



## Statement

### Businesswomen and Entrepreneurs Consultative Gathering and Relaunching Chamber in East Zone

20-21 May, 2023

Jalalabad city, Afghanistan

The Afghanistan Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), in collaboration and facilitation of Voice of the Afghan People (VAP), organized a two-day consultative gathering of businesswomen and entrepreneurs in Jalalabad city. The gathering brought together nearly fifty businesswomen and entrepreneurs from Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, and Nuristan provinces. The gathering aimed to collect businesswomen and entrepreneurs' demands, concerns, challenges, and current opportunities and reopen the women's chamber of commerce and industry in the East zone.

During the gathering, the participants deeply assessed and analyzed the current situation of businesswomen and entrepreneurs with specific focus on women's economic and social status as well as the barriers and opportunities for their progress in economic activities. By considering their duty and commitment to supporting their families and society in overcoming current hardship and unemployment; as well as by fully supporting national interests and Islamic principles, maintaining long-term peace and stability, and upholding national unity, and in light of the fact that collaboration and harmony between the people and the local authorities are the only paths to stability and prosperity, we all agree on the following:

- 1. We appreciate the IEA's support in enabling us to host such a remarkable gathering for businesswomen.** We consider the restoration and reopening of the Women's Chamber of Commerce in the Eastern Zone as a significant step forward in women's businesses, and **we call upon the IEA authorities to provide this chamber with the necessary**

**cooperation at the local level in order to foster more economic activities and promote the status of businesswomen and entrepreneurs.**

2. After conducting a comprehensive analysis and assessment of Afghan women's economic and social conditions, we found that **the economic situation of Afghan women, particularly widowed and without caretaker**, who must support themselves and their families, **is fragile, and the majority of them are unemployed and destitute**. The social and economic problems that these impoverished women and orphaned children face have undoubtedly had an impact on the entire society. Therefore, **we ask the IEA to prioritize women's issues and develop and implement effective policies to address their economic challenges.**
3. We ask the IEA authorities to **establish more industrial parks, offer interest-free loans, reduce taxes, determine specific areas for peddlers and street vendors, establish specialized marketplaces for women, and provide more facilities for issuing business licenses to women-led businesses in the East region.**
4. We ask the national and international organizations **to prioritize domestic products** when awarding contracts and making procurement in addition to continuing to provide humanitarian aid for Afghan women. This will help establish a favorable business environment for local manufacturers and enable them to compete in the market. This will not only ensure women's economic autonomy but will also ensure women's presence in trade and business sectors.
5. The economic sanctions have a negative impact on the country's economic status; therefore, **we call upon the international community to lift economic sanctions** to rescue Afghanistan's people from poverty and starvation.
6. We emphasize **the need for efforts to address all the issues and challenges** faced by businesswomen and entrepreneurs in the east zone, **including lack of access to resources and access to the local market.**