

Renewing Ties

Dialogue among the Civil Society Representatives
of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

28 - 29 November 2016
Kabul, Afghanistan



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Finally, SAHR Secretariat thanks the SAHR Bureau members particularly the Chairperson, Ms. Hina Jilani and Co-chairperson, Dr. Nimalka Fernando, for their support and guidance.

Abbreviations

AWEC	Afghan Women's Education Center
AWSDC	Afghan Women's Skills Development Center
CASA	Central Asia South Asia
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
HRD	Human Rights Defender
HPC	High Peace Council (Afghanistan)
ISACPA	Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NRLM	National Rural Livelihood Mission
RSPN	Rural Support Program Network
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAHR	South Asians for Human Rights
SAPAP	South Asian Poverty Alleviation Programme
SERP	Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India

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Introduction



South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) organised a dialogue among civil society representatives of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan under its Women, Peace and Security programme. It was hosted by Afghan Women's Education Center (AWEC) on 28 and 29 November 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan. The main purpose of the dialogue was to review the peace and security issues in Afghanistan, especially with regard to relations between Pakistan and India and its impact on the country.

This report includes a summary of the proceedings and conclusion of the consultation.

The delegation that visited Afghanistan for the dialogue were: Dr. Maryam Bibi, Ms. Bushra Gohar, Ms. Shandana Humayun Khan and Ms. Naila Hussain from Pakistan; and Mr. Jatin Desai,

“SAHR is confident that this dialogue would contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics between the three countries, identify the role of civil society groups, particularly women’s groups in the region, in facilitating peace and security in Afghanistan and initiate discussions on joint approaches between civil society groups and others in the three countries.”

.....
Dr. Shweta Singh and Ms. Shalini Nair from India.

The two day event entailed a consultation and meetings with key government and non government personnel. The delegation also met

with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, High Peace Council and other government personnel to discuss their recommendations. The Kabul Declaration (annexed herewith) was released at the conclusion of the dialogue.

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Overview of the Status of Relations among Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

In the South Asian region long term interstate tensions and internal conflicts have caused long lasting effects on the political stability, economic development, governance and respect for human rights in all countries of the region. Preexisting gender inequality, impunity, and high levels of corruption has exacerbated the existing situation for women and human rights in the region. The loss of life and destruction due to ongoing conflicts has led to immense social cost. For instance, Afghanistan has hardly been able to reach development goals and freedoms for women. Instead, the number of threats to their life is increasing each day.

Unfortunately, despite the progress made in the last few years such as India's growing economic power and existence of Pakistan's consecutive democratic civilian governments, many analysts consider the South Asian region as one of the worst places for women and children. Afghanistan is impacted by chronic religious fanaticism and extremism. Concurrently, poverty is also on the increase where nearly 35.8% of the population is living under the poverty line.

Landlocked countries in South Asia continue to remain extremely vulnerable and dependent on their neighbours for basic needs of the people. This vulnerability increases

“This is the moment that demands increased regional ties between civil society to eliminate mistrust and work towards peace and cooperation in South Asia.”

due to tensions among countries, especially in the case of Afghanistan, where the peace and security concerns of India and Pakistan negatively affect Afghanistan. There are many opportunities in the region that could change the situation of landlocked countries such as Afghanistan. The Central Asia South Asia (CASA) 1000 electricity project, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline, trade agreements, the Gwadar port and the Chabahar port are multiple opportunities for economic growth in Afghanistan, which would also lead to possible stability in the region.

Fears and mistrust among the three countries are destabilizing the region. India and Afghanistan boycotted the official South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit 2016 due to growing tensions between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. Quadrilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, USA and China have been suspended; and Afghanistan continues to complain about Pakistan's interference in its internal security.

However, positive relations between India and Afghanistan negatively affect Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan, especially their security situation.

This is the moment that demands increased regional ties between civil society to eliminate mistrust and work towards peace and cooperation in South Asia.

Challenges and Best Practices in Cooperation among Civil Society of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

Connectivity among people of South Asia is badly affected due to state centric security policies which impose restrictions on visas etc. Despite this, civil society in the region have continued to initiate actions that promote peace and cooperation among the people and the leaders. This chapter discusses such initiatives and focuses on ways the civil society at regional level can play an effective role in addressing bilateral issues towards increased regional impact.

Pakistan Citizens' Drive: This initiative by Palwasha Hassan, Naila Hussain and Shandana Khan helped Afghan refugees during the US attack in Afghanistan in 2001. The assistance received especially from Punjab, which is usually perceived as alienated from the Pashtuns, was immense. Currently, the situation of the Afghan refugees is at its worst and there seems to be a lack of motivation, awareness and distrust among people. The positive rhythm of the emotional ties between the two countries which has always existed could be harnessed to inculcate cordial relations and trust among people.

