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RETURN

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UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation –2003

Neighbouring Countries:

Returnees have the free choice of either returning to their village (location of origin) or to any other place in Afghanistan – but not to the IDP camps.

Iris Validation Centres: All refugees returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan with **UNHCR** assistance will have to go through an iris machine, a computer-based technology that examines the eye and can detect if someone has been tested before. The machine does not take the picture of the eye, but registers a number that's similar to fingerprint. Iris Recognition Centres are located at **Hayatabad** in **Peshawar**, **Alizai** in **Kurram Agency, Balochistan** (in **Chaman** for refugees returning from **camps** and **Karachi**, and in **Baleli** for those returning from urban areas in the province), and in **Khost** in Afghanistan.

Returnees who want to receive the **UNHCR** assistance package have to go through the Iris screening, otherwise they will not receive their entitlements. Returnees are advised to have their **VRFs** with them while travelling in the host country and Afghanistan. Anyone who is discovered to have received assistance before will not receive assistance.

Single returnees will have to join other single returnees or families to make a minimum distribution unit.

Note: The entire family will be checked against the VRFs at the encashment centre.

Returnees should not approach just any Distribution Centre, but only the one marked on their VRFs, otherwise they will not receive assistance.



Closing of a Scheduling Centre: The scheduling centre at **Shinwari Sarai**, in Dalazak Road, Peshawar, will be closed permanently at the end of July, 2003.

Transport Assistance: Returnees will receive cash assistance at the following encashment centres in Afghanistan located in **Pul-I-Charkhi, Ghazni, Mohmand Dara, Zaranj, Daman, Mazar-I-Sharif, Pul-I-Khumri, Kunduz, Herat, Gardez** and **Khost**. The DC's in **Mazar** and **Kunduz** are assisting only the returnees from the Central Asian republics – those returning to northern provinces (**Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan**, etc) should receive their entitlements at the first EC or in **Pul-I-Khumri**.

Note: Please be advised that the working hours at **Pul-I-Charkhi** encashment centre is from 0800 in the morning to 1400 in the afternoon. The returnees arriving after 1400 hrs. will not receive their entitlement on that day, and the next day only the head of the household should go to the centre to receive the assistance (cash, food and non-food items).

Note: Pul-e-Charkhi encashment centre will be closed on Saturdays as of August 11, 2003.

Properly filled, signed and stamped VRFs will be valid for seven days for returnees from both Iran and Pakistan; for the returnees from Pakistan, from the day they leave the Iris Scan Centre, and for returnees from Iran, from the day they leave the registration centre, and arrive at the encashment centre inside Afghanistan.

Depending on final destination in Afghanistan, each family member will receive between 3-30 dollars, and is limited to 7 persons per family. Children under 12 months of age (less than one year) will receive only half of the amount given to other members of the family. Returnees from Karachi and Lahore will receive an additional 5 dollars per person at the first encashment centre.

Returnees from camps in Pakistan will receive 5 dollars per family in addition to the established amount if they transport construction material only from their dismantled houses. The transportation of construction material will be certified by a special note made on the VRF at the Registration point in Pakistan

Note: The Returnees' personal belongings are exempt from all customs duties. But please note that returnees neither can take commercial amounts of any item nor can they export the governments proscribed items. Returnees should also advise their truck drivers not to carry business goods on returnee trucks in order to avoid delay at the border and undesired consequences at the customs.

Working Days: The UNHCR-assisted repatriation operation in Pakistan will run from Sunday to Thursday. There will be no UNHCR-assisted repatriation on Friday and Saturday. In Iran, the operation will run from Saturday to Thursday. There will be no operation on Friday.

Note: All refugee students must have their school certificates stamped by Afghan embassies/consulates before returning to Afghanistan. According to a directive issued by the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry its missions in the region they should NOT charge



validation/stamping fees on academic certificates of repatriating Afghan students. Those graduates who want to work as teachers in Afghanistan should also have their documents stamped by Afghan embassies/consulates.

