

Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy
4-5 December 2001
The Brussels Proclamation

The meeting of the Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy came up with the following demands with respect to the reconstruction of Afghanistan :

EDUCATION, MEDIA AND CULTURE

Infrastructures in Afghanistan for the past 23 years have been destroyed. People of Afghanistan lost their basic human rights including the right to live, to be educated and to work, as well as their culture. Two generations of Afghans are illiterate and there was no adequate schooling available due to the war and the repressive regime, which banned girls from school and taught boys only about 'political' Islam so that these boys were brainwashed and became extremists. These ideas are contrary to Islamic values. Afghan women are in dire need of education and information through the media. Education, information and culture empower women. Women are the shapers of society; they have to be educated and have access to information in order to raise responsible children. Women should participate fully in the current and future development of Afghanistan.

We need to re-open the schools in major cities of Afghanistan, starting from Kabul the capital, and bring back to the people our cultural heritage. Particular attention should be given to orphans living in the streets, both in respect of shelter and education.

We need to bring hope and a bright future to our people. It is our duty as Afghan women to help and support our people in order to bring to the fore the important contribution of Afghan women as the torch-bearers of a culture in peril.

For the past 23 years, Afghan people have been living in the dark. We the Afghan women should join our efforts to establish a civil society in our country and bring back democratic values through education and culture. Education and culture transcend the reality of our lives. Their healing power and creative energy could act as a catalyst for peace and as an antidote to our national wounds by safeguarding our cultural heritage from disappearance. By reviving education and culture, we Afghans can all have something common to share and be united.

Recommendations

- ?? Sending a group of women to Afghanistan for assessing the schools' condition
- ?? Developing an emergency plan for re-opening schools by March 2002 for both girls and boys and reconstruction of the schools that have been damaged or destroyed
- ?? Reopening of institutes of higher education
- ?? Provision of all the necessary means for schools so that they will be able to function properly
- ?? Transfer of students taught at home to schools
- ?? Provision of a comprehensive school curriculum based on international standards and the relevant supplies
- ?? Provision of teachers' training including refresher courses for teachers
- ?? Creation of structures for sheltering and educating orphans
- ?? Ensuring fair salaries for all staff in education
- ?? Inclusion of educational professionals in the Ministry of Education
- ?? Ensuring inclusion of conflict resolution courses in education
- ?? Afghan journalists living abroad to assess the situation in Afghanistan

- ?? Reconstruction of TV satellites and radio stations, in particular in the major cities of Afghanistan that were already equipped
- ?? Provision of cameras and necessary equipment
- ?? Provision of training for personnel in the area of technical backing and production
- ?? Recuperation and re-purchase of the ancient literary works which have been dispersed around the world, with the help of UNESCO and private donors
- ?? Reprinting of rare books of literature, poetry, etc
- ?? Translation of Afghan literature into English and other languages so that the Afghan children living abroad will be able to regain their cultural identity
- ?? Establishment of a prize-award system in literature for young writers, poets and artists

HEALTH

Women should participate fully in the current and future development of Afghanistan, particularly in the field of health. We volunteer to do a comprehensive survey in order to specifically identify and point out the needs if concrete support is provided. In order for the group members to conduct a comprehensive survey in the following areas, the group members request the European Commission and the donor agencies to provide the means for a team to conduct a survey of the medical needs of Afghans.

Recommendations

- ?? Provision of critical medical equipment, medicines and vitamins
- ?? Rebuilding of water and sanitation systems
- ?? Restarting of the food program
- ?? Vaccination programs
- ?? Medical teams be sent to Afghanistan to provide hands-on training and mentoring to Afghan doctors and other medical staff
- ?? Afghan doctors and other medical staff be provided with the opportunities to get training abroad
- ?? Scholarships be provided to medical students to study abroad
- ?? Awareness raising through media, distribution of health related material, including but not limited to mother and child health, malnutrition, hygiene, contagious diseases, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- ?? Re-establishment of health centers in urban and rural areas
- ?? Re-establishment of training centers and training programs for the medical personnel
- ?? Rebuilding of medical faculties in Kabul, Herat, Nengrahar and Mazar-e-Sharif
- ?? Rehabilitation of psychological hospital in Kabul
- ?? Expansion of orthopedic centers for handicapped people
- ?? Expansion of clinics and treatment centers for Malaria and Leshmenia

- ?? Establishment of counselling and health centers in schools
- ?? Provision of family planning programs
- ?? Establishment and rebuilding of medical laboratories
- ?? Re-introduction of health insurance
- ?? Provision of centers for HIV/AIDS patients and drug addicts
- ?? Provision of blood banks

