

Connections

U.S.-AFGHAN WOMEN'S COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development

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Greeting from Georgetown University President and USAWC Chair John J. DeGioia

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council to Georgetown University. First of all, I would like to thank the Council members for their steadfast leadership and commitment to this important work. Georgetown University is extremely honored to be part of this initiative.

Georgetown University was founded in 1789 based on the Catholic and Jesuit traditions. Our Jesuit identity encourages the University community to encompass and spread the spirit of "men and women for others" which is precisely what the Council is challenged to do in Afghanistan. Through empowering youth and women in Afghanistan, we not only support their efforts to make a difference in their country, but also create an important opportunity for us in the United States to learn through this exchange. As the new Chair of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council, I very much look forward to witnessing how our new engagement will further reinforce the important efforts already undertaken by the Council. This is a great responsibility that we take very seriously.

Furthermore, under the direction of Dr. Phyllis Magrab, we look forward to advancing scholarship and fostering multidisciplinary

collaboration to further empower Afghan women, which we believe to be an essential component of the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan. In addition, we are delighted to welcome Ms. Eva Weigold Schultz as the Executive Director of the Council at Georgetown. She will be working closely with Dr. Magrab to ensure the smooth operation of the Council. I look forward to our work together and I am certain that our collaboration will expand the Council's efforts to improve the lives of women and children in Afghanistan.

Georgetown has a long commitment and strength in convening public and private organizations to help revitalize Afghanistan. In January 2002, Georgetown University invited President Hamid Karzai to campus and presented the President's Medal in recognition of his dedication to reconstructing Afghanistan. In July 2002, we hosted the two-day Afghanistan-America Summit on Recovery and Reconstruction, which brought together key government officials in Afghanistan and the United States, industry leaders, and experts in international aid and development, health, and human rights to explore ways in which the Afghan government and the

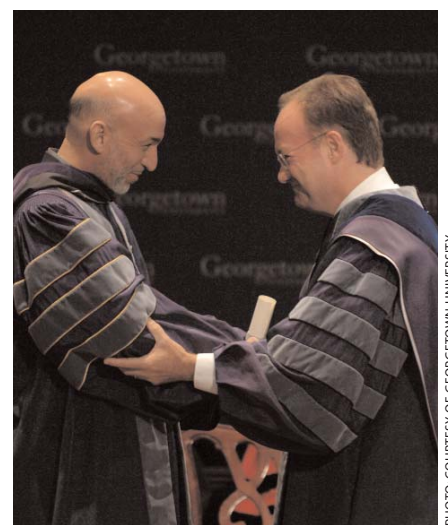


PHOTO: COURTESY OF GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Georgetown President John J. DeGioia.

international community could collaborate to respond to post-conflict Afghanistan's needs.

Our engagement continued into 2003, in which we hosted another Afghanistan-America Summit on Recovery and Reconstruction as well as invited several Afghan students for a weeklong cultural and educational forum. It is in this supporting environment that we welcome the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council to this campus. We look forward to utilizing the unique resources available at this University to convene key actors to foster the reconstruction of Afghanistan. ●

From Vice Chair Dr. Phyllis Magrab

It is my great pleasure and privilege to work with the talented and dedicated members of the Council, and to carry on this work that is so important to advancing human rights and democracy in Afghanistan. The Council is well established at its new home in Georgetown, with the appointment of an Executive Director to manage the day-to-day operations. Eva Weigold Schultz, an accomplished Foreign Service Officer at the Department of State, will be detailed to Georgetown beginning this summer, and will be working with me at the Center. Eva is currently Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of State for

Democracy and Global Affairs, a position most recently held by Paula Dobriansky, and has expertise in the areas of human rights and democracy promotion, women's issues, and trafficking in persons. We are delighted to have her join us.