Afghan refugees' and women's experience of building peace in conflict areas: With their struggle the resilient Afghan women have carved out an important role in the peace building of the country. There are inspiring stories of Afghan women, many of whom have lived as immigrants in Pakistan and returned to conflict ridden Afghanistan to bring significant changes to society.

Impact of art and culture on cooperation, i.e. Pushtoon Cultural Festival:¹ Art and culture highlight the commonalities between the people including the Pashtuns on both sides of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This intimacy relates to the common issues that affect them such as security and the rise of extremism, violence and terrorism. It has always been perceived that through art and cultural performances such as the Pushtoon Cultural Festival, which include common components, people can be brought together for building trust and awareness of issues.

Women's Shelter in strengthening cooperation: Women play a significant role through initiatives such as the women's shelter in enhancing

cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan Women's Skills Development Center (AWSDC) has been working in providing shelter to women victims. They have received cases of women not only from Afghanistan, but Pakistan and other neighboring countries. The intervention of AWSDC has led to several success stories of victimised women, especially women trafficked to Afghanistan, who have been repatriated.

Role of media in building cooperation: Media reports on the geo-politics of South Asia, specifically Afghanistan, have been largely restricted to coverage on conflict or the crisis situation, political negotiations or terror attacks. With the spotlight firmly on conflicts, tales of human suffering and endurance often fade into oblivion. There is a need to focus on the communities that are most affected by internal conflicts.

However, there have been initiatives that facilitate greater understanding between people. For instance, following the terror attack in Mumbai in 2008 by extremists by the Pakistan based terrorist group Lashkar-e-

¹ Shandana Khan presented on an Afghanistan-Pakistan Pashtoon Festival in May 2015, which was a volunteer effort by four Pashtoon women in Pakistan. It was a three day event in Islamabad, also attended by the ex Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Janan Mosazai as well as by Pakistan's Advisor to the PM on Foreign Affairs, Mr Sartaj Aziz.

taiba the relations between the two countries became strained. Parallel to that media reports only focused on violence and terror. In 2012, a group of Indian journalists representing the Mumbai press club visited Karachi and Hyderabad as a part of a process to launch a people to people interaction. On their return the Indian papers carried stories that went beyond merely replicating the government's official line. Stories of fishermen languishing in jails on either side of the border, those living in exile, stories entailing the need for the liberalisation of the visa regime and improve bilateral trade. There were also stories on the endemic gender disparity in the region, drawing parallels from Pakistan and India about Karo Kari in Sindh and honour killings ordered by Khap Panchayats (Grand Caste Council) in rural India.

Another important example of successful cross-border media initiatives is that of the AmankiAsha, a joint project by India's Times group and Pakistan's Jang group in 2010. The effort was to promote mutual peace and development through civil society dialogue, by way of literary festivals, musical performances, and discussions on common issues such as Kashmir, prisoners, the water-dispute, terrorism and trade. Ironically, the very same Times group's channel Times Now is known to spew the worst

“There are numerous women’s issues which impact on promotion of peace and development at national and regional level. However, women activists, women’s organizations and other like-minded persons in various spheres have been working on these issues. All their messages need to be cumulated into one strong influential voice.”

kind of anti-Pakistan venom on its prime time shows.

Over the last two years, the discourse of nationalism in India under Prime Minister Modi has become extreme. It has also resulted in corresponding increase in provocative language and jingoism in the media.

Networking among women on peace and development:

Networking from grassroots to regional level for knowledge transfer, sharing of expertise and strengthening of voices is crucial for women working on peace and development. There are numerous women's issues which impact on promotion of peace and development at national and regional level. However, women activists, women's organisations and other like-minded

persons in various spheres have been working on these issues. All their messages need to be cumulated into one strong influential voice. Currently, there has not been consistent effort of the networks and organisations to deliver a strong message at policy level and to conduct regular monitoring of their implementation. The refugee issue of Pakistan could be taken as an example where the Awami National Party took up the issue of forced repatriation by forming a high level committee comprising of the representatives of political parties in order to avoid an occurrence of a humanitarian crisis.

However, this endeavour needs to be strengthened through endorsement by all civil society networks, activists, and media personnel advocating for it.

Formal and Informal Peace Processes in Afghanistan: Chronology, Strengths and Weaknesses

Afghanistan formally started the peace process in 2010 with the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Process. It was at the London conference that the Afghanistan and Taliban peace process was emphasised.² There were however informal peace talks being carried out by the then President Karzai with the Taliban, which was strongly opposed by civil society groups as they were conducted without the engagement of the people and political parties. It was in June 2010 at the Peace Jirga that the concept of the Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC) was set up and decided that it should reintegrate the foot soldiers of the Taliban to decrease the violence and put pressure on the leadership who are residing outside the borders of Afghanistan, mostly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Karachi and Quetta. The Afghan government found that the reintegration process was not so successful because the reintegrated persons found themselves not in an enabling environment, and some of them even returned to the Taliban fold.

