

فدراسيون زنان تجارت پيشه افغانستان
Afghan Women's Business Federation
(AWBF)



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"AfghanMarkSM" Global Trademark Announced Today: New Brand Certifies Better Pay, Working Conditions, Access to Education, Literacy Training and Health Care for Afghan Women Carpet Weavers

New Brand Certifies Empowerment of Afghan Women through Business, Not Charity.

(New York, February 13, 2007) The Afghan Women's Business Federation (AWBF) today made the première announcement of a new trademark called AfghanMarkSM, which is a certification brand label that will be carried on exported carpets made by Afghan women who are employed by women-owned or women-managed carpet-making businesses there.

The new AfghanMarkSM brand label on a carpet certifies that the Afghan women who made that carpet were paid fair wages while working in inspected working conditions with no illegal child labor, and with access to health care and education, including literacy training.

"This is a major humanitarian, educational and business development breakthrough *by* Afghan women *for* Afghan women in the post-Taliban era of our country's history," said AWBF spokeswoman Ms. Halima Kazem of Kabul, Afghanistan, who made the announcement at a press conference today at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City.

"For centuries, many Afghan women have toiled for much of their lives on looms, sometimes barely eking out a living, while making the hand-knotted, world-famous Afghan carpets that are emblematic of the artisan culture of Afghanistan. Many of these hard-working women today are illiterate, with limited social, health care or educational opportunities. Some are war widows. Most are mothers and many are breadwinners for their families. They sometimes work on the carpet looms for wages as low as one dollar per day, or less, while making high-end, heirloom quality carpets that can sell for premium prices," said Ms. Kazem. "As of press time, eight women-owned or women-managed carpet companies or consortiums employing 24,000 weavers have signed on to the AfgahnMarkSM brand certification program. We expect the numbers to continue to grow as more companies, carpet studios and artisans join."

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Ms. Kazem continued, "The new AfghanMarkSM trademark brand means empowerment for working Afghan women not through charity, but through business, with fair pay and labor rights. For these women, the AfghanMarkSM brand means more and better food for their families, education, health care and, above all, greater respect for Afghan women who, under Taliban rule, and in other eras, were often treated poorly.

The new AfghanMarkSM trademark empowers conscientious consumers, wholesalers, importers and retailers to make an informed choice and select high-quality carpets that meet the certification standards of the AfghanMarkSM brand.

Only "heirloom quality" carpets, which the AWBF certifies as a particularly high standard of carpet, will be allowed to carry the new AfghanMarkSM certification trademark. Each carpet will be numbered and will have with it a brief story of the woman or women who wove the carpet.

Ms. Kazem explained, "The AfghanMarkSM was created by the post-Taliban era Afghan Women's Business Federation, which is headquartered in Kabul with women-owned and women-managed member business throughout Afghanistan. We want the AfghanMarkSM to become a true, meaningful and increasingly widely recognized symbol of a better life for Afghan women weavers who aren't asking charity, but just the opportunity to benefit fairly from their hard work on the looms."

The Afghan Women's Business Federation was established in Afghanistan after the elimination of Taliban rule with U.S. assistance from the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) www.cipe.org and funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) www.usaid.gov

The Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) in New York City, the venue that was chosen for the world première AfghanMarkSM announcement, is dedicated to the art of the Himalayas and the surrounding regions.

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Digital Photos

Note to Editor: You can find downloadable digital color AfghanMarkSM logo images and dozens of 300 d.p.i. color photos of Afghan women working at all stages of carpet making, from wool preparation to actual weaving, plus "snapshots" of life in Afghanistan today, including women attending school, at www.afghanmark.com/press

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PS Note to Editor: In America, we consumers have become accustomed to seeing various kinds of quality assurance and seal-of-approval labels on products made in America or elsewhere. While it is appropriate to say that the new AfghanMarkSM is in the spirit of and inspired by these same concepts, the new AfghanMarkSM is uniquely Afghan -- by Afghan women and for Afghan women. It is a clearly recognizable step forward in earnings, empowerment and status for the hard working women of Afghanistan.