



**President of the Human Rights Council
Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow**

March 4, 2011

Your Excellency:

The undersigned individuals and organisations, members of the Committee on the Status of Women- Geneva of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations (CoNGO) in consultative relations with the UN ECOSOC and our partners are profoundly concerned and wish to express our dismay at the violence to which women and girls are being subjected in Afghanistan.

We are particularly alarmed by the report of 9 December 2010 of the **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (MANUA)**. This lists widespread harmful traditional practices – child marriage, giving away girls for dispute resolution, forced isolation in the home, exchange marriage and “honour” killings which cause suffering, humiliation and marginalization for so many Afghan women and girls.

Such practices are grounded in discrimination and beliefs about the role and position of women in society. We must especially raise awareness to the new Afghan Edict on Development issued by the General Administration Directorate of the Supreme Court on 26th of October 2010. This states that women and girls who run away from their own residence to a stranger’s residence, rather than to a relative’s house, security or justice departments, regardless of the fact that they are experiencing violence caused by a family member, will be condemned for committing the crime of adultery or prostitution. In the letter No. 1497/1054 of the Supreme Court, we note the remarks: “even if the running was as a result of violence and torture used by one of the family members, since this act could cause crimes like adultery and prostitutions as well, it is against the Sharia principles, therefore the act of running away from home is considered prohibited and prosecutable based on discretionary punishment.”

We strongly believe that the future of Afghan women and girls and women everywhere depends wholly on their protection and respect of their human rights. The daily violations and denial of fundamental human rights make these women particularly vulnerable. We are most vehemently opposed to these practices and urgently request the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council:

- Alert the international community about the situation and
- Remain vigilant in ensuring that the recommendations contained in the MANUA report be communicated to the Afghan government and
- Assure a national strategy for the implementation of the EVAW (Elimination of Violence against Women) law be put in place.

These concrete actions would be as a major step forward in the legal protection of women’s human rights in Afghanistan.

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EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMICS OF GENDER

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ENVIRONMENT

Jeannine de Boccard, International Council of Women

GENDER EQUALITY: ROLE OF MEN AND BOYS

David Fernandez-Puyana, Spanish Society on International Human Rights Law

HEALTH

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NUTRITION

Joanna Koch/ Myrna Lachenal
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PEACE

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Femmes Africa Solidarité /WILPF

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN and GIRLS

Hendrica Okondo/ Ely Pradervand
World YWCA/ WWSF

TASK FORCE ON RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL RIGHTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON GENDER EQUALITY

Berhane Raswork
Inter African Committee

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