Civilian Protection Group (CPG)

Press Release

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Afghanistan is at a crossroads with challenging political, economic and security transitions underway. The mission of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has ended after eleven years; the successor mission Resolute Support is significantly smaller in scope and size. The main responsibility for the country's security is handed over to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). To cope with these challenges, the newly established Unity Government needs coordination and cooperation with the international community, regional stakeholders and especially with civil society organizations from within the Afghan society. The latter is particularly important in order to address the protection of civilians, which has become a growing concern throughout the country over the recent years.

In light of this, a number of Afghan civil society organizations have formed the *Civilian Protection Group* (CPG) to advocate for the rights and protection of civilians in close cooperation with the *Afghanistan Protection Cluster* of the UN family. The primary goal of this initiative is to create awareness, to sensitize and to engender responsiveness to issues concerning the protection and human security of every single Afghan civilian, regardless of age, gender, socio-economic, religious or ethnic background. Moreover, it aims to ensure that Afghan voices, in particular the rural ones, are heard in policy-making processes on protection issues. In order to accomplish this goal, the *Civilian Protection Group* builds on evidence-based research and uses policy briefs as tools to advocate issues of concern with the National Unity Government and the international community.

The group consists of civil society organizations and NGO representatives that have experience and expertise in work and advocacy for human rights protection and environmental protection but also in the areas of capacity building and peace building. The member organizations have been active for many years and throughout the country.

The key protection concerns the group wants to address go beyond physical security and include socio-economic conditions, social service delivery (healthcare, education etc.), environmental protection and corruption in government institutions, including the justice sector.

Our priority is advocacy for the rights of youth, displaced persons, the poor, women, as well as of of people with disabilities. Our aim is to amplify their voices in policy-making processes on protection issues by the Afghan government and other national or international stakeholders.

The present condition requires informed advocacy. We believe that the formation of the *Civilian Protection Group* is a significant step towards coordinating and improving protection efforts.

We request all interested organizations, which share our concerns about the protection of civilians to participate in this joint effort, so that the vital issue of civilian/social protection regains its place in the life of Afghans.