In 2015 the national unity government took the peace process as their first area of focus. They started with bilateral talks with the Government of Pakistan and began independently to talk to various armed groups. One of their remarkable achievements was to sign a peace deal with Hekmatyar.³

Despite all these efforts, the HPC has not been able to start a peace process within the country. Afghanistan is a country with diverse ethnicities, political groups, social classes, tribes and communities. Because of the burden that the Afghan government has in order to deal with the Taliban, it has not been able to pay adequate attention to local conflicts and people's grievances. This too adds to the insurgency and instability in the country. It is also very important to deal with the grievances of the youth that contribute to conflict between these groups.

A new initiative by the Afghan government is the Quadrilateral talks involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, USA and China which came up with a road map to bring the leaders of Taliban

residing in Pakistan to the peace table and begin face to face negotiations with the Taliban leadership. But with the death of Mullah Omar, this process was sabotaged. When once again the peace process gained some momentum, a statement was issued by Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan's Advisor on Foreign Affairs naming the Taliban as puppets of the Pakistan government which resulted in the Taliban stepping back from the peace talks. This last meeting took place in February 2015.

There were also informal talks between the Taliban and Afghan political and civil society groups which had an impact on Taliban leaders in Doha. Currently, the Afghan government is focusing on a reconciliation process with the Taliban but it is too early to assess its effectiveness, but it remains a hopeful process. The HPC has also revised their strategy to create a culture of peace and dialogue between the Taliban and government.

With the postponement of the official SAARC summit 2016, one of the major challenges now faced by the government of Afghanistan is the lack

² Julian Borger. Afghanistan Conference sets out plan for two tier peace process, Guardian, 28 January 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/28/afghanistan-london-conference-analysis>

³ Ghani, Hekmatyar sign a peace deal, Al Jazeera, 28 September 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/afghanistan-ghani-hekmatyar-sign-peace-deal-160929092524754.html>

“However, it would be beneficial to Afghanistan as well as to the whole region if both Pakistan and India were involved in the peace talks.”

of bilateral communication between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pakistan’s Perspective on Peace talks and Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan:

Decades ago Bacha Khan warned against the proxy war in Afghanistan and stated that the fire that will start in Afghanistan will engulf the region. There is a growing realisation and consensus among the political leadership in Pakistan that Pakistan’s soil should not be used to conspire against any other country and that any contradictory self-destructing policy needs to be stopped. Till today pro Taliban Afghan policy has partly led to Pakistan’s isolation at the regional and global level. Further, there is a growing consensus in Afghanistan against a Taliban installed government. Much positive development has happened in the country such as elections, a new constitution; gradual increase in economic and social rights of people, such as right to education, and a comparatively vibrant media which

inspires future prosperity. At the same time, there is a greater need for peace and reconciliation defined and owned by the people.

Pakistan’s unilateral decisions to seal off or tighten security of eight key border crossings on the Afghan-Pakistan border to seemingly prevent militants and illegal activities has negatively affected relations between the two countries, including the blocking of the trade routes. The postponement of the official SAARC Summit 2016 symbolised the isolation of Pakistan, which seems to have realised at political level that applying a narrow security perspective as a key determinant of its relationship with its neighbours, does not address the complexity of Pakistan’s relationship with them - and vice-versa. Pakistan needs to broaden its perspective and build on the positives such as commonality of cultures, ethnic groups, religion and trade.

People’s voice is missing in Pakistan’s perspective of Afghanistan. There is a great lack of transparency in the peace talks. Pakistan military has mainly led the 14 peace talks between Afghanistan government envoys and the Taliban in Pakistan. These talks in a way provide legitimacy to the Taliban.

India’s Perspective on Peace talks and Relations between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India:

Afghanistan being a land locked country located strategically in the South and Central Asia is dependent on neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran and China. India being the South Asian power has much interest in Afghanistan. One could thus depict the keenness of both Pakistan and India in the peace building process in Afghanistan as an ongoing proxy war between them. However, it is strategically advantageous for Afghanistan if Pakistan and India resume cordial relations. Every time hope was built up regarding ameliorating relations of the two countries in the recent past, it ended with disappointment. President Ghani’s support of India’s decision to withdraw from the official SAARC Summit 2016 delineates the newly built strength in the relations between the two countries. However, it would be beneficial to Afghanistan as well as to the whole region if both Pakistan and India were involved in the peace talks.

