



Summary of the Pugwash meeting on Afghan reconciliation

Dubai, 15-17 January 2013

A meeting was convened on the issue of Afghan reconciliation in Dubai on 15-17 January 2013 as a sequel of the meeting convened also in Dubai on 21-23 September 2012. Few *preliminary points*:

1. No participant was supposed to represent any official position of the Afghan Government, or of an Afghan political party or of the insurgents. Nevertheless an effort has been made to have a diversified participation so to represent in a fair way most of different viewpoints existing on the issue of reconciliation.
2. Everybody is convinced that the Afghan reconciliation process should be an Afghan led process. The Pugwash initiative does not mean to be an alternative to any official activity (such as those promoted by the High Peace Council) but at best to be a complementary initiative aimed at informally discussing ideas and proposals. Similarly all the participants in the Pugwash initiative believe that all the non-official initiatives for peace should complement each other in a constructive way.
3. All participants in the Pugwash meetings spoke (and speak) in their personal capacity and their opinions cannot be reported to anybody outside the meeting, without having a prior consensus by the relevant person.
4. All non-Afghan participants also participated in their personal capacity, even when they were officials.

Main points discussed in the Dubai meeting

Peace and a workable compromise: avoiding a civil war

1. There was a universal consensus that people in Afghanistan want *peace* in a unified Afghanistan. After about 30 years of war, peace and tranquility is an absolute necessity for the people of Afghanistan. The risk of a *civil war* in Afghanistan after the departure of the foreign troops should be by all means averted.
2. In order to bring about peace in Afghanistan one needs to progress towards a *ceasefire* to allow full freedom of negotiations and at the same time to understand how to generate a *political process* that could represent a workable compromise.
3. There are many issues that could be part of this compromise, but the most important ones are the definition of an effective *power sharing*. Some will most likely present proposal for introducing modifications to the Constitution. These proposals should be discussed in an open way, with the aim of finding a workable way out.

4. Power sharing should happen through *elections* and the consensus to this point was remarkably high. Elections are very well compatible, as it has been pointed out, with an Islamic society. The definition of the electoral system could and should be the subject of discussions and negotiations.

Afghan as an Islamic society

5. Afghanistan is and will be an *Islamic society*. Freedom of expression for the Afghan citizens, *justice* and particularly social justice (as it has been pointed out) are essential aspects of an Islamic society. Respect of *human rights* is also an essential part of an Islamic society. Note incidentally that also religious freedom is an important part of an Islamic society as "*there should be no compulsion in religion*" (see Holy Quran 2:256).

Strengthening the preparation for peace and security

6. It has been pointed out that the insurgency (represented by the Taliban) has its roots in the presence of foreign military forces in Afghanistan. The *withdrawal of the foreign military forces* will create a different situation in the country. The foreign military forces, in their residual time of their staying in Afghanistan, should participate in their own ways to the ceasefire.
7. *Liberation of prisoners and amnesty* are important confidence building measures that can help promote a peace process in Afghanistan. The US promised to free some key prisoners from Guantanamo and it is regrettable that this has not happened.
8. Beginning immediately all the efforts should be made to *avoid any form of harm to the civilian population* of Afghanistan. This is in principle accepted by everybody but not implemented or not enough implemented in reality. All sides should be very careful in avoiding civilian casualties (see in particular the message for the festivity of Eid Ul Fitr by the Taliban leadership)
9. It has been asked whether, in case of a ceasefire supported by the Taliban, there will a 100% guarantee of cessation of hostilities. The answer has been a *prudent one* as it has been pointed out that splinter groups may always appear. Also people should be prepared for possible activities of *spoilers* or spoiler groups.
10. While preparing for a ceasefire, it would be good to lower the rhetoric from all sides and try to think to the different political position in Afghanistan as such and not as either "terrorists" or as "puppets of the invaders"

No to Al Qaida

11. There was a uniform consensus that in peaceful unified Afghanistan there should be absolutely *no role for foreign militants* or for people who would launch attack on any other country from inside Afghanistan. There should be no role and no presence of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan.
12. It has been pointed out also that not all foreign people leaving in the Pashtun area (across Afghanistan and Pakistan) are necessarily armed militants. Some are bona fide refugees and, as such, should be protected.

Necessary steps to facilitate talks

13. In order to facilitate the talks and the negotiations aiming at a future peaceful Afghanistan the issue of blacklists should be promptly solved. Beginning immediately restrictions on blacklisted people, who are participating to official *and* non-official talks for peace, should be waived with zero bureaucratic obstacles.
14. The establishment of a working office in *Doha* of the Taliban is an important step to facilitate negotiations.
15. Talks and negotiations should be comprehensive. *No political party or group should feel to be left out.* The specific interests of all different groups should be respected, provided that the goal is to have a unified and peaceful Afghanistan.

Economic recovery

16. The foreign countries that have been involved in the occupation of Afghanistan should feel the responsibility of helping the new Afghanistan to develop an *economically viable society*. The various military activities (including the activities of contractors) have generated a large war-dependent economy. Readdressing this economy to a “normal” economy in a pacified Afghanistan will require a strong economic contribution from those countries that, for various reasons, have contributed to keep Afghanistan at war in the last years. Afghanistan will need now more than ever economic assistance.

Neighboring countries

17. A peaceful Afghanistan is not only in the interest of the Afghan people, it is also in the interest of the countries that will withdraw their military forces from Afghanistan. But mostly important it is in the interest of *all neighboring countries with no exception*.
18. Pakistan in particular will benefit very clear from a peaceful friendly Afghanistan. *Pakistan* should take the opportunity of facilitating talks and negotiations between Afghanis of all parties and militants. Pakistan could become a significant meeting ground for the Afghan reconciliation process. The US should facilitate this role of Pakistan and, while appreciating the difficult situation of Pakistan today, should respect any possible initiative for talks that could happen in Pakistan.