PRESS RELEASE

POLLS OPEN ACROSS AFGHANISTAN

September 18

Polls opened across Afghanistan from 6.00 am Sunday, heralding the next major step in Afghanistan’s progress to democracy after a quarter century of conflict.

Almost 12.5 million registered voters may cast ballots at nearly 6,300 polling centres set up in all 398 districts of Afghanistan.

The Chairman of the Joint Electoral Management Body, Bissmillah Bissmil, urged Afghans to come forward to vote in a spirit of solidarity, as he opened polling at the Lycee Istiqlal school in central Kabul.

"On this momentous day in our land's history, I urge the men and women of Afghanistan to come out and vote," Mr Bissmil said.

"This election is for the Afghan people. By coming out to vote today, you will be playing a vital role in Afghanistan's progress to democracy."

"Every Afghan has a role to play in this step towards a peaceful future. Let us all act together in solidarity, to make this step to our democratic future smooth, peaceful and united."

The Chairman urged voters to cast their ballots early, to avoid queues later in the day.

Simultaneous elections are taking place for the 249-seat Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly) and 34 Provincial Councils.

Voters will cast two separate ballots each, one for the Wolesi Jirga and one for the Provincial Council in their province.

"Come out today and exercise your right to choose the representative you believe in. The choice is yours, and your choice is secret," the JEMB Chairman said.

Polling centre gates will close at 4.00pm.

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