



AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

**Aga Khan reaffirms commitment to Afghan peoples
and to a peaceful, pluralistic Afghanistan**

Geneva, Switzerland, 24 November 2020 - His Highness the Aga Khan, on behalf of the Ismaili Imamate and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), today reaffirmed his enduring commitment to a peaceful and pluralistic Afghanistan.

In a statement delivered at the virtually held 2020 Afghanistan Conference by AKDN's Diplomatic Representative to Afghanistan Sheherazade Hirji, His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and founder and Chairman of the AKDN, noted that as the country entered into a new period of transition, it would need the contribution of all of its people to address their common challenges: rising poverty, climate disruption, an unforgiving pandemic.

"It will need all their talents to build an inclusive future with more opportunities, requiring more education, more knowledge, more private initiative. In these endeavours, AKDN is, and will remain, a steadfast partner," said the Aga Khan, emphasising that AKDN will maintain the breadth of its work in all sectors from education, healthcare and cultural restoration, as well as in economic development.

"During our 25 years in Afghanistan, AKDN has been guided by a fundamental belief that the key to the country's future is in a vibrant, meritocratic, pluralistic civil society – in the Afghan people and in long-term institutions anchoring their contributions to the common good," he said.

This year's conference is organised by the Governments of Afghanistan and Finland, and the United Nations, and is being held virtually over 23-24 November 2020. Over 70 countries, international organisations, and agencies are attending the conference which builds on previous ones held in Brussels in 2016, and Tokyo in 2012. The aim of the conference is to commit the Afghan government and the international community to shared development objectives for 2021-24.

AKDN participated in two side events during the two-day conference.

At a panel discussion devoted to the theme of Afghanistan's economic priorities and aid effectiveness on 23 November, AKF General Manager Michael Kocher shared his reflections as one of the country's earliest investors, around the four building blocks of investments in connectivity, multi-input development, regulatory consistency and human capital that could help the country, especially young people, look forward with confidence.

Earlier in the week, at a side meeting entitled "Support to Peace and Prosperity through Public-Private Partnerships in Key Infrastructure Investments" organised by the European Union (EU) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Mr Daler Jumaev, President of Badakhshon Energy shared the AKDN's experience in the development of successful public-private partnerships, and the role of these partnerships in preserving peace and prosperity.

AKDN's involvement in Afghanistan dates back to 1996 when it started distributing food aid during the country's civil war. Since 2002, the AKDN and its partners have committed over US \$1 billion in development assistance to the country. The Network's integrated approach combines economic, social, and cultural inputs. Its economic projects span over 240 cities and

towns in the country's 34 provinces, while its social development and humanitarian work directly covers eight provinces, and 19 provinces through consortia and partnerships, some 4 million people. It manages the health care for Bamyan and Badakhshan under Sehatmandi. Its cultural programmes, which operate in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, and Badakhshan, have restored over 150 heritage sites.

This commitment has strengthened through the years, through formal partnerships with the Afghan government, significant joint investments into Afghan companies, and national and regional development programmes in partnership with international actors and donors.

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2020 Afghanistan Conference
<https://um.fi/afghanistan-conference-2020>

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