

**International Women's Day Message**  
**by Dr. Sima Samar, Deputy Prime Minister and**  
**Minister for Women's Affairs, Afghanistan**  
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**Afghan Women Today: Realities and Opportunities**

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As we celebrate International Women's Day in Kabul and throughout the world, the future of women in Afghanistan has a long way to go. Afghan women finally may be able to regain our rights. Afghanistan may at long last have a chance for a peaceful, democratic future. The long darkness for the women and girls of our country may finally be over. But to reach this goal, a lot of resources and support are needed.

As Minister for Women's Affairs, I hope that I will be able to heal some of the wounds of Afghan women. As always, the main losers of the foreign-backed wars in Afghanistan have been women and children who have had no part in the hostilities. Women have seen their homes destroyed, their sons and daughters killed, their futures ruined, and their dignity and rights as human beings taken away. The suffering of Afghan women has been unimaginable.

True reconstruction in Afghanistan requires a plan for recovering and rebuilding the lives of Afghan women. Without women's participation in all parts of life development will not happen

**Since I took office on 22 December 2001, the Ministry for Women's Affairs was without an office for almost the first two months of the Interim Administration, some clearly wanted to use the Ministry for Women's Affairs just as a symbol. But symbolism will not solve the problems of women in this country.**

Finally, a peaceful, democratic Afghanistan in which the rights of women are restored, is not possible without security. Without security we cannot do much in our country.

We hope that the international community will not forget Afghanistan again. We hope that the world community will keep their new promises and provide substantial relief and development assistance to rebuild the whole system and economy in Afghanistan and to allow Afghan women and girls to rebuild their lives. The Afghan people – especially Afghan women and girls – deserve peace, health and prosperity.

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