



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Fact Sheet
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Secretary of State Rice Launches "Businesses Building Bridges" Private Sector Initiative for Afghanistan

On January 30, as part of a new initiative to highlight the importance of the private sector in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President Hamid Karzai launched the "Businesses Building Bridges" initiative. Recognizing that one of the keys to success in Afghanistan is the establishment of a thriving Afghan private sector, the Businesses Building Bridges initiative, a public-private partnership with U.S. business leaders, will help cement business relationships and other productive linkages between the U.S. and Afghanistan private sectors.

The goal of this important initiative is to demonstrate the commitment of the U.S. business community to help train Afghan entrepreneurs, to identify practical means to improve the Afghan investment climate and to enhance commercial and economic linkages. Over the next year, Businesses Building Bridges' leaders will use their expertise and knowledge of U.S. business practices to help launch programs to mentor the Afghan business community – including women entrepreneurs. These linkages will broaden understanding of business environments in both countries, and help develop innovative ways to increase foreign investment and U.S. business involvement in Afghanistan. The U.S. business leaders anticipate traveling to Afghanistan at least once over the coming year and also will host senior Afghan business executives in the United States.

To complement the Businesses Building Bridges initiative, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) announced a grant of \$500,000 for training Afghan entrepreneurs. In addition, the State Department will fund Afghan business delegations to select U.S. trade events in 2006.

Secretary Rice's announcement of this innovative initiative was preceded by a Trade and Investment Conference at Asia House in London hosted by U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs Josette Sheeran Shiner and UK Ambassador to Afghanistan Rosalind Marsden. This event also featured Afghan President Karzai and senior Afghan government officials, along with a panel of executives of key international investors in Afghanistan.

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