

**Press Release
Kabul – 16 March 2009**

**IDLO LAUNCHES THE FIRST JUDICIAL BENCHBOOK IN DARI
AND ANOTHER KEY LEGAL RESOURCE FOR THE AFGHAN
JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) officially launched two essential new legal resources for judges and law students in Afghanistan. IDLO was joined by key members of the Afghan judiciary at a Seminar held at the Safi Landmark Hotel in Kabul from March 15 to 16, 2009 for the launch of a Judicial Bench Book and a Mock Trial DVD.

The Seminar saw the presence of over one hundred judges, of which 25 were women, coming from Kabul and other Afghanistan provinces.

In the framework of a program funded by the Canadian Government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), IDLO has produced two much-needed professional tools for the judiciary and other justice sector actors:

The Judicial Benchbook, co-authored by members of the Supreme Court and supported by the Chief Justice and the Judiciary, this resource aims to guide and improve legal reasoning and judicial procedures that lead to high quality judgments in civil, commercial and criminal cases. The guidebook also highlights the desired standards of judicial ethics and conduct.

These factors will bolster uniform practices throughout the Judiciary in Afghanistan; demonstrate transparency and enhance credibility of the judgments of the Afghan Judiciary within as well as outside of Afghanistan.

The benchbook is an easy-to-use practical guide for judges providing technical guidance on Afghan law and procedure. It includes real-life cases of common issues facing Afghan judges; a step-by-step approach for technical matters; and check-lists and diagrams to demonstrate the role of judge in given situations.

A Mock Trial DVD was developed when in 2007 IDLO held a mock trial in the main hall of the Kabul Appeal Court with nine trainee judges from the Supreme Court. The simulation was electronically recorded and is now ready for distribution with English subtitles.

The simulated trial was a success both in terms of measuring the impact of the training and material received by the judges and in giving the most practical approach to support the legal information provided.

The distribution of the DVD during judicial training courses and its diffusion among law students and trainees at the Independent National Legal Training Center (INLTC) will greatly contribute to practically demonstrate the different roles of Judges, Prosecutors, and Defense Attorneys in the Afghan Justice System; and to clarify the defense rights provided by the Afghan Law and Constitution.

Speaking of these resources, Mr. William T. Loris, Director-General of IDLO said:

"In keeping with the objectives of strengthening the Rule of Law in Afghanistan, we hope these new materials will actively contribute to the establishment of a predictable legal system with fair, transparent and effective judicial institutions. These are essential conditions to gain the trust of the Afghan population in the judicial system."

Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ron Hoffmann added:

"Canada is committed to supporting Afghan justice sector reform to strengthen Afghan capacity, enhance Afghans' access to justice, and to protect and promote human rights. These valuable resources will serve to strengthen the rule of law in Afghanistan."

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IDLO (International Development Law Organization) is an international, inter-governmental organization with a mandate to promote the Rule of Law and good governance in developing countries, countries in economic transition and countries emerging from post-conflict situations. Since its establishment in 1983, IDLO has worked with more than 19,000 lawyers, magistrates and officials from approximately 176 countries.

IDLO has its Headquarters in Rome, Italy and two Regional Offices; in Cairo, Egypt, covering Arabic-speaking countries and in Sydney, Australia, covering the Asia Pacific area. IDLO currently operates Project Offices in Afghanistan, Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan.

IDLO is funded by contributions from its 18 Member States and other donors.

For detailed information on IDLO and its activities, please refer to the website www.idlo.int.

Canada is among the top bilateral donors in Afghanistan in the world today. Afghanistan has become Canada's single largest development program

For detailed information on the Government of Canada's activities in Afghanistan, please refer to the website www.afghanistan.gc.ca.