



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**  
**Ministry of women's Affairs**  
**Coordination and International Relation Department**

March 8, 2011

Organizing Committee  
Second International conference  
"Women of the mountains"

**Dear organizers, participants and guests of the Conference "Women of the Mountains."**

On behalf of the women of Afghanistan, I would like to send my greetings to the participants of the Second International Conference "Women of the Mountains" on March 8-9, 2011 at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. It is so important that conference takes place at the moment when all of the humankind and people and women of Afghanistan in particular, celebrate centennial of the International Women's Day. Please accept my heartfelt congratulations on that great occasion. Unfortunately, I am unable to participate in this but my heart and soul are with each of you.

It is important for all of the women around the world to work together on advancing their rights and freedoms and improving their lives and living conditions of their families. Furthermore, it is equally if not more important when the cause of gender advocacy is promoted jointly by mountain women, who are faced with many challenges on a daily basis by natural conditions such as high altitude, remoteness, etc. Therefore, the agenda of the Conference is very timely and important for all of us, including women of Afghanistan. I espouse the ideals of the Conference and feel it is important to recognize the unique and vital role that women bring to sustainable mountain development.

We, in Afghanistan are making it an utmost priority to involve our women more actively in political and economic life of society, and to make their voices heard and their rights respected. A lot has to be done with regards to women's roles and many changes will come, but only if we work in conjunction with one another, holding our hands together, listening to each other and sharing our experiences with one another as well and with women who live in other mountain regions of the world in particular.

Moreover, I appreciate very much the initiative of Utah Valley University in hosting the Conference a second time after the success of the first one in 2007, when more than 100 officials of international organizations and representative from more than 20 nations and almost all states of the Rocky Mountains interested on sustainable mountain development and women issues gathered together and adopted the final Document of the Conference in 2007 "Orem Declaration of Mountain Women." It is now one of the documents for international community, and the United Nations, which defines major priorities and goals for everybody to work together on improvement of living conditions of global mountain women and communities.

I am sure that the second Conference Women of the Mountains will be a success and it will help to facilitate new ties on a grass-roots level between the women of United States and many mountain nations of the developing world, including my country Afghanistan.

Wish you success with your conference.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar,**

**Minister of Women Affairs of Afghanistan**

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