

## Afghan children fly kites for peace as part of UN-backed campaign



Afghan children with kites

20 September 2007 – On the eve of the International Day of Peace, some 100 Afghan street children flew kites adorned with doves and olive branches atop a hill overlooking Kabul today, marking the closing stages of a United Nations-backed campaign to halt violence in the war-torn nation.

Today's event, on Nader Khan hill, was one of many around the country in the final days of a two-month campaign launched by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (**UNAMA**), the UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) and the global campaign group Peace One Day. Kite flying was banned under the brutal Taliban regime which was ousted in 2001.

The initiative has grown to encompass scores of organizations, businesses, and institutions, as well as politicians and individual citizens – all urging a halting of violence in Afghanistan on and around 21 September, which is observed annually as the International Day of Peace.

Since the Taliban was ousted, kite flying has re-emerged as a popular past-time, particularly for Afghan children.

Those taking part in today's event belong to Kabul's Aschiana Foundation, a non-governmental group that looks after street children. Expressing the hopes of many of the children, 11-year-old Sweeta said, "We want our peace kites to fly as high as possible, so everybody can see how much we want peace."

Bo Asplund, the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative in Afghanistan, shared the hope of the children who wished for peace. "Far too many Afghans continue to live in the shadow of fear and insecurity. Let us today pledge to do more to remove the scourge of fear and insecurity from the lives of people across the country."

Earlier this week children from Aschiana travelled around Kabul visiting television stations to appeal by song for support. Kabul municipality joined in by opening the fabled gardens of Babur to a photo exhibition for peace. A city cleanup and advertising campaign has been launched, and telecoms companies Roshan and AWCC have issued thousands of bulk SMS messages for peace – a first in Afghanistan.

In addition, peace marches are planned in the cities of Herat and Jalalabad, and in the southern and southeastern provinces – areas directly affected by the insurgency – UNICEF and the UN World Health Organization, along with Afghan health authorities, have launched a polio vaccination campaign to coincide with Peace Day.