

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND
THE ON JOINT EFFORTS TO ENABLE THE ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Pursuant to the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan Concerning the Development of Trade and Investment Relations, signed in Washington D.C. on September 21, 2004 (the "TIFA"), the Government of the United States and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (individually a "Party" and collectively the "Parties"), continue to seek ways to improve their bilateral trade and investment relationship. The Parties recognize that promoting the economic empowerment of women and women entrepreneurs, and developing other professional opportunities for women is important to improving this relationship. Accordingly, the United States-Afghanistan Council on Trade and Investment (the "TIFA Council"), co-chaired by the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Afghanistan, agreed to pursue this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the Seventh TIFA Council Meeting on February 27, 2013. To this end, the Parties have reached the following understandings:

Section I – Objective of the MOU

The objective of the MOU is to provide a framework for cooperative work under the auspices of the TIFA Council to promote the empowerment of women entrepreneurs, which includes women-business owners, in Afghanistan. The Parties aim to address barriers to women's entrepreneurship in Afghanistan and develop initiatives that increase the ability of women to start, run, and grow businesses.

Section II – Joint Efforts

The Parties share the joint objective of promoting the economic empowerment of women, developing women entrepreneurs, and ensuring that women are afforded economic and business opportunities. In doing so, the Parties seek to achieve an equality of economic opportunity for similarly situated men and women. To that end, the Parties intend to work together to empower women in the economy and promote women entrepreneurs by exploring ways to:

1. ensure strong interagency and inter-ministerial support for and coordination of policies and programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women in Afghanistan and the promotion of women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan;
2. provide women and women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan with access to information about laws, regulations, policies and other official requirements for starting, running and growing businesses, including

information on international trade rules, requirements, and preference programs;

3. address and remove any governmental impediments to women and women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan starting, running and growing a business; and

4. address and remove, in a timely and transparent manner, market barriers in Afghanistan that have a disproportionately adverse effect, directly or indirectly, on women and women entrepreneurs;

The Parties intend to include on the agenda for each meeting of the TIFA Council items specifically related to the economic empowerment of women and women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan.

Section III – General Principles and Activities

1. The Parties acknowledge that it is in their joint interest to help ensure the economic empowerment of women in Afghanistan and to promote women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan as a way to strengthen their bilateral trade and investment relationship.

2. The Parties intend to promote the goals of increasing the access of women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan to markets and market information. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is to ensure that its Gender Office, which has responsibility for promoting women's entrepreneurship, including ownership of businesses, has adequate staff and resources to assist women entrepreneurs. The Gender Office and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Private Sector Development Directorate are to provide regular reports directly to the Minister or the Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry on all efforts undertaken to support and strengthen women's entrepreneurship, including women's ownership of businesses. The Parties intend to include on the agenda for each meeting of the TIFA Council a discussion of the work of the Gender Office and the Private Sector Development Directorate to support and strengthen women's entrepreneurship, including women's ownership of businesses.

3. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is to coordinate an inter-Ministerial group, comprised of representatives of Ministries of the Government of Afghanistan, which focuses on trade and investment issues related to the economic empowerment of women and the promotion of women entrepreneurs. The inter-Ministerial group should have the authority to identify, address and eliminate barriers to women's entrepreneurship and to the successful operation of women-owned businesses.

4. The Parties intend to solicit input from women entrepreneurs and women's business associations on specific problems they encounter and on how the Parties can best work together to address and eliminate those problems.

5. At TIFA Council Meetings, and at other meetings between the Parties on bilateral trade and investment issues, the Parties intend to discuss assistance programs sponsored by Departments and Agencies of the Government of the United States, as well as other initiatives related to the economic empowerment of women, to promote increased dialogue and exchanges on best practices.

Section IV – Final Provisions

1. All activities covered by this Memorandum of Understanding are to take place, in accordance with the Parties' respective national laws and regulations.
2. This MOU does not create rights or obligations under international law or under the domestic law of either Party. All activities covered by this MOU are subject to the availability of appropriated funds.
3. Implementation of this MOU is to be led by the Office of the United States Trade Representative, on behalf of the United States, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on behalf of Afghanistan.
4. The Office of the United States Trade Representative, on behalf of the United States, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, on behalf of Afghanistan, are to name an official to serve as their respective point of contact for matters related to the implementation of this MOU. If a Party's point of contact changes, the Party is to notify the other Party of its new point of contact.
5. The Parties intend to begin implementation of this MOU upon the date of the last signature.
6. The Parties may modify this MOU by mutual written consent.
7. A Party that undertakes an activity in furtherance of this MOU is to report the activity to the TIFA Council at its next meeting.

Done at Washington, D.C., United States of America on May 20, 2013,
and at Kabul, Afghanistan on 16 June, 2013.

For the Government of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

For the Government of the
United States of America

