

**Media Note****Office of the Spokesman**

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**U.S. Support to Afghan Refugees and Returnees**

We are pleased with the outcome of the International Conference on the Return and Reintegration of Afghan Refugees, co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This conference brought together the key participants supporting close to three million refugees, primarily in Pakistan and Iran. The conference sought ways to align repatriation timelines with medium-term development strategies in the Afghan National Development Strategy.

Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs and Democracy Paula Dobriansky, who led the U.S. delegation, stated at the conference that the international humanitarian community stands ready to assist. We were pleased to hear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan express its intent to take overall responsibility for planning and implementing its national development strategy.

Since October 1, 2001, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has programmed more than \$500 million for humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, conflict victims, and internally displaced persons, including over \$50 million in Fiscal Year 2008 (October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008). The United States is committed to working with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNHCR to ensure that repatriation to Afghanistan remains voluntary, safe, and at a pace linked to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

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