Messages to women:

1. The Ministry of Public Health has urgent need of women health professionals in all provinces of the country. Women with interest in professional training as nurses, midwives and community health workers are advised to register their interest with Departments of Public Health or of Women's Affairs at provincial level, so that they can be contacted when opportunities arise.
2. Tetanus (TT) vaccination campaign for women between 15 – 45 years of age is ongoing inside Afghanistan. All women returnees who have been vaccinated against TT are advised to keep the records - before they return.
3. Refugee Women are advised to seek professional training in safe delivery, early infant care, nutrition, and hygiene, 'first aid', emergency medical care, or as a midwife/auxiliary nurse.
4. They are advised to bring educational certificates, including courses they have taken.
5. Single women should link with a family for the journey and identify themselves immediately on arrival.

Shelter:

To help returnees in their initial phase of reintegration, the UNHCR is providing shelter for 60,000 families in 2003. The shelter project is NOT for every returnee family but only for the most vulnerable, who have been identified from returning IDPs and refugees, as well as the returnee receiving communities. The beneficiaries are selected with the help of local Shuras, local authorities and UNHCR partners. They have to build the shelter on their own land or property, in their places of origin. Shelter (a standard two-room, one corridor and one latrine unit) programme is self-help assistance, and while building material (timbers, lintels, doors, windows and tool kits) is provided by UNHCR, the beneficiaries are responsible for the construction work. The recipients are also entitled to a sum of money or food for work for standard and domed type shelters.

Important Message: Refugees prior to their voluntary return should note that:

1. Shelter programme is only for the most vulnerable.
2. UNHCR shelter programme is not for every returnee family
3. The conditions for benefiting from the shelter project are; for the returnees to be in their village of origin, be identified through the help of local Shuras and UNHCR partners, and to build the shelter on their own land or property.

Decree

The President of the Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan issued a decree on July 15th, 2003, on the convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, which is to be in October 2003. The following is a summary of the decree:



Taking into account the history and national traditions of Afghans and in accordance with the Bonn Agreement, the Loya Jirga of the people of Afghanistan for the adoption of the constitution shall be called and convened in the city of Kabul.

Composition and number of members: The Constitutional Loya Jirga will have 500 members. Four hundred and fifty members will be elected, and 50 members will be appointed by the President.

Of the elected 450 members:

1. 344 people will be elected through secret ballot by the 15,000 district representatives, who were chosen during the Emergency Loya Jirga in May 2002.
2. 42 members will be elected by refugees in Pakistan and Iran, IDPs, Kuchis, Hindus and Sikhs. 15% of these should be women.
3. 64 women members will be elected by women representatives in the 32 provinces.

Of the 50 members appointed by the President: 25 of them will be eligible women, and 25 will be legal scholars, constitution specialists and other experts.

In addition, the following personalities will be invited to the Loya Jirga as observers:

- Members of the cabinet of the ITSA (33 persons)
- Chief of the Supreme Court (1 person)
- Chairman and members of the Constitutional Commission (35 persons)
- The chairpersons of the Judicial Reform Commission and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (2 persons)

The observer members do not have the right to vote and express their views during the proceedings of the Constitutional Loya Jirga unless they are asked specific questions or requested to give explanations by the Loya Jirga members.

Other senior government officials including governors, deputy governors, district administrators, mayors, army, police and National Security Directorate personnel are not eligible to participate in the Constitutional Loya Jirga.

Security for the elections: In order to ensure full security, the Afghan Ministry of Interior shall take comprehensive security measures and designate a special security unit. This unit shall carry out its duties in close co-ordination with the Secretariat of the Constitutional Commission.

Providing security for provincial and regional gatherings and transportation of members to election centres and the venue of the holding of the Loya Jirga is the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior and the designated unit. The unit will receive adequate professional training, including orientation about election management with the co-operation of the Secretariat of the Constitutional Commission.



