PRESS RELEASE

JEMB CHAIRMAN URGES VOTERS TO HAVE THEIR SAY ON SEPTEMBER 18

September 12, 2005

In less than a week, 12.5 million Afghans will have their first opportunity in more than three decades to elect a national legislature and 34 Provincial Councils, and thereby complete Afghanistan's transition to democracy as mapped out by the Bonn peace process of December 2001.

Almost 5,800 candidates are contesting the elections on September 18, including 2,760 candidates for 249 seats on the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of National Assembly), and 3,016 candidates for a total of 420 seats on 34 Provincial Councils.

“In less than seven days’ time, you will have the opportunity to elect local representatives, from your area, to represent your interests in the national assembly and on your local provincial council,” the Chairman of the Joint Electoral Management Body, Bissmillah Bissmil said in a message to the Afghan electorate.

“This is your right, and your responsibility. When you mark your ballot papers next Sunday, you will be deciding who deserves to sit in the parliament, and on your local provincial council. You get to decide who deserves to represent you. Your choice is secret. No one will know who you vote for."

Voters must vote in the province listed on their Voter Registration card.

Around 6,270 Polling Centres containing around 26,240 Polling Stations will open at 6.00am across Afghanistan. Polling Centres will close their gates at 4.00pm, but voters already in queue will be able to continue waiting for their chance to vote.

Counting begins on September 20. Ballots will be counted in one Counting Centre per province. Ballots cast in Kunar and Nuristan will be counted in Nangarhar province.

On September 18, Afghan voters will mark two ballot papers each, one for the Wolesi Jirga and one for the Provincial Council in their province. A total of 69 separate ballots are being held on September 18: including 34 separate Wolesi Jirga ballots, 34 separate Provincial Council ballots, and a separate ballot for Kuchis (nomads), for whom 10 seats are reserved in the Wolesi Jirga.

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