We are also extremely grateful to Mrs. Laura Bush for continuing her leadership role in the Council in a private capacity, most recently speaking at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts opening of the Afghan Treasures exhibit, on loan from the national Museum of Kabul (see "Council News", below). We are enormously appreciative of the time and talent which she generously continues to provide.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

I look forward to supporting the great work of existing Council members, and to developing new initiatives to expand the Council and to take it in exciting new directions. We want your ideas and suggestions on ways you would like to see the Council grow—let us hear from you! Send us your photos and updates to magrabp@georgetown.edu so that we can share information. ●

U.S. Government Support for Women's Issues

President Obama's newly-formed "**White House Council on Women and Girls**" (www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President-Obama-Announces-White-House-Council-on-Women-and-Girls) will coordinate all U.S. government agencies' efforts to improve the economic status of women, to combat domestic violence, and to improve women's health care. Members will include cabinet-level federal agencies, and the effort will be led by Valerie Jarrett, Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor. The Executive Director of the Council will be Tina Tchen, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Public Liaison. We look forward to exploring possible partnerships with this new organization.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a lifelong champion of women's rights, has used her first 100 days in office to elevate women's issues. For the first time, the international women's issues office now reports directly to the Secretary, and is headed by a Senate-confirmed Ambassador. The Office of Global Women's Issues, under the leadership of Ambassador-at-Large Melanne Verveer, will focus increased resources on promoting women. Secretary Clinton has also made a point of meeting with women leaders from government, business, and civil society during her extensive travels, to underscore the importance the Administration attaches to women's issues. She has spoken out on the importance of respecting and protecting the rights of Afghan

women, and of engaging their talents in helping the country to move forward, and has praised the Council's work in this regard. In her confirmation hearings, Secretary Clinton noted that the women Senators had worked closely with Mrs. Bush on behalf of Afghan women, spoke to the connection between the Council's work and the "Vital Voices" organization she founded, and expressed her support for Georgetown's leadership.

We warmly welcome the appointment of **Melanne Verveer** as Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State. Ambassador Verveer was Co-Founder, Chair, and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global

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U.S. Government Support for Women's Issues CONTINUED

Partnership, an international nonprofit that invests in emerging women leaders who are pioneers of economic, political and social progress in their countries. Ambassador Verveer also served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady in the Clinton Administration, was chief assistant to then First Lady Hillary Clinton in her international activities, and took the lead in establishing the President's Interagency Council on Women. Under Ambassador Verveer's leadership, Vital Voices' Afghan Women's Leadership Initiative provided job training, legislative, and leadership training skills to hundreds of women. We were delighted to have Ambassador Verveer join us for a meeting of Council members on April 16, where she introduced Ambassador Steven Steiner in her office as her point person on Afghan women's issues. We look forward to working together with them both.

Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, **Ambassador Richard Holbrooke**, recognizes the essential role women play in promoting stability and prosperity in this region. At the International Republican Institute's annual Jeane Kirkpatrick Award Ceremony, on March 9, Holbrooke presented the award to Dr. Hodaya Haqmal, founder of the Movement of Afghan Sisters (see "Afghan Women in the News"), and said: "You can be assured that the Obama Administration, like its predecessor, will support women's efforts in Afghanistan. I have publicly praised Laura Bush in the past, and I'm happy to do so again, for making this one of her signature issues, and I know this Administration will continue that." ●

Council News

Student Outreach. At the invitation of Georgetown medical students, we organized a panel on April 16 at the University's medical center on "Health Care Challenges and Opportunities in Afghanistan" for almost 100 medical students and faculty as part of their annual Social Justice Week program. Dr. Phyllis Magrab explained the work of the Council and invited students to join our network; Dr. David Gahn from Health and Human Services gave a compelling presentation on the challenges and rewards he faces in training practitioners at the Rabia Balkhi maternity hospital in Kabul; and Gary Cook briefed on the successful work of USAID in providing basic community health services and in building the capacity of the Ministry of Health. The students posed thoughtful questions to the panel on the sensitivities of teaching family planning within Islamic faith, on overcoming security

challenges to provide services in rural areas, and on ensuring health and social services remain core to our overall Afghan policy strategy. We will follow up with the student body to encourage their continued education and activism.

