



د افغانستان د خلکو غږ
صدای مردم افغانستان
VOICE OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE

Statement

People's Consultative Gathering in Balkh, Sar-e-Pul and Samangun

11th September 2022

Mazar-e- Sharif City

The first one-day consultative local gathering for people and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan for Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, and Samangan provinces was conducted in Mazar-e-Sharif today. The gathering brought together over 260 men and women from different communities in all districts and centers of all three provinces, including religious scholars, social and cultural activists, tribal leaders, businesspeople, youth, victims of conflict, and minorities. In addition, provincial authorities, including the Balkh province deputy governor, joined the summit.

The Voice of Afghan People, a local initiative, organized the gathering and with the aim to collect people's input and share it with the relevant authorities of the IEA.

Maulvi Noor-al Hadi Abo Edrisse, Deputy Governor of Balkh, and Maulvi Zabiullah Noorani, Provincial Director of Information and Culture, attended the summit and addressed the participants on behalf of the IEA. They expressed their appreciation for such gatherings of people. They took the opportunity to announce the commencement of development projects to create job opportunities and address the unemployment problem in the province and the region. Additionally, they highlighted that a fair education environment for all, particularly for girls, exists in the province.

In his turn, Hekmatullah Haidari, a community elder, asked the authorities to pay serious attention to the agriculture sector and the construction of water dams. Moreover, Anwar-al- Haq Tatar, on behalf of the youth, pointed out that brain drain and unemployment are the main problems for youth and asked the authorities to allocate resources to resolve these issues.

Finally, Professor Nafisah Ghyasi, on behalf of the women, while praising the existing positive environment for women in Balkh, demanded further significant change to ensure meaningful participation of women in all social and governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Following the plenary, the participants were divided into group where they held discussions and exchanged views on different issues such as unemployment, economic crises, confidence building between the public and the authorities and good governance, urban and rural development, agriculture, humanitarian aid, and health. The summary of these discussions are as follows:

1. According to the participants, currently unemployment is one of the most critical problems, which if continued can result in youth brain drain and drug addiction culminating into a major crisis in the country. They reiterated that initiating new local projects and industry and production growth at the provincial level could eliminate unemployment. Additionally, they asked the authorities to give a role to youth and women in the government to contribute to their country's development.
2. The participants considered the current economic situation fragile and expressed concerns about economic stagnation. In addition, they complained about the imposition of heavy taxes and higher calculation of electricity bills on people. They asked the local and central government to address it and pay attention to the growth of the local economy and the creation of agricultural, livestock, and handicraft market to run the economy. Furthermore, they called on the international community to lift Afghanistan's sanction, which mainly affects the ordinary people.
3. According to the participants, the current distance between the government and the people can be reduced by providing better services to the people, eradicating administrative corruption, respecting the rights of citizens and women participants per the Sharia, and making the rulers accountable. They also called on the IEA to assign experts for the technical jobs to ensure good governance.
4. The participants considered humanitarian aid a necessity and mentioned their gratitude for it. However, they called for more assistance in agricultural development, urban and rural development, and other public sectors.

5. The participants asked the IEA to establish good relations with the international community and attract more international aid for completing unfinished projects. They said that both urban and rural development as one are critical priorities and asked the IEA to pay more attention to the development budget in order to provide employment opportunities for thousands of people.
6. According to the participants, agriculture as a significant sector can get people away from poverty and unemployment in the country. Moreover, they called for mechanization of agriculture, adaptation to environmental changes, creation of water dams, and distribution of improved seeds as essential in the development of agriculture and autonomy of the local people, which can result in the progress and prosperity of the country.
7. The participants shared the concern that the public health sector faces various challenges, such as a lack of medicines and a lack of expert personnel and structure. If the same situation continues, the country will face a big catastrophe. Therefore, they asked the government and the international community to pay special attention to the health sector.
8. The participants praised the local officials' efforts to create a better environment for women and asked authorities to increase women's participation in the social, economic, and government sectors. At the same time, they asked the local government to do more and create a specific office for communication between women and the IEA. In addition, they called for the opening of schools in rest of the region, improvement of education, creation of job opportunities, and the participation of women in all levels of government throughout the country.
9. According to the participants, civil society, cultural and social institutions are the fundamental pillars of the society, and their role as bridge between the people and the government is highly effective. Therefore, they called on the local government to address these institutions' existing challenges and problems and support them in their activities.

Finally, the participants asked the IEA to ensure broad interaction with the spectrums of civil society and to work together to create transparency and confidence-building between citizens

and officials. The participants also welcomed any other priorities the Islamic Emirate wanted to discuss in the continuation of the talks.

The one-day gathering will be followed up with various other summits at the regional and provincial levels.