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CONSTITUTION

Recalling the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Cairo Programme of Action, and the UN Convention Against Torture, we the participants of the Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy make the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- ?? Making all support, including monetary, from the international community conditional on the rights and treatment of women
- ?? The cessation of using Pakistan as a proxy for Afghanistan and the subsequent recognition of Afghanistan as an independent state in reconstruction negotiations
- ?? Guaranteed recognition of the returnees to Afghanistan as legitimate citizens of Afghanistan
- ?? Central inclusion of women in the Loya Jirgah (Grand Assembly) and all peace processes and matters related to reconstruction
- ?? Inclusion of Afghan women lawyers in the development of a new constitution based on the 1964 constitution and resulting legal frameworks
- ?? Critical focus on disarmament in all areas of Afghanistan and a wide demining campaign
- ?? Ensuring that the principles of non-discrimination according to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, and political affiliation in all aspects of political, social, cultural, civil and economic rights are central to the new legal system
- ?? Ensuring the protection of women from forced/under-aged marriages, sexual harassment, trafficking in people and all other types of abuse
- ?? Ensuring a safe and secure environment for women and girls
- ?? Ensuring equal rights for women including the right to vote, equal pay and equal access to education, health care and employment
- ?? Elimination of child labor and child soldiering
- ?? Wide utilization of Afghan women experts, their knowledge and experiences
- ?? Establishment of an umbrella/coalition under which a number of organizations will jointly work on projects or programs
- ?? Donor funding to be channeled through local Afghan Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and a transparent system of accountabilities be established

- ?? Ensuring examination of the economic involvement of regional actors in the context of promoting sustainable peace

REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN

According to UNHCR in the past two decades Afghan refugees constitute the largest refugee population in the world. Due to the current war in Afghanistan, approximately 300,000 more refugees have been added to the refugee population. More than 65% of refugees are women and children. Afghan refugees in the first country of asylum, especially in neighbouring countries, including Central Asian countries, have very limited rights. The safety and security of most refugees, especially women, is extremely limited. Under the current circumstances, due to the presence of landmines and destruction of infrastructure in residential areas, Afghanistan does not have the capacity to provide sustainable living conditions. The political and security conditions in Afghanistan are not considered to be safe for some refugees. For those refugees who cannot return and are in need of international protection according to the 1951 Geneva Convention, resettlement should be provided as a tool of protection.

Recommendations

- ?? Avoidance of forced repatriation of refugees as it violates basic human rights according to UNHCR guidelines on repatriation
- ?? Provision of a durable resettlement solution for those refugees who cannot return to Afghanistan for security reasons
- ?? Increase of educational, training, capacity building and income generating programs to enhance the special needs of refugees and internally displaced women and children.
- ?? Provision of basic needs of internally displaced and refugee women required for human existence. These needs include:
 - ?? Security and protection
 - ?? Health care services
 - ?? Education on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases
 - ?? Education on birth control and family planning

Afghan Participants:

These extraordinary women, who hail from different ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, have held Afghan civil society together against all odds. They include educators, health care providers, political activists, and others who have shown their commitment and leadership in grassroots organizing. Participating Afghan women will come from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian Republics, the United States, Canada and Europe. All affirm their commitment to democracy and women's rights. Supporting Speakers and Participants: Women leaders from around the world will also be present in solidarity. The supporting speakers, participants and convening groups will help carry the message of the Afghan women back to their own countries and help ensure that Afghan women are represented in conflict resolution efforts and the ongoing dialogue for peace. Confirmed speakers and participants include (in alphabetical order): Anna Diamantopoulou, European Commissioner, Employment and Social Affairs Eve Ensler, Artistic Director and Founder, V-Day; Playwright, "The Vagina Monologues" Denise Fuchs, President, European Women's Lobby Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, United Nations Asma Khader, Board of Directors, Equality Now Angela King, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, United Nations Hibaaq Osman, Founding Director, Center for Strategic Initiatives of Women Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Joan Ruddock, British MP Maj Britt Theorin, Member, European Parliament

DECLARATION OF SOLIDARITY

In solidarity with the Afghan women gathered in Brussels December 4-5th, women's rights activists from Belgium, Croatia, France, India, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States met in parallel session in Brussels to formulate support strategies for the implementation of the Brussels Proclamation issued by the Afghan Women's Summit. A number of initiatives were devised by this group, which included activists from war-torn countries, artists, lawyers, funders and a parliamentarian. Also working with the group was the Gender Advisor to the UN Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UNIFEM. The group was deeply moved and inspired by the clarity and brilliance of the Brussels Proclamation and the vision of Afghan Women for the future of their country. In support of this vision, the group made the following commitments:

- ?? To undertake an advocacy campaign to ensure that the funds allocated by the international community for the reconstruction of Afghanistan are conditional on (i) the participation by women in decision-making over the granting of the funds; (ii) the inclusion of women's non-governmental organizations among recipients of the funds; and (iii) the use of the funds for implementation of the priorities outlined in the Brussels Proclamation.
- ?? To declare on International Women's Day 2002 that for women "Afghanistan is Everywhere", which means that we are joined in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan not only because we all identify with their suffering but also because we understand that the same conditions of violence, oppression, invisibility and other forms of inequality that plagued Afghanistan are universal. We will use March 8th to mobilize a worldwide demand for the implementation of the Brussels Proclamation issued by the Afghan Women's Summit.
- ?? To create an international task force of women's rights lawyers with particular expertise in drafting legislation and constitutional law.
- ?? To provide political support to the Ministry of Women created by the Bonn Agreement, and to undertake efforts to foster voter education and the participation by women in elections.
- ?? To coordinate a funding effort to support grassroots community initiatives by and for women in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, which will make available at least \$1 million over the next three years.
- ?? To promote United Nations recruitment of women for employment in the various agencies within the UN system operating in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.