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## **MARKING 'GLOBAL OPEN DAY,' UN OFFICIALS CALL FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION OF AFGHAN WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND PEACE PROCESSES**

**KABUL, 8 October 2014** – Senior United Nations officials today highlighted the critical importance of women's meaningful participation in political and peace processes in Afghanistan.

Speaking after hosting a meeting in Kabul that marked the 2014 'Global Open Day on Women, Peace and Security,' and attended by Afghan women representing civil society, the two UN officials – the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom, and the Deputy Country Representative for the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Pamela F. Husain – reiterated the imperative that women's perspectives, experiences and participation contribute towards shaping lasting peace in the country.

"Despite considerable progress achieved over the last twelve years, more needs to be done to provide opportunities for Afghan women to exercise leadership and play an equal role in decision-making, especially in security and governance matters, which deeply affect women's daily lives," said Mr. Haysom.

"The new government is called upon to honour its commitments on women's rights," he added.

"The role of civil society, and particularly advocates for women's rights and participation in decision-making at all levels, is critical for ensuring sustainable peace and inclusive governance," said Ms. Husain. "Today's representatives identified fundamental issues that must be taken forward by the new Government in partnership with civil society to consolidate gains in women's rights and secure a peaceful and inclusive future for all Afghans."

Global Open Days provide a forum for dialogue between UN senior leadership and women's organizations worldwide on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325, which was adopted in 2000.

The Open Days were launched in 2010 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the resolution, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction, and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

At today's gathering, women civil society representatives identified major obstacles hindering their meaningful participation in political and peace processes. These included: under-representation in elected and appointed bodies, especially in decision-making positions; weak awareness of women's political rights; low literacy rates that place Afghan women at a disadvantage when competing for public office; and, discriminatory social practices restricting women's participation in social and economic opportunities.

The representatives asked the UN for increased technical and financial support in enhancing women's ability to exercise leadership and their political rights, especially in light of upcoming 2015 Parliamentary elections. Furthermore, they asked for the UN to support the adoption and implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan for resolution 1325.

Mr. Haysom and Ms. Husain reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to supporting Afghan institutions and civil society to enhance women's contributions to all stages of peacebuilding, peacemaking, peacekeeping and conflict prevention, in line with respective mandates.

The UN officials also took the opportunity to highlight the invaluable contribution of Afghan activists to promote women's full inclusion in public life – often at great personal risks. They concluded by encouraging civil society to work in partnership amongst themselves as well as with the government for enhanced impact and results.

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For more information on UN Women's work in Afghanistan:

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