



سفارت جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان
واشنگتن دی سی - ایالات متحده امریکا

EMBASSY of THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC
of AFGHANISTAN
Washington DC - United States of America

د افغانستان اسلامي جمهوریت سفارت
واشنگتن دي سي - د امریکا متحده ایالات

IEEW Remarks

APX. 4~ min

It is my pleasure to speak to you all today at the Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women for their *Peace Through Business* graduation ceremony. Today's graduates are among some of the best and brightest that our countries have to offer, and I am excited to see how they will use the knowledge they have gained throughout this program to build their businesses and better their communities.

In Afghanistan, and in every other country represented by these graduates, the training of women entrepreneurs is of the utmost importance. Women contribute socially, politically, and economically to Afghanistan every day; they enrich our communities and help us build a more stable, more peaceful society. The involvement of women is critical in our pursuit of a sustainable economy and lasting peace.

Women are vital to the success of Afghanistan's economy. Afghanistan's exports make up approximately \$1 billion a year, primarily consisting of fruits, nuts, carpets, and saffron, all of which are industries dominated by female labor. Women comprise 65% of the workforce for animal husbandry and agricultural labor. Although this work is commonly considered unpaid household labor, the scale of these contributions are indisputable. Despite only comprising 22% of Afghanistan's official workforce, women are a huge component of the informal economy, which makes up 80-90% of Afghanistan's economy. As women become more involved in Afghanistan's official economy, more people begin to recognize what has always been true-- that the contributions of women are critical to the success of our country.

Cultural acceptance of women working outside of the home is at a record high of 76%. More than ever, women are becoming business owners, scientists, health care providers, and an



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integral part of many other industries across the country. This integration of women into the workforce promotes both economic growth and the diversification of the labor force. In addition to being inherently beneficial, women's participation in the workforce has created more long-term economic growth. Studies have indicated that in post-conflict societies, there is a significant relationship between the level of women's empowerment and the speed of post-conflict poverty reduction.

Despite the recent efforts made to see more women in the workforce, there is still a long way to go before we achieve true equality, and true peace, in Afghanistan. The graduates of this program are taking the first step toward moving Afghanistan to a brighter, more equal future. With the continued participation of women in the economy, Afghanistan can move towards creating lasting peace.