



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

AFGHAN LAW STUDENTS SCORE HIGH IN WASHINGTON DC

4 April 2005; Kabul, Afghanistan: This past week, four final-year Law students from Kabul University participated in the internationally prestigious *Philip C. Jessup Moot Court Competition*. “The team did not make it to the final rounds which were extremely tough,” said UNDP Justice Programme Manager Siphosami Malunga who accompanied the team to USA, “but they faced and stood up against the world’s most famous universities. They did phenomenally well”.

The *Jessup Moot Court Competition* is the world's most acclaimed of its kind, organized by the International Law Students Association in the US capital and attracting over 500 students from the world's top law schools. It is a simulation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) where teams plead written and oral cases ranging from international criminal to international maritime law. After the seventh day of competition, the top prizes of scholarships and books are awarded to the winners.

The Afghan team, consisting of Ms Fakhria, Mr Said Masood, Mr Zemar Ahmad and Mr Edrees Aliimi pleaded against India, Poland, Malaysia, and Japan. While the team did not qualify for the final rounds, their very presence at the competition – the second Afghan team to compete in the contest – is viewed as a success. A fifth student Ms. Neija trained with the team but remained in Kabul.

“It was a huge honour to represent our country here”, said Mr Aliimi, “As we entered the courtroom and team number 104 was announced, we heard the name of our university and country and a long applause, it was an amazing moment”, he added. “Everyone was very friendly with us and delighted to make acquaintance with Afghan visitors”.

Before their departure for the USA, a ceremonial pleading was held in Kabul where the students simulated court proceedings under the jurisdiction of the ICJ. UNDP Country Director Mr. Frederick Lyons recognized the achievements of the students and the importance of their participation in such a prestigious competition. “This is a small yet important step in the efforts of UNDP and the international community to bring justice and rule of law to Afghanistan”, stated Mr Lyons. “Just three years ago, the country was coming out of conflict with most formal legal institutions destroyed by the war. Today thanks to the efforts of these courageous young Afghans, we have here some prospective judges, lawyers or prosecutors – Afghans who will help rebuild their country and strengthen rule of law”.

UNDP supports and sponsors Afghan students participating in the competition, which includes an intensive recruitment, training and rehearsal period. The "Rebuilding the Justice Sector in Afghanistan" (RJSA) project aims to rebuild and strengthen Afghan Justice Institutions, to develop Afghan law faculties and revise law curricula, and to enhance overall access to justice in the country. The project’s major donors are Italy, Canada, and the UK.

“We are very grateful to UNDP and to our mentors from UNDP and UNAMA back in Kabul who not only improved our knowledge but also gave us the courage to participate in the right spirit”, said Ms Fakhria, noting “It is the first time a woman represents Afghanistan in this competition and I am proud to be paving this road”.

NOTICE to MEDIA: The students are scheduled to arrive back in Kabul on Wednesday 6 April at 11:30 hrs, on Kam Air flight RQ006 from Dubai. Interested media representatives are encouraged to meet and greet them at Kabul International airport.

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