Afghanistan Constitution

Introduction: Constitution is the state law, that contains the fundamental laws and principles with which all other laws must conform. The first constitution in Afghanistan, called 'Nizam Nama Assasi', went into force in 1923, during the reign of King Amanulla Khan Ghazi. Since then, 4 other constitutions have been ratified by a Loya Jirga. There were no public consultations for the drafting of these constitutions.

Ms. Shukria Barekzai, a Constitution Commission member said that for the first time in Afghanistan's history a consensual constitution, which will reflect the beliefs, culture, ethnic composition, faith and wishes of the Afghan nation, is being drafted.

Constitution Process: The Constitution Commission was established on Oct. 5th, 2002 (13 Mizan 1381) in accordance with the Bonn Agreement (December 2001). The duty of the nine- member body was the drafting of the constitution. After completing its task this commission was replaced by the Reviewing Commission on May 3rd, 2003, with 35 members, including 7 women. The responsibilities of the Commission included conducting public awareness campaigns, and soliciting public opinions regarding the content of the constitution, through consultations and questionnaires inside and outside Afghanistan.

The Constitution set up eight sub-offices in Jalalabad, Herat, Kunduz, Kabul, Gardez, Kandahar, Mazar and Bamyan as well as in Peshawar and Quetta (Pakistan), and in Tehran and Mashhad (Iran).

The representatives, the ex participants of the Emergency Loya Girga, were selected by UNAMA as representatives during this process. The process is being monitored by UNAMA and is funded by UNDP.

Public Awareness Campaigns: In addition to using all media outlets including local and international radio and TV programmes, as well as distributing leaflets and posters, the Commission also issues a publication, called 'Assasi Qanoon' to inform the public of the purpose and procedures of its activities.

Public Consultations: Teams from Kabul and regional offices have visited different locations in Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan and Iran, and have held discussions with tribal elders, ulema, women, members of emergency Loya Jirga, business people, academics, professionals, youths, Afghan members of National and International NGOs. The public consultation process has been nearly completed, and most of the questionnaires and other written views have been received.

Female members of the constitution teams separately consult women on their views. Participants, men and women regardless of their origin, ethnicity, religion, belief and political affiliations are



able to express themselves freely and openly on major constitutional issues and the type of constitution they want in Afghanistan.

Shokria Barekzai, a member of Constitution Commission, said she would also conduct two consultation sessions with Afghan refugees in the USA .

After the completion of public consultations and incorporating them into the draft constitution, the Commission will publish the draft by August 6th 2003, and the Commission's members will go back to the people, including Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, to collect their comments on the draft.

The process will end by September 2003, and the Loya Girga is to be convened on the 1st of October 2003. The Loya Girga will consist of 500 participants including 24 refugee representatives (8 women) from Iran and Pakistan, as well as 6 IDP representatives and 9 Kuchis (Nomads). It will have 25 days to prepare the final draft of the new constitution.

Central Provinces:

The Constitution Commission in Kabul divided the region into zones for better and more organised facilitation of visits by the constitution teams. The central provinces are included in Kabul Zone, which covers Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Logar and Wardak provinces. After the Commission was officially inaugurated in Kabul, the representatives for each of the mentioned provinces underwent training to learn ways and means of facilitating public consultations. They were responsible for identifying venues for consultation gatherings and conducting public awareness campaigns to inform the people of the process. They had discussions with various groups of people including women.

The public consultation process lasted about a week in each province, depending on the size of the population. The process has almost been completed, but the questionnaires distributed to various groups and individuals will continue to be received until the end of July, 2003.

In the Central region, so far 25,000 people have participated in consultation gatherings, and more than 50,000 questionnaires have been distributed.

Bamyan Province:

Bamyan, though a central province, is not included in the Kabul Zone. The public consultation process in Bamyan is ongoing and constitution teams have visited the centre of Bamyan, Shibar, Saighan and Yakawlang. The visit to Kahmard was delayed due to the blockage of roads following heavy rains. By the third week of July, 38 consultation gatherings had taken place in Bamyan with approximately 4,000 participants.

