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INDIA OFFERS COOPERATION AT ROME CONFERENCE ON JUSTICE AND RULE OF LAW

President Karzai with heads of delegations at the Rome Conference.

At the Conference on Justice and Rule of Law in Afghanistan, held in Rome on July 2 and 3, the Indian delegation was led by Shri Prakash Jaiswal, Minister of State (MOS) for Home Affairs and included Rajiv Dogra, Indian Ambassador to Italy; Rakesh Sood, Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan; V.N. Gaur, Joint Secretary (Police), Ministry of Home Affairs; and Smita Pant, Under Secretary dealing with Afghanistan in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi.

The conference, co-hosted jointly by Afghanistan, Italy and the United Nations, reaffirmed the crucial importance of the reform of justice sector and the implementation of the rule of law for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, while recognising that without justice and the rule of law no sustainable security, stabilisation, economic development and human rights could be achieved.

The conference delegates concurred that the rule of law reform and the coordinated support by the international community will be implemented through a National Justice

Programme, including short, medium and long-term implementation, to be funded in significant part through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

Although the conference was not intended to be a pledging conference, donors took the opportunity to make new announcements adding an additional amount of about \$360 million (some of which are multi-year pledges) to support short-term projects, and with commitment to consider further funds to implement the National Justice Programme.

Donor countries also committed themselves to a coordinated approach at central level and provincial level through the establishment of a Provincial Justice Coordination Mechanism.

In his speech at the conference, Minister of State Shri Prakash Jaiswal, elaborated that, to date, India had imparted training programmes under Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)'s scholarship scheme as well as the Indian Technical Economic Cooperation programme in the field of justice covering legal education, office

management, IT, English proficiency and intellectual property rights. The objective was to enhance human capacity development in Afghanistan, which is vital for institution building in Afghanistan. In the past, India has also trained Afghan judges and lawyers at the Indian Law Institute.

MoS Jaiswal also announced that India would be willing to consider further training programmes and technical assistance in the justice and legal sectors in established Indian law institutes, given India's vast experience in this field and the complementarities with Afghanistan's own conditions. In a joint India-Afghanistan-UNDP programme, India was also proposing to depute experienced coaches and mentors in Afghan institutions for capacity development in the justice sector.

This would be in keeping with President Karzai's vision of providing a multi-faceted regional dimension to the reconstruction work being undertaken in Afghanistan, which would have greater situational complementarities, besides being more cost effective. ■

Excerpts from the statement of Head of Indian delegation

■ The Rome Conference offers a vital platform for Afghanistan and the international community to come together for consolidating our efforts and committing to a comprehensive, broad-based vision of rule of law reforms that will address Afghanistan's needs in a holistic manner. Concrete decisions on these at this conference can, indeed, lead to an integrated, strategic plan for justice that can produce improved coordination, efficiency and cost effectiveness in this sector.

■ India remains firmly committed to the comprehensive justice and rule of law reform process in Afghanistan. A well-functioning professional justice sector, together with reforms in all other sectors, indeed, has the potential to strengthen the reconstruction effort and ushering in the much needed long-term stability in Afghanistan.

■ India's commitment to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan remains unflinching. Our \$750 million partnership today embraces a multi-dimensional co-operation programme being undertaken in virtually all parts of Afghanistan covering almost all sectors including justice, education, health, telecommunications, transport and civil aviation, agriculture and irrigation, industry, power generation and transmission, information and broadcasting, as well as human resource development. Our diverse assistance programme is in total alignment with the Afghan priorities and implemented in close coordination with the Afghan stakeholders, with focus on local ownership.

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