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UNDP – Japan Partnership Strengthens Afghan Democracy

USD 16.7 Million Assistance from Government of Japan for Provision of Ballot Papers, Other Election Materials

Kabul, 12/11/2013 - Japan today extended a grant to the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) in support of free, fair and credible elections and a more responsive democracy, following the signing of a US\$ 16.7 million agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the IEC headquarters in Kabul.

An exchange of notes took place between H.E. Hiroshi Takahashi, Ambassador of Japan and Mr. Alvaro Rodriguez, Country Director of the UNDP, in the presence of H.E. Yusuf Nuristani, Chairman of the IEC, and Ziaulhaq Amarkhil, IEC Chief Electoral Officer.

The latest Japanese support to the UNDP Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT II) initiative will include polling items such as ballot papers, indelible ink and polling station kits, and ground transportation of polling materials across the country and international freight cost for sourcing of the election materials. This complements the ongoing assistance of the Government of Japan in the area of IEC's institutional capacity building.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr. Nuristani said, "The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan welcomes the continuous committed support of the Government of Japan, to the conduct of the Presidential and Provincial Council elections in 2014". "Japan's contribution, of US\$ 16.7 million follows its earlier contribution of US\$81.7 million to electoral assistance in Afghanistan during 2009 and 2010. The IEC is committed to holding credible and transparent Afghan-led elections. The Japanese support strongly contributes to this effort."

The Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Hiroshi Takahashi, said that since 2004 Japan had supported the electoral process in Afghanistan. "These elections are central to the country's political transition. Japan expects that this contribution will further the conduct of inclusive elections and will assist the IEC in its goal of fostering broader democratic participation and increasing public confidence."

"This renewed partnership between Japan and Afghanistan reflects the firm commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community in enhancing democratic governance in Afghanistan", said the UNDP Country Director, Mr. Alvaro Rodriguez. "The Japanese support will contribute to further UNDP's efforts in assisting the IEC towards electoral processes that are deemed robust and credible".

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