Public Opinion: During consultations in the central region, participants expressed their main concerns as:

- A great majority wanted a republic, which would enshrine all fundamental tenets of Islam.
- Ensure social justice, equal employment opportunities for all the tribes and the populations of various areas.



- Ensure women's rights, including better education opportunities.
- A government that will pay attention to the welfare of those living in remote areas of Afghanistan, and that it will try to solve their problems.
- Women groups also wanted provisions of healthcare for women and children to be included in the constitution.
- The young people wanted better education opportunities, especially higher education, for all ethnic groups without discrimination. They also demanded freedom of expression.
- Kuchis want a clear policy regarding their lives, their demand for land and having equal rights as other Afghans.
- Afghans with dual nationalities wanted to be able to retain their Afghan nationality.

Northern Region:

The Regional Office of constitution officially started its activities in Mazar-I-Sharif on June 3rd, but the public information campaign regarding the process had started in May, in Balkh, Samangan, Sar-I-Pul, Jawzjan and Faryab provinces. Posters and leaflets and other means of information dissemination have been used to inform the public of the process. Mailboxes have been installed in public centres such as mosques, the Department of Education, Balkh University, offices, etc., to receive people's written comments.

The public has welcomed the exercise, as this is the first time they are able to take an active role in a very important national process, and they hope that the new constitution would be a national document rather than a factional one.

People's Views: Some people favour a federal system, which they believe could eliminate tensions among various ethnic/religious/political factions, but the majority want a democratic system, with citizens having the right to choose their representatives to government/parliament.

Southern Region:

Preparations for constitution process in southern provinces started in the beginning June 2003, with the establishment of a regional office in Kandahar with 7 staff, as well as one representative for each province; Uruzgan, Zabol, Hilmand and Nimroz.

The 3-member Consultative Group arrived in Kandahar from Kabul on June 23rd, in order to guide and assess the process in the region.

The main activities of Regional Office for Constitution are:

- To organise the meetings and to define the constitution process and to explain its essence, significance and requirements.
- To hear/collect the opinions and suggestions of the people, and to submit the outcome to the Constitution Commission in Kabul.
- To distribute questionnaires.
- To collect the filled out questionnaires and send them to Kabul.

The members of Regional Office together with 1 or 2 members of Constitution Commission (who came from Kabul), as well as representative from UNAMA and the Human Rights Commission had several meetings with representatives of different groups, such as educated individuals, religious leaders, community elders, government employees, traders, farmers,



workers, etc., in the centres and various districts of Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, Hilmand and Nimroz provinces.

Similar meetings were organised for women in the region with the exception of Uruzgan province. A considerable number of women took part in these meetings, notably in Kandahar and Hilmand. The discussions were mainly concentrated on human rights (especially women's rights). Most women insisted on the disarmament and the quick establishment of the National Army in the region, which would ensure the smooth application of the constitution and protection of human rights.

People's Views: Most people consulted were in favour of the monarchy.

A total of 39,000 questionnaires were distributed in southern provinces, and more than 30% of the questionnaires have already been submitted to Kabul.

According to the Regional Office, the local authorities in the region have provided full assistance in organising and facilitating the meetings, and the local media have helped in informing the people of the procedures and developments regarding the process.

Salaries for staff members of Regional Office (US\$ 200 to 400) and logistical assistance, such vehicles, fuel, etc is provided by UNAMA.

Concerns: The Regional Office was concerned that because of school holidays, they were not able to hold more meetings with women. Some people also complained that compared to other regions in the country, fewer questionnaires had been allocated to the Southern Region.

South-Eastern Region:

The Regional Office of the Constitution Commission in South-eastern region officially started its work in Gardez on 13th May 2003.

Public Consultation: Public Consultations in Paktia and Khost started on 10th and continued until 25 June 2003. The Regional Office organised 14 meetings in Paktia and 15 meetings in Khost Provinces, with support and participation of UNAMA in all gatherings. Similarly, 19 meetings were held in Ghazni: 10 meetings in the provincial centre and 9 meetings in the surrounding districts (except for Ajiristan and Zana Khan), and 6 were organised in Paktika province.

