PRESS RELEASE

BALLOT MATERIALS BEGIN ARRIVING IN AFGHAN PROVINCES

August 10, 2005

The challenging task of transporting ballot materials to polling stations across Afghanistan has started, announced the JEMB on August 10. Badakhshan is the first province to have its ballot papers delivered for the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections being held on September 18.

“The size of the distribution challenge we face is ten times bigger than last years presidential elections, due to twice as many ballot papers being required, the large size of these ballot papers, and the fact that more Polling Stations, over 26,000, are being opened for the 2005 election.

“Our distribution network has been tested in the previous stages of the operation – the Candidate Nomination Period and the Voter Registry Update Period, both of which were conducted without logistical problems. Despite the challenge, we are sure that all of the polling materials will be in place for election day” said Bissmillah Bissmil, Chairman of the Joint Electoral Management Body.

The first materials have already started arriving in Afghanistan’s more remote provinces as part of a rolling programme of distribution and 20 per cent of non sensitive materials such as furniture are already in place. 40 million ballot papers, weighing over 1142 tonnes, and 135 000 ballot boxes will be delivered across Afghanistan in time for polling day.

In addition 140 000 bottles of voter marking ink are being flown in from Canada. The ink will be used to mark the finger of each voter to prevent multiple voting.

The distribution plan includes the use of cargo planes, helicopters and trucks, and in remote regions the use of donkeys. In some places JEMBS staff will be required to walk for several days in order to deliver materials to remote Polling Centres.

Mr Bissmil added: “We have plans in place for every phase of our distribution process and are coordinating our efforts closely with the Afghan National Police and Army to ensure that all ballot materials are in place and secure in time for polling day, allowing all Afghans to have their say in deciding the future of our country on polling day”

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