



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Spokesperson's Office
Kabul, Afghanistan

Tel: 00 39 0831 24 6121
00 93 (0) 20 297 6121

Email: spokesperson-unama@un.org
Website: www.unama-afg.org

**UN ENVOY HAILS PROGRESS OF AFGHAN SCHOOLS DURING
GLOBAL ACTION WEEK FOR EDUCATION**

Kabul, 23 April 2008 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan (SRSG), Kai Eide today lauded the progress made by Afghanistan's schools during a week of international action calling for the inclusive education of all school age children around the globe.

Speaking during a visit to Amani High School in the Afghan capital, SRSG Eide said: "Education is a fundamental right for every human being, it fosters dignity, freedom and is vital if we are to enable Afghanistan to mobilize all the resources of its people. Afghanistan can be proud of the tremendous progress that Afghan schools have made under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

"Before 2001 there were fewer than a million children in school and girls were all but excluded from mainstream education. Today over six million children attend schools and over 330 000 girls started school for the first time this year, unprecedented in Afghanistan's history. As we mark the 'Global Action Week for Education' I want to reaffirm our joint commitment to reach out to those families whose children have not been able to attend school; we want to see inclusive education for all of Afghanistan's children. They are the future of this country."

Global Action Week for Education is an international campaign supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The theme for this year is "quality education to end exclusion'. Around 72 million children are excluded from schooling and over 700 million adults remain illiterate worldwide. The United Nations reports that many children are excluded due to disability or gender, others because of conflict and still more because of poverty or child labour.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that up to one third of Afghanistan's school age children are involved in some form of labour and premature marriage continues to stifle the educational prospects of many young girls, while the Ministry of Education estimates that insecurity is preventing nearly 300,000 children from attending schools, mainly in southern Afghanistan.

During 2007, the Ministry of Education with the support of UNICEF built over 3000 community based schools across Afghanistan for over 140,000 children in remote villages with no access to formal schools while the World Food Programme is encouraging poverty stricken parents to send their children to school through its food-for-school programme which benefited over 2.5 million children last year.