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PRESS RELEASE

AFGHAN GEMSTONE TRADERS EXHIBIT FOR FIRST TIME AT THE GEM AND JEWELRY EXCHANGE TRADE FAIR

Tucson, Arizona | February 2-7, 2010

20 Afghan companies will participate in the Gem and Jewelry Exchange Trade Fair to be held in Tucson, Arizona from February 2 to 7, 2010. This premier event for gems, minerals and jewelry is one of the most popular with buyers, collectors and enthusiasts from around the country and the world.

The Afghan traders are sponsored by United States Agency for International Development's Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED) Project, with the assistance from the Afghan Gemstone Traders Association. The main purpose of their participation is first to show case Afghan gemstones to the world - to let people know that Afghanistan is the source of some of the finest rough and cut emerald, ruby, aquamarine, tourmaline, kunzite, silver and gold jewelry and lapis products - and secondly to directly link the Afghan traders with the international gemstone buyers who attend the fair in thousands.

This is the first Gem and Jewelry Exchange Trade Fair that ASMED has sponsored for the Afghan gemstone traders, however the ASMED gemstone sector development project was launched last Spring 2009, with the goal of reviving Afghanistan's rich gemstones and jewelry heritage. Much of the appeal of jewelry and gemstones relates to its origins. Afghanistan's rich, exotic culture and the history of gemstone trading in the region will form the foundation of the marketing message. Working with miners, the Ministry of Mines and local and international gemstone dealers, the ASMED project, which is currently being implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc., will stimulate the industry from mines to markets, with 'fair-trade' working practices, social responsibility and environmental sustainability at its heart.

More than 15,000 gem specimens will be on display at the Afghanistan Pavilion located in the International Hall at the Gem and Jewelry Exchange Trade Fair at stands 2702-2711. If proper support is provided to the sector, and contacts made directly between sellers and buyers, estimates are that within five years the gemstone industry alone could export over \$300 million a year, which was approximately half of the total value of exports of all products from Afghanistan in 2008 alone.