The constitution representatives met with tribal elders, members of local shuras, women, military and police representatives, government departments and employees, religious leaders Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ) delegates, academics, students, intellectuals and ordinary people throughout the region.

Public Awareness Campaign: local radios in Gardez and Khost, and local newspapers and magazines took part in informing people of the process.



Public Opinions: About 90% of the people seem to be in favour of the monarchy, and most of the remaining 10% want an Islamic Republic. All those consulted rejected a federal system. Most people in Ghazni were in favour of a secular system of government.

All Hazaras consulted rejected the monarchy and called for an Islamic Republic with a one or two chamber(s)/elected parliament.

In Paktika province, about 55% people favour an Islamic republic, 30% monarchy.

Religion: All the people stressed that Islam should play a key role in the new constitution, with "Hanafi" to be recognised as the only source of Islamic laws. All Hazaras emphasised the need to either recognise both the Jafari fiqr and the Hanafi, or mention neither in the new constitution..

Human Rights: Most speakers emphasised on Human Rights and other international norms and principles unless they were in contradiction with Islam and Afghan culture. They also wanted freedom of speech, freedom of press and democracy.

Women's Rights: A surprising number of men publicly voiced their concern about the way that women are being treated in their area. They called for women to be granted the rights bestowed upon them by Islam. It was emphasised that women need better education (free and obligatory), health care and, more generally, development and economic opportunities.

Tribal System: Many of the participants stressed the need for the government to recognise and respect the tribal systems in the area.

Pashtunistan: The Pashtunistan issue was also high on the people's agenda, demanding that it be enshrined in the new constitution.

National Army and Police: A key demand shared by all groups was for the ANA and national police to be non-political, neutral and ethnically and regionally balanced.

Minority Rights: Another demand was to enshrine minority rights in the Constitution.

Intellectuals: Intellectuals called for democracy, freedom of speech, as well as a balance between secular and religious influences.

Eastern Region:

The office of the Constitution Commission in the eastern zone was established with 10 staff members in Jalalabad, the capital city of Nangarhar province, on 7th April 2003. The representatives were sent to Kunar, Laghman and Nooristan provinces to select locations for the public gatherings and inform the people of the consultation process.

Public Information Campaigns: The Commission launched a public awareness campaign prior and during the holding of consultation gatherings:



- Distribution of the Commission's monthly publication, "Asasi Qanoon" printed in Dari and Pashto. This publication contains all relevant information about the constitution commission and constitution procedures.
- Distribution of posters and leaflets containing additional information on the working procedures of the Commission.
- Using various media outlets, including radio and TV programmes of national and international radios.

Public Consultations: The public consultations started on June 10th in Laghman and later in Kunar, Nangarhar and Nooristan provinces. The consultation phase has been completed in all these provinces. 17,000 people participated in 46 gatherings and 15,000 questionnaires distributed throughout the eastern region. The last day for receiving filled questionnaires was July 31st, 2003.

People's Views: During consultation gatherings the participants expressed the following views:

- They wanted an Islamic Government.
- They wanted the 'Hanafi' Islam to be the official religion of the country.
- They were in favour of "Pashto" as the national language and "Pashto" and "Dari" as official languages.
- They favour a "Wolisi Jirga" system not a parliamentary one.
- They want the president to be elected by direct vote of the people.
- Primary education should be in mother tongue in each area, and secondary and higher education in both Pashto and Dari.
- They want the Disarmament process to be completed before the adoption of the Constitution.

Western Region:

Three members of the Reviewing Committee were assigned to set up the regional offices of the constitution in Herat and three other provinces; Farah, Ghor and Badghis. The first office was established in Herat on May 19th, 2003, and later in other areas. Of the three members one is a woman. The Constitution Commission's regional office in Herat recruited some of the needed staff to establish networks for further activities.

United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) was functioning as the observer in the public consultation process in western areas.

