SUMMARY OF JEMB PRESS BRIEFING ON
VOTER REGISTRATION UPDATE

KABUL DISTRICT 9, VRU CENTRE
June 29, 2005

Speakers:
JEMB Chairman Bissmillah Bissmil gave a progress report on the first four days of Voter Registration Update

JEMBS Chief of Operations Richard Atwood gave overview of VRU Operation

Attendance:
Around 25 reporters including:
Afghan TV (private);
Tolu TV;
AINA TV;
Television Afghanistan (state-run);
Hindu Kush Newsagency;
New York Times;
BBC Dari + Pashto;
VOA;
Ilhas Turkish Newsagency;
New York Times

Questions:
Questions included:
• What safeguards are there against people obtaining multiple VR cards?
• What happens to candidates who have already begun campaigning before the official campaign period?
• Can you conduct a successful election with this lack of security?

Materials Provided:
• Voter Registration Update chart
• Media Accreditation kit
• Backgrounders package containing Background Briefing, Table of Seats, Election Timeline

FULL TRANSCRIPT FOLLOWS

JEMB CHAIRMAN Bissmillah Bissmil:

Dear sisters and brothers of the press, I welcome you here today to one of the 18 Voter Registration Centers operating in our capital city, and thank-you for making the time to come and hear about the progress of the Voter Registration Update.

We are now in Day Five of the Voter Registration Update.

This is a four-week period, during which we are inviting Afghans to either ADD their name to the Voter Registry, or for those who have already Registered but, we are inviting them to CORRECT
the province listed on their Voter Registration card if they have moved to a new province since last year.

Ladies and gentlemen, the response is overwhelming.

In just the first FOUR days, 153,155 new Afghan voters added their names to the Voter Registry. Another 2,770 corrected the province on their card. As you know, this process will run until July 21. (30 Saratan)

I urge Afghans who have not yet registered to vote to come and sign up, to have your say in the forthcoming elections. Those who need to change the province listed on their card, do not waste time. Across Afghanistan, we have established 1,052 Voter Registration Stations in 720 locations, covering every district of Afghanistan

This includes 485 Female Voter Registration Stations, and 485 Male Voter Registration Stations, and 82 stations for Kuchis (nomads).

My fellow Afghans, these elections are for you. They will complete our land’s transition to democracy.

JEMBS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS Richard Atwood:

Good Morning and Welcome. JEMBS is very encouraged with the start of the voter registration update period. The registry update period is another key phase of the elections operation this year. The secretariat is pleased that it is started on time and in accordance to the electoral calendar approved by the Joint Electoral Management Body.

As the chairman said we are now in the fifth day of the voter registration and we are open in about 1030 registration station across all of Afghanistan’s districts. We are very encouraged with the turnout thus far. As the chairman said over the 18000 Afghans have used our registration facilities which I think indicates that our public outreach campaign has been successful and that Afghans are aware of this process.

Many Afghans have come to use the facilities both those that need new registration card that have not registered last year and those that need to change province name on their registration card. I would also add that I think it is important to note that if Afghans have registered last year and they have a registration card from presidential elections last year with the correct province on they do not to come this year to register. I would like to add that it is actually an electoral offense to own or to try and obtain two registration cards.

STATEMENTS END

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Question: In one of your press conferences you had mentioned that in provinces which have got more than 100 candidates the type of the ballot paper will be as a booklet and less for than 100 candidates there will be different ballot. Has this issue finalized or not?

JEMBS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS Richard Atwood: Yes the issue has been finalized, I think in general we will try and take questions about voter registry update but I will answer this question. You are right that the type of the ballot depends on the number of candidate of each province. The Joint Electoral Management Body Secretariat conducted extensive tests on focus groups with the number of different ballot types and the focus groups test showed that whether a large number of the candidates on the ballot the most effective type of ballot and the easiest to use was a booklet ballot. The Afghans in both rural and urban areas both literate and illiterate and both
men and women found that the ballot which open like a book for a large number of candidates was the easiest to use and allowed them to identify their candidates most quickly. JEMB has now decided that with a large number of candidates the ballot will be in a form of booklet.

**Question:** As you know that the parliamentary election is more complicated than the presidential elections and you will need to extend this process to the villages and district while the warlords still have weapons and they have not been disarmed and some of the candidates have been killed so what do you predict in terms of security will you be able to conduct this election successfully? And my second question is regarding the 16 candidate that have been removed from candidate list. Do you have any information regarding this issue?

**JEMBS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS Richard Atwood:** It is of course the Government of Afghanistan that is responsible for the security of the elections. The JEMBS security department is in constant lesion wit the government of Afghanistan and relevant ministries. While we do have some concerns regarding security we are competent that at the present the process is moving forward according to electoral calendar. There are a number of candidates across Afghanistan that will be taken from the provisional candidates list. The provisional candidate list will be published outside the JEMBS provincial offices between the 2nd and 7th of July. Candidates have been removed for a variety of reasons all will have the right to respond to the Electoral Complaint Commission.

**Question:** During the registration update period some of the people might go to the different registration centers and take more than one card what are your measures in order to avoid it? And what are your measures regarding the candidates that have already started their electoral campaign before the date that has been set by JEMB?

**JEMBS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS Richard Atwood:** As I mentioned before it is an offense to earn more than one registration card. It is Article 53 if the electoral law prevents people earning more than one card. I believe this is an important message that the Media of Afghanistan can help us put out to people. If people know that some one has taken more than one card they are welcome to submit complaints against them to the Electoral Complaint Commission. People must be aware that this is an offense to take more than one registration card on Elections Day of course we will ink voters fingers with a very strong permanent ink so they will not be out to vote twice in any case. The Electoral campaign starts 30 days before election day. I should specify lasts for 30 days finishes 48 hours before voting. We have an independent Elections Complaint Commission (ECC) this year and the electoral offenses belong to them.

ENDS