of Afghanistan Integrated Capacity development Organization (AICO) and former MP for Kabul Province.

Mr Nader Jan, Director of Women for Women International-Afghanistan office.

Ms. Wazhma Frogh, gender and development specialist, co-founder of the Women, Peace & Security Research Institute and winner of the 2009 International Woman of Courage Award.

Mr Imam Jan, Member of Parliament and representative for Jalalabad. He is working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society.

Mr Besmellah Afghanmal, Senator and representative of Kandahar province in the Upper house (Meshrano Jirga).

Mr Mohammad Hasham Folad, former Member of Parliament for five years and current member of the High Peace Council in Afghanistan.