



PRESS RELEASE

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Afghan Civil Society Leaders Gather for the Second National Policy Reform Conference in Kabul

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | SEPTEMBER 26, 2012 – Hundreds of civil society activists from across the country gathered in Kabul to participate in the September 24-25th second annual National Policy Reform Conference funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Key actors from local and national civil society organizations, government, the National Assembly, and other guests announced policy action plans to address citizens' concerns related to economic and social development, empowering women and youth, education, health, and democracy and governance. These action plans will serve as mechanisms for local groups to strive to reach their collective goals for change.

During her opening remarks, Dr. Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission emphasized that the "existence of civil society in a country shows the promotion of democracy and institutionalization of human rights ... civil society should be empowered."

Prior to the conference, working groups drafted five policy papers on democracy and governance, socio-economic development policy, women and youth empowerment policy, public health policy, and education policy. Also, 715 community dialogue sessions and 32 regional-level policy dialogue sessions in 29 provinces involving some 16,000 persons were held over the past two years. Conference participants recommended increased funding for preschool education, greater access of women to healthcare, and increased government transparency. Whether advocating for increased parent involvement in the schools, scholarships for women in the healthcare field, or the fight against corruption, the groups emphasized the need for civil society cooperation with national and local level authorities.

Civil society is an essential partner in restoring and sustaining peace and stability in Afghanistan. U.S. government is committed to continuing to support civil society sector activities after 2014. The Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS II) is a three-year program is funded by USAID and implemented by Counterpart International. I-PACS II builds national networks and enables Afghan citizens to more effectively participate in the political process, solve community problems, and demand good governance.

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