

100000 Afghan Women Call on Women Leaders across the Globe for Protecting Women's Rights in Afghanistan Peace Process

8th March, 2021

Dear Global Women Leaders,

As we stand here looking back at almost a century's celebration of women's achievements, we can see that women of all races, religions and creeds have come together becoming and strengthening each other voice to end wars, build peace, justice, equality and ensure access to human rights. Today, on the International Women's Day, 100,000 women from across Afghanistan through this letter call upon you, our sisters and world leaders, to lend us, the women of Afghanistan, your voice strengthening our call for sustainable and dignified peace and justice in our war-torn country at this very crucial moment in our history.

We have been at the frontlines of building peace for decades. We know the costs of war first-hand and continue to pay the price daily. Our families have borne the brunt of war and have witnessed and lived through the displacement and destruction of our homes and communities. In last two decades and beyond, women leaders like yourselves have joined us in advocating for the protection and promotion of our rights. You have been our allies in our struggle towards a reality in which opportunities, freedoms, and rights are not defined by gender. Today, once again, we urge you support us to ensure that women's rights are protected during the peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Women of Afghanistan have historically played a crucial role in building and sustaining peace and ensuring steady development in our communities. Afghan women's movement has ensured that women's rights are enshrined into the Constitution of 2003 and have worked with successive governments to ensure that these constitutional rights are upheld. This has resulted in massive progress in women's inclusion in the political, economic and social spheres in Afghanistan. Afghan women, in the government, development community and the civil society, have led the way in setting goals and targets for the betterment of ordinary Afghan women's lives. These achievements would not have been possible for us without the support of the international community and the global leaders like yourselves.

We welcome the peace process as we see a peaceful solution to the decades of conflict in our country the ideal solution. We announce our full commitment to support the process and vow to engage with all parties in promoting a peaceful settlement. However, we believe that durable peace, stability and prevention of civil war in Afghanistan needs ample time, patience, and resources rather than a hasty withdrawal of troops and a shaky political deal between the warring factions. We firmly believe that the withdrawal of the international troops from Afghanistan must be responsible, staged, linked with conditions agreed in an independently monitored peace deal between the Taliban and the Afghan state.

We expect Taliban to acknowledge and accept the fact that everyone in Afghanistan, despite their sex and gender, ethnicity and religion deserve to exercise their basic rights enshrined in the constitution. This should form the basis of any deal that is to be struck. The gains and the rights of Afghan women and minorities must not be bargained in a peace deal.

We want you, women leaders from across the globe and our sisters in the struggle for gender equality and women's rights, to lend us your voice and advocate to your governments for taking the following actions:

- Engage from position of leadership with the warring factions and convince them to agree to a permanent humanitarian ceasefire;
- Develop an international mechanism to mediate between the parties to conflict for enhancing the peace process and ensure accountability and sustainability of the peace deal;
- Ensure that penalties such as financial and travel restrictions are imposed on government officials, political leaders and the Taliban if they fail to protect the rights of all Afghan citizens and oppose preserving the gains of the past two decades or violating terms of any agreements reached;
- Use your leverage with the Afghan government, political parties and the Taliban to support the meaningful and equal participation of women, youth, victims of war, minorities, civil society and the media in the peace talks;

- Channel financial and technical aid to Afghanistan towards efforts that strengthen access to universal human rights, especially of girls and women, and minorities;
- Engage regional players to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism, economic development and resolving regional conflicts through diplomacy;
- Continue your assistance to the Afghan security forces to defend its territories and protect the rights of Afghan citizens.

Insecurity, instability and war in Afghanistan has negative repercussion in the regional and beyond. Conversely a peaceful, stable Afghanistan will ensure a stable region. Therefore, if global leaders stand with us in this difficult and uncertain time, and ensure meaningful peace is reached, the positive ripple effect would be felt across the region and beyond.

We believe that we have come a long way towards building a self-reliant Afghanistan. Let us not lose our strategic patience in actualizing our vision of securing a long-lasting, just and dignified peace so that our children live in peace, our youth participate in rebuilding a prosperous Afghanistan, and our country does not become a safe haven for terrorist groups again.

Sincerely Yours

Provincial Women's Networks

***Provincial Women Networks** are registered with Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan as grassroots networks. PWNs are bringing women together from different walks of life in each province to build trust and confidence, make alliances with different actors and work in their communities towards conflict resolution, peacebuilding and service delivery. The PWNs are active with 30 to 40 members in 15 provinces (**Kabul, Parwan, Bamyan, Daikundi, Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Paktya, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunduz, Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab and Herat**). These networks were established by EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) in seven provinces in 2012 and later expanded to cover fifteen provinces with technical support from Cordaid. The members are receiving tailored trainings and capacity buildings that are based on their needs to become more effective mediators and peacebuilders in their communities. As of now they have mediated, advocated and resolved more than 1,118 cases, which includes conflicts resolution cases, violence against women cases, prevention of child marriages, educating and empowering women, job placements, women's political participation and promoting girls education in their communities. PWN members are also meeting on a regular basis among themselves to exchange ideas and share knowledge with each other as well as interact with women leaders, policy makers and others presenting their perspectives about conflict, peace and governance.*