Public Awareness Campaign: The first step of the constitution offices in the region was a public information campaign to inform the people of the objective and procedure of the process and consultation gatherings, where the public could express their views on what should be included in the new constitution.

The teams visited and held talks, over a period of two months, with various groups, including government officials, universities, local shuras, madrassas, schools (male and female), UN offices, NGOs, (Local & International) in each province.



During the public awareness campaign a joint visit comprising one representative of DoRR and one representative of the Constitution Commission office also met the IDP leaders to inform them of the constitution review process. They also distributed information leaflets and posters in different IDP camps.

The NGOs AREA and CHA were part of the public awareness process in western region. AREA covered Herat and Badghis and CHA covered Ghor and Farah provinces. The Swiss Peace Fund (SPF) funded the two NGOs activities and the constitution office provided stationary for staff training.

Other Channels of Information: All media channels; newspapers, radio and TV were used to inform the public of the various stages of the process. In Ghor, where there is no TV or radio, loudspeakers were installed in different parts of the city, and in districts mosques were the means of informing villagers.

Consultation Gatherings: Each constitution office in the region held meetings with local authorities and prominent individuals to come up with modalities and a plan to carry out public consultation exercise. Those involved included the deputy Governor of Herat, Sunni and Shia clergymen, the head of Herat Professional Shura, as well as representatives of National Islamic Solidarity Shura, Education authorities such as head of Herat University and heads of government departments, including the head of Department of Women's affairs, head of Supreme Court, and other cultural and social associations. The aim was to build direct contact with different categories of people. District administrations, elders and Mullahs were informed and meetings at district and village level were organised.

Distribution of Questionnaires: The questionnaires have been distributed to the public, including IDP camps, but not all of the filled questionnaires have reached the constitution office. People had the choice of filling the forms either in groups or individually. There was public interest and enthusiasm to participate in the process after 23 years of war. One interviewer- a civil servant- said; "we want to help the effectiveness of this exercise". "We are sure and hopeful that God will reward us success, and we will have peace in our country after the constitution has been adopted", said a prayer in Herat's Grand Mosque. A teacher said: "the world will not recognise us unless we have a constitution approved by the people of Afghanistan.

Public Opinion: People express optimism about the actual implementation of the constitution. Their main desire is that the constitution be based on Islamic laws, and should not be adopted from the constitution of other countries.

Constitution Consultations – Pakistan

Islamabad:

The Constitution delegation arrived in Islamabad during the first week of July to conduct consultations on constitution with various Afghan refugee settlements in the area, including Kacchi Abadis, G-10 Markaz, G-9 Markaz and F-10 Markaz.



Peshawar:

The Constitution delegation arrived in Peshawar on June 24th, and opened their office at the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar to hold public awareness campaign with the participation of a large number of Afghan writers, media people and community elders. This was followed by holding press conferences and several visits to various camps in and around Peshawar. They met the refugee elders and informed them about the process of the drafting of the new constitution. The team also visited schools and various educational and cultural organisations.

Public Consultations team spent 50 days in Peshawar holding meetings with refugees in the camps as well as refugees in urban areas.

Public Opinion: During these gatherings the participants raised the following issues:

- Why the draft constitution was not available for public discussions.
- The conditions are not suitable for venturing into such an important and sensitive task, and that while the country is currently run under the 1964 (1343), the drafting of a new constitution could have waited until there was an elected parliament in Afghanistan.

Quetta:

The Commission set up an office in Quetta, and began its work on July 1st with the distribution of questionnaires, which had 32 questions on different aspects of the new constitution.

The Quetta Constitution Office visited Afghan refugees at different locations in Balochistan, throughout July, to consult Afghan refugees. The collection of written comments and questionnaires will be collected until the end of July and will be sent to Kabul.

The Afghan groups in Quetta were quite happy with the work of the Constitution Office. Afghan Teachers Association members said that when the questionnaire were being prepared, they had been consulted by Kabul and their views on 12 questions in the questionnaires were accepted and were altered accordingly. Some were waiting to see whether their comments would be incorporated into the draft constitution.

