



# Afghanistan



## Country Overview:

*Location: Southern Asia, north and west of Pakistan, east of Iran*

*Size: 652,230 sq km*

*Population: 231,108,077 (July 2013 est.)*

*Capital: Kabul*

*Export-commodities: opium, fruits and nuts, hand-woven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semi-precious gems*

*Import-commodities: machinery and other capital goods, food, textiles, petroleum products*

*Currency: Afghan (AFA)*

*Religion: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, other 1%*

*Government Type: Islamic republic*

*Chief of State: President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid KARZAI (since 7 December 2004); First Vice President Mohammad FAHIM Khan (since 19 November 2009); Second Vice President Abdul Karim KHALILI (since 7 December 2004); NOTE - the president is both the chief of state and head of government*

*Language: Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%, Pashto (official) 35%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%, much bilingualism*



## Islamic Republic of Afghanistan / Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Afghanistan

### Meetings and Negotiations

- Punctuality may be **expected** of foreigners.
- Shake hands when arriving and leaving business discussions. Should an Afghan place their right hand over their heart after shaking hands, it is appropriate to **reciprocate** this gesture.
- When greeting a female colleague, **always** wait for her to initiate the handshake.
- Eye contact between men and woman should be **avoided**, but acceptable between men as long as not prolonged.
- **Always** enquire about a person's health, business, family, but not in depth.
- Business cards are given **respectfully**; comment on the card and any qualifications the giver may have and place it in a folder or card holder.

- Islam is practiced by the majority of Afghans and governs much of their personal, political, economic and legal lives.
- **NOTE:** the left hand is considered dirty. Use the **right** hand to hand things, eat, shake etc.
- Time is allocated during the working day for **prayer**. This may interrupt the daily business schedule.
- Generally, the key decision maker is the most senior person in the company.
- The negotiation process is based on building **strong** relationships.
- Afghan working week begins on **Sunday** and ends on **Thursday**.

- Muslims follow the doctrines of the Koran, which **forbids** alcohol, pork and shellfish.
- Pointing and sitting cross-legged with your shoe/foot in the direction of someone's face is considered **rude**.
- Putting the right hand on the chest means "thanks, but no, thanks".

### Gift Giving

- Gifts are nicely wrapped and presented subtly with the right hand or both hands. Gifts should not be expensive, otherwise viewed as a bribe.

#### Appropriate Gifts:

- compass, pens/promotional materials

#### Gifts to Avoid:

- alcohol/perfume, items made of pork, gifts/images of dogs
- Green wrapping paper is reserved for weddings.

### Business Attire

- Men: conservative suit/shoes.
- Women: modest/loose fitting clothing that covers the arms and legs.

### Behavior

## Business Tips continued

### Conversation

- Basic Dari: **Hello** (Salam), Good morning (Sob- Ba-khir), Good afternoon (zohor- ba-khir), Good night (shab-ba-khir), **thank you very much** (tashakor besyar ziad), you're welcome ( qabeli tashakor nest)
- **Honor** in Afghan culture defines the reputation and worth of an

- individual. A deal with you may bring your Afghan business associates **prestige, honor** and **respect**.
- Afghan communication style is rather indirect; will rarely get "no" as the answer.
- Afghans generally negotiate with a win-lose mentality. Pointing out Afghan advantages may assist in negotiating.

### Topics to Discuss:

- culture, history, popular sports: Buzkashi a team sport played on horseback, soccer (football)

### Topics to Avoid:

- previous/current wars with England, Russia, and the USA, religion (unless inquiring about its history), terrorism.

