

**Statement of
Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson,
Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

Mr. Chairmen, Director of APF, distinguished representatives from the national human rights institutions, and honorable guests:

It is an honor and a pleasure for me to be here. Thank you to the APF leadership for inviting the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to participate in the 8th Annual Meeting of APF.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would be very difficult for me to brief you about the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and our achievements in three minutes, but I will try to give some highlights.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission was established in 2002 according to the Bonn Agreement and a presidential decree announced on 6th of June. The initial term of service was two years, but fortunately the Commission is included as a permanent institution in Afghanistan's new Constitution which was adopted in January this year. This gives our people and our colleagues in the Commission the opportunity to continue the struggle to promote and protect human rights in Afghanistan.

We started our activities just five days after the establishment of the Commission without budget or any other means for work. We were only 11 commissioners. Today we have our main office in the capital, and seven regional offices in different parts of the country. Today, the number of executive staff including support personnel is about 300 people. Our Commission is nearly gender-balanced, with five women and six men.

We have developed our 5-year strategic plan. The Commission has set up its working sections in the main office as well as in the regional offices. These sections are Human Rights Education, Women's Rights Promotion, Child Rights Promotion, Monitoring and Investigation of Human Rights Violations, and Transitional Justice.

After the grave violations of human rights in Afghanistan – where using the word of human right was counted as crime – this is the first Human Rights Commission in our history. Working in this field in a country like Afghanistan where the gun still rules is not an easy task. To be able to

promote and protect the human rights, we have held more than 250 workshops and trainings to build the capacity of our staff and to train others in the related governmental, NGO's and civil society about human rights. We have run these programs in Kabul and in our regional offices.

As a result of our lobbying, Afghanistan Government ratified CEDAW, ICC, and Optional Protocol II of CRC last year. Our Commission also successfully campaigned among the delegates of the Grand Assembly in January 2004 for inclusion in the new constitution of the bill of rights based on the international standards.

Our Commission so far has registered over 2000 complaints of human rights violations, which we have received from different parts of the country. Of greatest concern, the violations include cases of land dispute, forced marriage, child kidnapping and trafficking, domestic and sexual violence, torture, arbitrary detention, and violation of the rights of detainees and prisoners.

Our staff regularly monitors the detention centers, prisons, and child rehabilitation centers as well as the other cases of violation and abuses of human rights. We report back to the President and other relevant organizations in efforts to stop the violations and to seek justice and remedies. Some of the reports are published widely in our monthly magazine.

While our Commission is in the preliminary stage of developing its institutional capacity, we hope that we can become members of this forum, which plays a vital role in sharing experiences among the national human rights institutions in the region, strengthening our efforts, and supporting each other.

At the end I would like to thank the International community and donors to make our work possible in Afghanistan.

I present the wishes of myself and my colleagues for the success of this meeting. I hope for peace, equality, justice, and a non-violent world.

Thank you very much for your attention.