The Quetta Constitution Office is also recording voices of different Afghan refugees on tape and sending it to Kabul.

Constitution Process - Iran

The Afghan Constitution Commission's representatives visited Iran for 17 days to meet with the Afghan refugees and receive their comments on the draft of the constitution.

During their stay in Tehran, the representatives attended public meetings and met with the staff of Afghan Embassy, Loya Jirga members, students, political, social and national personalities, teachers and heads of private schools (men and women) in different locations in Tehran. They also met with the educated individuals, civilians, community elders, prominent ethnic (Pashtoun, Uzbek, Hazara, and Tajik) leaders, Afghan merchants and businessmen in Shahr-e Ray, Saveh, Karaj, Varamin and Semnan Camps.



Similar meetings were held in Mashad (where the Constitution Commission opened its office on May 22), and other parts of Khorasan province, as well as in SHIRAZ, ESFAHAN and QOM. Due to lack of time the representative could not visit Yazd, Kashan and some other locations, but questionnaires were distributed to the Afghans for comments and suggestions.

In Iran's Sistan and Balochistan province representatives of the Constitution Commission travelled to Zabol, Niatak and Zahedan on 12-14 July 2003, and met with the Afghan communities and briefed them on the procedures for the preparation and ratification of the draft constitution. A large number of questionnaires and survey forms were also distributed in the region.

According to the head of Constitution Commission, a constitution office will be established in Zahedan, which will continue its work of informing Afghan refugees of the constitution process and to hold consultations with them.

Thousands of filled survey forms from Sistan and Balochistan province have already been collected, which is quite surprising considering the low rate of literacy among the Afghans in the area.

Representatives of the Constitution Commission organised special gathering for women, and comments and opinions of the participants were collected.

General Feedback: There was an overwhelming wish for a republic, disarmament as a priority for the national unity, and the adoption of a new constitution. There were concerns regarding the legal status and rights of ethnic and religious minorities, women's rights, literacy and education, role of Islam, human rights situation, freedom of the press and roles of civil institutions in Afghanistan.

UNHCR/BBC Radio Programme: There is a joint BBC/UNHCR radio programme specifically aimed at Afghan refugees, IDPs and returnees. The programme deals with the situation in Afghanistan, including security, development activities of the Afghan government, United Nations and other aid agencies, and the difficulties that the Afghans, especially returnees, are facing. The BBC radio programme is part of UNHCR's efforts to provide an accurate account of the situation in Afghanistan to those wishing to return home, and to offer a forum for a wider debate on all aspects of repatriation and reintegration.

The programme is broadcast from Saturday to Wednesday (5 Days a week):

- 1st edition: 0730 to 800 GMT = 1100 to 1130 Iran time, 1200 to 1230 Afghan time, and 1230 to 1300 Pakistan time.
- 2nd edition: 12.00 to 1230 GMT = 1530 to 1600 Iran time, 1630 to 1700 Afghan time and 1700 to 1730 Pakistan time.

The programmes are broadcast on Short wave frequencies of 15420 kHz (19-meter band, and 17870 kHz (16-meter band).



The programme has a section for the listeners' letters. If you have any comments or questions please write to the following addresses. The BBC will include them in the programme:

- Afghanistan: BBC, Post Box No. 1, Central Post Office, Kabul, Afghanistan.
- Pakistan: BBC, Post Box 255, University Town, Peshawar, Pakistan.
- Iran: UNHCR (BBC) – P.O.Box No. 91775 – 1876, Mashhad, Iran.

UNHCR/ARTV Radio Programme: UNHCR has also a joint radio programme with Afghanistan Radio and TV, "Coming Home", as part of its mass Information efforts. The programme is broadcast on Sundays and Fridays (2 days a week) at 9:00pm for 30 minutes in Dari and Pashto languages.

For More Information Contact
Solmaz Dabiri on (0093) 070276000, E-mail: DABIRI@unhcr.org