Council Focus on Health: Also on April 16, immediately after the student lecture, Dr. Magrab chaired a working luncheon at Georgetown to bring together Council members and U.S. government partners active in the health arena with senior faculty and staff from Georgetown's medical departments. Turnout was excellent, as was the discussion, which focused on the opportunities Georgetown can offer in partnering on health care issues, and on steps to raise the profile of the Council's work in order to ensure the continuity of Council projects by creating new partnerships and leveraging new resources. We will be following up with Council

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Council meeting at Georgetown, 2008.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE WHITE HOUSE, BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Council News CONTINUED

members to create an inventory of existing projects and needs, which we will feature in our next newsletter.

Mrs. Bush speaks at Houston Council events, meets with Afghan women.

Mrs. Laura Bush participated in several events in Houston, Texas on February 25 and 26 in support of Afghan issues and Council projects. Council Members Shamim Jawad and Tim and Anita McBride coordinated these events around the opening of the “Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures” exhibit at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (the exhibit is on loan from the National Museum of Kabul).

- ABC News’ World News Tonight and Good Morning America broadcast Mrs. Bush’s tour and interview at the museum with correspondent Jonathan Karl, who traveled with Mrs. Bush to Afghanistan in June 2008. Mrs. Bush spoke of her continued commitment to the people of



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MRS. LAURA BUSH

Mrs. Bush meeting with a group of Afghan women visitors, sponsored by the Department of State.

Afghanistan, particularly the women and children.

- Mrs. Bush delivered remarks to raise awareness and cultivate support for the Ayenda Foundation at a reception at the home of former Ambassador to Switzerland Peter Coneway. Mrs. Shamim Jawad spoke about her plans to travel to Bamiyan to open the Ayenda Children’s Center that Mrs.

Bush visited in June 2008 while under construction. Council Vice Chair Phyllis Magrab and Council Members Tim and Anita McBride were also in attendance.

- Mrs. Bush also spoke at an event in support of the American University of Afghanistan. This event, hosted by Joanne King Herring, was a successful fundraiser for the University and coincided with the University Board meeting in Houston. The University’s acting President Dr. Moulakis and Mrs. Shamim Jawad were among the speakers.
- On April 2, Mrs. Bush met with a group of Afghan women participants in an International Visitors Program, sponsored by the Department of State. The women represented various businesses, political parties, and civil society groups, and urged that international assistance focus on areas outside of Kabul, and be channeled through local authorities and women-headed organizations. They spoke of the



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AYENDA FOUNDATION

Mrs. Shamim Jawad visiting a classroom during the official inauguration at the Ayenda Learning Center in Bamiyan.

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Council News CONTINUED

plight of war widows, who are often left homeless and without means of support. Mrs. Bush emphasized her continued dedication to Afghan women's empowerment, and her thoughts about using President George W. Bush's planned institute in Texas to develop programs to help Afghan women.

Inauguration of Ayenda Learning Center. On March 25, Ambassador Said Jawad and Mrs. Shamim Jawad officially inaugurated the Ayenda Learning Center in Bamiyan. The Center, which sits in the shadow of the Great Buddha statues that were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, will provide 300 children with a modern educational facility and enhanced vocational training opportunities previously unavailable in this impoverished province. Standing two stories tall and housing 24 rooms, the Center was funded through private donations collected by the Ayenda Foundation, chaired by founder Shamim Jawad and co-chaired by co-founder Timothy McBride. The Bayat Foundation, which constructed the



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SOZO INTERNATIONAL

TriWest Medical's work in conjunction with SOZO.

Center, provided project management services free of charge.

