Community focus, pluralism and civil society essential in fragile states, says Aga Khan

Berlin, Germany, 15 January 2019 - His Highness the Aga Khan today emphasised three essential ingredients for stability and effective development in fragile contexts: a focus on local communities, a commitment to pluralism and the importance of a strong civil society.

The Aga Khan was speaking at an event entitled, “Fragile States ‘Weiterdenken’ (‘Thinking Ahead’) – Utilising Experiences from Stabilisation Measures for the Future”, which brought together leaders from the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and German development partners.

Based on AKDN’s experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere, His Highness emphasised three crucial ingredients for stability and effective development in fragile contexts:

- **Concentrating at the local level.** When national conditions are not favourable – as is often the case in fragile or conflict situations – the most meaningful, and quickest, change can often start locally, building credibility and confidence more quickly.

- **A commitment to pluralism is essential.** Consultation must be wide and everyone present in a community must benefit.

- **Civil society, which AKDN refers to as private organisations designed to serve public goals, is of utmost importance.** Such institutions can be stabilising factors and points of continuity when security is fragile and politics are volatile.

The Aga Khan commended the longstanding partnership of the AKDN and Germany, recognising their shared commitment and achievements in Afghanistan, while also drawing upon the hallmarks of AKDN’s approach. He also reflected on lessons that would be applied in other situations of fragility and crisis.

Over the past 25 years, Germany and the Aga Khan Development Network have developed a strong partnership, together investing close to € 600 million in programmes in Asia and Africa, spanning clean energy and infrastructure, water and sanitation, financial services and tourism, as well as education, health and civil society. Over this period, AKDN has worked especially closely with the German Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry of Development (BMZ) through KfW Development Bank and its commercial subsidiary DEG.

In Afghanistan, with Germany’s support, AKDN has strengthened regional connectivity through cross-border infrastructure; improved the health sector through public-private partnerships; and restored Afghanistan’s rich cultural heritage at the Bagh-e-Babur and Chihilishtoon Gardens.
The “Weiterdenken” event focused on the German-funded “Stabilisation Programme for Northern Afghanistan” (SPNA), which has programmed over € 100 million through local communities into some 430 projects, building trust, government legitimacy, and civic engagement.

“Stabilisation in Fragile Contexts: Challenges, Lessons and Opportunities” was organised by KfW Development Bank, the German Federal Foreign Office, Chatham House and the Aga Khan Development Network. The event provided an opportunity for AKDN and KfW to share the findings of a recent review of the Stabilisation Programme Northern Afghanistan (SPNA) and gather insights from a wide range of experts on the effectiveness of foreign assistance and actors working on stabilisation initiatives in Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Through in-depth discussions with a range of experts, the meeting sought to reflect on the challenges, lessons learned and good practice that can be built on in diverse country contexts.

NOTE

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) works to improve the quality of life for tens of millions of people in 30 countries. Many of its institutions have been operating in the developing world for over 50 years. Today, the Network employs over 80,000 people. Its budget for non-profit social and cultural activities stands at US$ 950 million. The Network’s economic development arm, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, generates annual revenues of US$ 4.3 billion, and all of its surpluses are reinvested in further development activities, usually in fragile, remote or post-conflict regions. For more information, please visit: www.akdn.org/

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