PRESS RELEASE

SEATS FOR WOMEN IN THE WOLESI JIRGA AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS

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Afghan women have been assured of a significant voice in the future of Afghanistan through the distribution of seats in the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly) and Provincial Councils. Elections for these bodies will be held concurrently on September 18, 2005.

More than one quarter of seats on the Wolesi Jirga and the 34 Provincial Councils have been reserved for women. Of the Wolesi Jirga’s 249 seats, 68 seats are set aside for women, in accordance with the Constitution and Electoral Law. Three of the 68 seats are reserved for Kuchi (nomad) women.

The Joint Electoral Management Body has distributed the remaining 65 reserved women’s seats in the Wolesi Jirga among the 34 provinces (constituencies) in direct proportion to their estimated population size, subject to a one-seat minimum per province.

The number of seats on each Provincial Council set aside for women ranges from 3 to 8.

The attached table lists seat distributions for the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Councils.

“The women of Afghanistan deserve a strong place in our law-making institutions. We want to hear our women’s voices, we want them to have a say in the drafting of our laws. Our women have much to contribute in deciding the future rules and policies of our society,” said the Chairman of the Joint Electoral Management Body, Bissmillah Bisimil.

“For too long our women have been silenced,” said JEMB Commissioner Momena Yari, one of four women on the 13-person JEMB. “This is your chance to raise your voice and be heard. I earnestly encourage you to seize this chance and stand for office.”

Since the launch of the three-week Candidate Nomination period on April 30, women have been turning up to JEMB offices from Khost and Nooristan in the east, to Baghlan in the north, Kandahar in the south and Ghor in the west to submit their nomination papers.

“Less than two weeks remain for anyone who wishes to run for office to submit their nomination papers,” said the JEMB Chairman. “These elections are for the men and women of Afghanistan. We have a responsibility to take this opportunity to have a say in the future laws of our land.”

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