Other projects continue well apace, with Doris Buffett's **Sunshine Lady Foundation** donation of \$200,000 for AUAf scholarships nearing completion, and with the completion of Caroline Firestone's **New Hudson Foundation**-funded apartment complex in Kabul for the Afghan Red Crescent Society. **TriWest Medical Alliance** (led by CEO David McIntyre) has funded the expansion of SOZO International burn prevention and awareness programs into Parwan, Laghman, and Logar provinces. ●



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AYENDA FOUNDATION

Opening day at the Ayenda Learning Center in Bamiyan.

Council Calendar

We will notify members of events as they are added, but here are some initial plans. Please let us know about important dates for your specific projects so that we can help get the word out!

- The Afghan Minister of Health, Dr. Sayed Mohammad Amin Fatimie, will be in Washington the week of **May 11**, and we are seeking a meeting to discuss the Council's work on health issues.
- Ambassador and Mrs. Jawad, together with Dr. William Haseltine, will host a benefit dinner for The Ayenda Foundation on June 15 at 7:30 pm at Dr. Haseltine's home in New York, NY. For further information, please call (202) 292-4299.
- USAID has asked to partner with the Council to bring 10 senior Afghan women public servants to the United States for a program in **July** for training and mentoring on political leadership. The tentative dates are July 4-14. We look forward to this opportunity and will be reaching out shortly to Council members to solicit participation in this program.
- We will look for ways to highlight and support the work of women candidates in the Afghan Presidential and provincial council elections to be held in **August**.
- We plan to hold a full Council meeting in the **fall**.

Afghan Women in the News

Secretary Clinton presents International Women of Courage Award to Wazhma Frogh.

In a ceremony at the State Department on March 11, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented the third annual International Women of Courage Awards to recognize women for their work in advancing social justice. Ms. Frogh is the Afghan Country Director for Global Rights, an international human rights organization. She has launched a literacy program for women, and public debates on domestic violence and marital rape in Afghanistan, both previously unmentionable topics. She persuaded mullahs to join her in a month-long campaign of speaking out against domestic violence, and, by mobilizing a group of over 35 civil society organizations, convinced the government of Afghanistan to take action against child rape. Ms. Frogh also provides training to policewomen on issues surrounding domestic violence and child abuse. (www.state.gov/g/wi)

IRI honors Dr. Homayra Haqmal with Jeane Kirkpatrick Award.

On March 9, the International Republican Institute's Women's Democracy Network bestowed its annual Jeane Kirkpatrick Award for outstanding contributions to the advancement of women in politics and civil society to Dr. Homayra Haqmal. The award was presented by President Obama's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. Dr. Haqmal represents the Movement of Afghan Sisters, an organization of women from government, the private sector, and

civil society. The Movement's goal is to lead a coalition of independent women to ensure the full political participation of women, and the effective advocacy of women's issues at the national level. They are organized through provincial chapters and a national board of directors, and plan to convene their first national assembly this spring. Along with the award, a scholarship to the Women's Campaign School at Yale University, sponsored by IRI board member Cheryl F. Halpern, was awarded. (www.iri.org/newsreleases/2009-03-10-wdn.asp)

Vital Voices Global Leadership Award Winner: Sadiqa Basiri Saleem.

On March 19, the Vital Voices Global Partnership held its annual Global Leadership Awards ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center to honor women leaders who have risen above discrimination and abuse to promote positive change in their communities. The "Rising Voices" award was presented to Sadiqa Basiri Saleem for her work in founding the Oruj Learning Center for girls in eastern Afghanistan. The Center, created in 2002, now educates over 2,700 girls in six schools and 200 women at four literacy centers throughout Wardak province; includes a domestic violence prevention project to provide services to 14,000 women; and provides human rights education and awareness training. Sadiqa is now in the U.S. finishing a degree at Mount Holyoke College, and planning to establish an Afghan Women's Leadership Institute to train high school graduates on business management and leadership skills. (www.vitalvoices.org) ●



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