



*Embassy & Permanent Mission
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Vienna*

Vienna, 1 December 2020

Development, Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods in Afghanistan

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan, together with the Vienna-based organizations of UNIDO and UNODC, hosted a virtual event focusing on the importance of development, women's empowerment and livelihoods in Afghanistan, to highlight the critical role of women in sustainable, peaceful development.

Ambassadors from Germany, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States highlighted the importance of improving the lives and livelihoods of Afghans, and of enhancing women's access to education, as there is no sustainable development without inclusive development. The high-level opening speakers remarked on progress made in empowering women and stressed that this progress must be maintained and further strengthened to include meaningful involvement of women in decision-making and participation in the economy. Interventions from the floor, including by Finland and Germany, emphasized the importance of gender equality and empowerment for ensuring long-lasting effects of sustainable development.

UNODC, UNIDO, OSCE and IAEA voiced their ongoing support for Afghanistan, detailing the importance of programming for alternative development, entrepreneurship and education, science-based opportunities and networking, to ensure that women have opportunities for their voices to be heard and can provide for themselves and their families in a meaningful way.

Panel presentations from UNIDO and UNODC shared stories of projects implemented in Afghanistan related to women's empowerment and youth entrepreneurship, and highlighted that these projects are scalable and replicable. As part of UNODC's support in Afghanistan to help communities face adversity, investment in community-led resilience systems and response is critical. UNODC and the Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry shared a video of the joint marketplace event they held earlier in 2020, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurship ([video](#)). Ms. Marghuba Safi shared the story of founding her own soap production company, which produces handmade, organic soap employing only women, many of whom were previously addicted to drugs. Preparing the next generation of young Afghan entrepreneurs was at the heart of UNIDO's panel presentation, with a focus on promoting creative-thinking and self-confidence among the youth.

The session concluded with remarks by H.E. Ms. Khojesta Fana Ebrahimkhel, who invited all partners to continue working together for livelihoods in Afghanistan, women's empowerment and sustainable development.