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**APF Member Reports**

**Dr Sima Samar  
Chairperson  
Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honor to speak in this forum again in order to comment on the human rights situation in Afghanistan and the work of AIHRC.

Although there are reports about the progress Afghanistan is making towards democracy, stability and respect for human rights, I unfortunately have to tell you that this year we have had more violence than in the past three years. This violence is the result of the lack of security, lack of law enforcement, lack of accountability, and continuation of culture of impunity.

We should not forget that Afghanistan has long been a pawn in a strategic game played by the world's super powers. At the same time, because of the internal conflict, we could not make progress toward peace, democracy and respect for human rights.

Durable peace in any country must be built on strong foundations. Among the essential ingredients are respect of human rights, justice, accountability, transparency, representative government freely elected by the people, and a functioning system of government that can be trusted by the people. But in Afghanistan, only a few of the ingredients are in place. My countrymen and women do not yet have human security: freedom from fear and want. In short, they are still a long way from enjoying their basic human rights.

In this brief statement, I want to concentrate on the absolute need to tackle impunity if my country is to be successful in making the transition to stability and peace based on democracy and respect for human rights. The AIHRC has determined that this must take the highest priority in our work because unless impunity is addressed, our other efforts to protect and promote human rights will be useless.

As you all know, AIHRC did a national consultation on transitional justice and released the report with recommendations for a national strategy on transitional justice to stop the culture of Impunity in Afghanistan. The report, "A Call for Justice," was welcomed by President Karzai and fully supported by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, who traveled to Afghanistan for the purpose, as well as by the UNAMA.

The thousands of Afghans who participated in the consultation overwhelmingly called for justice for the serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law that were committed under a series of regimes for almost three decades. Afghans have a broad

vision of what justice means in our situation. Ultimately, it was felt necessary to bring those responsible for serious crimes to judicial accountability. However, as a first step, Afghans want to remove from positions of power and influence those human rights violators who continue to effect people's daily lives. They also want improvements to be made in the public office appointment process so that the devil they know is not simply replaced by another devil. Unfortunately, this is the case even today. Other calls were made for measures -- many of which require government action -- to acknowledge the suffering of victims both symbolically and materially, to make community reparations, to establish and publish the truth, and to promote respect for human rights. Institutional reforms also seen as needed, with priority given to the national justice and security systems.

Our government is considering the recommendations in the "Call for Justice" report. A Plan of Action also has been developed in an international conference in Holland on 6 and 7th June 2005, which included representatives of the Afghan government, OHCHR, UNAMA, AIHRC and International community and submitted to the president for endorsement.

Mr. Chairman, my main call today is to urge members of the international community/states, inter-government organizations, NGOs and especially this forum – to strongly support politically, materially, and through international cooperation, the implementation without delay of the Plan of Action for transitional justice in Afghanistan. There is no doubt that this will be a lengthy process that will face many obstacles. However, it is equally certain that the longer impunity prevails in Afghanistan, the less chance there is for our country to become a place of peace, stability and opportunity for its long-suffering people. Without justice, we cannot be a country where human rights of all are genuinely respected.

Mr. Chairman, the voice of the people of Afghanistan must not only be heard; it must be heeded. Our country's future depends on this. There is no longer any excuse for delay. Sustainable peace is not possible without justice.

Thank you.