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## U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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### **USTDA DIRECTOR ASKEY ANNOUNCES AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION INITIATIVE DURING MEETINGS IN KABUL WITH U.S. TREASURY SECRETARY SNOW AND AFGHAN FINANCE MINISTER GHANI**

KABUL – (September 18, 2003) This morning, U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) Director Thelma J. Askey announced an Industrial Capacity and Market Development Initiative for Afghanistan, which will help develop local private sector capacity in manufacturing, assembly and services, and will support the country's efforts to improve its physical infrastructure and human resource base. The result will be a joint effort, on the part of the Afghan and U.S. Governments and private sectors, to expand trade and further solidify the underpinnings of the Afghan economic base.

Director Askey made the announcement during a meeting with Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani and U.S. Treasury Secretary John W. Snow in Kabul. According to Director Askey, "This initiative represents an additional component to President Bush's ongoing commitment to accelerate economic growth in Afghanistan."

As a part of this initiative, USTDA is sending technical experts to Afghanistan, who will assist the government and growing private sector in identifying specific needs and in creating tailored strategies to address them. These initial needs assessments are expected to lead to follow-on activities, such as technical assistance, training and feasibility studies. The first technical team, which will evaluate the construction materials sector, is expected to visit Afghanistan in October.

Another step in implementing this initiative will involve funding technical assistance that can help guide the development of industry in Afghanistan, thereby stimulating trade and creating jobs for Afghan citizens. This assistance is expected to include the following components: (1) an assessment of existing industrial parks and other similar facilities in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan; (2) a market analysis, which will help determine what industries offer the best prospects for investment in Afghanistan; (3) an assessment of the managerial and vocational training needs to support increased industrial development; and (4) an assessment of the transportation and logistics issues that need to be addressed.

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This USTDA Initiative builds on and complements existing agency programs in Afghanistan. During the past year, USTDA has committed over \$3.5 million to that country, focusing on specific projects identified as priorities by the Afghan Government in the power, telecommunications, civil aviation, oil and gas, and other key sectors. Training and local capacity building have been central components of these and other USTDA activities that are already underway or under active consideration. Examples include a feasibility study on the creation of a private university in Afghanistan, development of a strategic business plan for Ariana Airlines, technical assistance and training for the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, a hydrocarbon resource assessment, and a capacity-building program for Afghan consulting engineers.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, feasibility studies, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.

-30-

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