



AFGHAN PEACE AND RECONSTRUCTION PLANS SHOULD INCLUDE PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict: Afghanistan Update

New York, NY- November 19, 2001 - According to a group of prominent international organizations, the United Nations should immediately put in place programs and policies to protect Afghan children and adolescents.

"Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict: Afghanistan Update" is released today by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children as a supplement to an earlier report detailing child rights abuses in Afghanistan. It calls on the UN Security Council to take immediate action to protect the rights of Afghan children.

"Now that the UN Security Council has unanimously adopted a resolution affirming the central role it will play in setting up a new transitional authority in Afghanistan, we urge the Security Council to include specific provisions to protect children in any UN mandate," said Mary Diaz, Executive Director of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Co-coordinator of the Watchlist. Some of the key provisions recommended include:

- Uninterrupted humanitarian access to war-affected, refugee and internally displaced children
- Child protection advisers reporting at the highest UN levels
- Disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programs for child combatants, including assistance for girls who may have been forced into prostitution and other sexual activity.

The Watchlist also covers topics related to Afghan children including family separation, the use of cluster bombs, recruitment of child soldiers, child labor and reproductive health.

"Afghan children and adolescents have long suffered the consequences of war," said Kathy Vandergrift, Senior Policy Analyst for World Vision and Co-coordinator of the Watchlist. "Now they are also threatened by massive displacement, the US bombing campaign, the break-down of law and order, a leadership void in Kabul and the onset of winter."

An estimated 100,000 Afghan children could die this winter unless they receive emergency assistance, according to UNICEF.