Dr. Sima Samar,

Chairperson Commissioner Dr. Sima Samar is a well known woman’s and human rights advocate and activist within national and international forums. Since 1994, Dr. Samar has received various international awards on women’s rights, human rights, democracy, and women for peace. Dr. Samar served as the first Deputy Chair and Minister of Women’s Affairs in the Interim Administration of Afghanistan. Before chairing the Commission, she was elected as the Vice Chair of the Emergency Loya Jirga. She was appointed as the Chair of the AIHRC by Mr. Karzai, Chairman of the Afghanistan Interim Administration.

Sima Samar was born February 3rd 1957. Following the Soviet-backed coup, in 1979 her husband, his three brothers and more than 60 other family members disappeared and were never seen again. Sima Samar graduated from Kabul University Medical College in 1982. She then practiced medicine at a government hospital in Kabul, but after a few months was forced to flee for her safety to her native Jaghori where she provided medical treatment to patients throughout the remote areas of Central Afghanistan.

In 1984, she went to Pakistan for the education of her young son. After working as a doctor at the refugee branch of the Mission Hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, and distressed by the total lack of health care facilities for Afghan refugee women, she started a hospital for Afghan refugee women and children in Quetta.

In 1989, Samar formally established the Shuhada Organization and Shuhada Clinic. The Shuhada Organization now operates 12 clinics and 3 hospitals in Afghanistan, all dedicated to the provision of health care to the Afghan population and particularly to women and girls. In addition, the Shuhada Organization runs nurse, community health worker and traditional birth attendant training programmes and reproductive health education projects.

In 2012, the Shuhada Organization also operated 71 schools for girls and boys in Afghanistan and 34 schools for Afghan refugees in Quetta, Pakistan. During the Taliban regime, Shuhada’s schools in Central Afghanistan were among the few academic girls’ primary schools; the organisation’s girls’ high schools were the only high schools that girls were able to attend in the country. The Shuhada Organization also ran underground home school classes for girls in Kabul. Following the collapse of the Taliban, these home school classes became the basis for two schools for girls that now teach more than 3,000 students and were handed over to the government.