

WOMEN'S FORUM ON AFGHANISTAN

Recommendations from Margot Wallstrom, Chair, on behalf of the Women's Forum on Afghanistan

I write on behalf of the Women's Forum on Afghanistan, an informal group of Afghan and global women leaders who met last month to think together about steps that can be taken to secure women's fundamental human rights in Afghanistan, including access to education, employment, and political participation. We believe that the immediate priority is getting humanitarian aid to the country quickly and efficiently, as well as providing financial support for the national education and health systems. We believe that the meaningful involvement of Afghan women, as decision makers, negotiators, project managers and direct recipients will be helpful to that end. As reaffirmed by Security Council Resolution 1325 more than twenty years ago, gender equality and women's empowerment is critical to international peace and security. Afghan women will help their country survive and thrive.

To help find practical ways in which to give these principles real meaning, we would like to make the following recommendations to the United Nations as well as donor countries who are now meeting to consider mechanisms for the delivery of aid to Afghanistan:

- 1. That decisions relating to the disbursement of funding in Afghanistan, including the funds raised from the recent pledging conference for Afghanistan, be made in close consultation with Afghan women leaders through a formal process established for that purpose, and that the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund's advisory board should be expanded to include representation of Afghan women leaders;*
- 2. That Afghan women-led organizations be given priority in the implementation of programs and aid delivery in the country; and*
- 3. That a Women's Advisory Panel on Afghanistan comprised of Afghan and global women leaders be established by the Secretary-General, supported by DPPA and UN Women, to advise him and UN agencies and donors on UN engagement in Afghanistan as it impacts Afghan women and girls.*

Our forum is comprised of talented women from many countries and many walks of life. We stand ready to work with you to find innovative ways to help the UN and the international community do a better job of translating the widely accepted principle of women's participation at the highest levels of decision-making into concrete action in the context of Afghanistan.