Enhancing Civil Society Space for Future Engagement in Afghanistan: Identifying Themes and Areas of Cooperation

The link of economic development to regional security:

The security in the region has an intrinsic relationship with the economic development and political stability of the region. Pakistan has been Afghanistan's major trade partner.⁴ The tense relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan not only affect the national revenue through bilateral trade, but deeply impacts lives of the people on both sides of the border. There have been problems between Afghanistan and Pakistan on issues of trade and transit facilitation. The bilateral trade was USD 2.5 billion in 2009-2010 and now it is less than USD 1.7 billion. This decline has had a negative impact on the industries and lives of people in Pakistan. Apart from Pakistan, Afghanistan has considerable trade links with India as well.

Afghanistan will benefit immensely if free movement is facilitated in SARRC countries, as it will increase connectivity among the people and augment trade and services among nations. It is also a significant that the strategic location of Afghanistan in the Central Asian region is also crucial

to open up trade with several other resource rich land locked countries.

Trade access to India through the Wagah border is a recent issue that has developed negative emotions in Afghanistan against Pakistan.⁵ The government will raise this in the revision of the bilateral trade agreement and if not resolved, it will be raised as a dispute in the World Trade Organization against Pakistan, which will further damage the relations between the two countries.

Conflict transformation and peace building: lessons drawn from South Asian models

A major challenge in the region is the dehumanisation of one country by another which is evident from the strained relations between India and Pakistan and distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is essential to promote humanisation among the neighbouring countries in order to maintain peace and harmony in the region and achieve sustainable development by eliminating poverty. This could only be attained through dialogue at all levels.

In order to achieve effective results from track two diplomacy, the Connectors and Dividers Analysis could be applied to create a holistic support network to sustain the discussion framework. This support system will comprise of important civil society actors such as activists, community organizations, political and religious leaders, media personnel, universities, academics and schools who will act as connectors in this instance. They will be strengthened by capacity building programmes on peace building and sustainable development at local level.

Also, religious radicalization is one of the major challenges to maintain peace in the region. Generational peace building at school level through carefully revised curricula is essential in fighting against it.

Cooperation among communities: Rural Support Programs Network India-Pakistan Collaboration in Rural Development

The Rural Support Programs Network (RSPN) is Pakistan's largest non-government, development network. It is a local Network with a high level

⁴ Ahmed, V & Shabbir, S (2016). Trade and Transit Cooperation with Afghanistan: Results from a firm level survey from Pakistan, https://www.sdpi.org/publications/files/Trade&Transit_Cooperation_with_Afghanistan_Results_from_a_Firm-level_survey_from_Pakistan_W-153.pdf

⁵ Syed, B S. Ghani's call for India joining transit trade rejected, Dawn, 11 Sept, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1283445>

of support from the government. RSPN consists of eleven Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) whose strategy is to assist rural people in building their own sustainable village institutions, to undertake development work and hold government accountable. RSPs work with 43 million people across Pakistan. RSP work was piloted in six South Asian countries under the overall ambit of the SAARC Charter, which states “The centre-piece of a policy framework for poverty alleviation has to be the mobilization of the poor in order to enable them to participate directly in the decisions that affect their lives and prospects” by the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA 1991).” Under SAARC, in 1994 UNDP launched the South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) to replicate the work of RSPs in these countries - India (Andhra Pradesh), Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The political commitment of India in the State of Andhra Pradesh for this programme was very high which led to a very good outcome.⁶ The program in India was done in partnership with the Andhra government under the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP). As a result the programme



had immense support and resources and its strategy was replicated by India's National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), which is the largest rural development programme by any government, internationally. In Pakistan, despite the fact that the RSPs have worked since 1982, government commitment has not been as high. RSPN and SERP have strong links and have visited each other's programmes often. This exchange with India is little known in Pakistan and is one way in which tangible collaboration can be undertaken between neighbours. This success delineates that it is worthwhile to collaborate on such participatory

development programmes in Afghanistan as well and RSPN is keen to do so.

Protection of women and human rights in the tribal belt areas: Women's welfare and promotion of basic rights in the rural and tribal communities in Northern Waziristan have been conducted by an organisation called Kwhendo Kor (Sister's House).

Sister's House has been working in Waziristan since 1993. At present, the organization has more than 343 staff with services spread in more

⁶ RSPN(2015). Report on the National Conference on Community Driven Development (CDD), <http://success.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/National-CDD-Conference-Report.pdf>

Enhancing Civil Society Space for Future Engagement in Afghanistan: Identifying Themes and Areas of Cooperation



than 300 villages. As an establishment working for the welfare of the women in the tribal belt the challenges have been immense and numerous and there have been threats from religious leaders and the extremist elements. The work conducted by the organisation has proved that while working in a hostile area it is important to have absolute involvement of the community through extensive building of mutual trust. Cultural understanding, political backing and flexibility and consistency in the efforts on the part of the establishment towards the upliftment of the community too is important. There are many misconceptions about education and women's rights in these areas. The community used to see them as alien to Islamic religion and culture. The organisation has been very successful in involving the community including the religious leaders, who eventually

came up with recommendations towards reclaiming women's rights.

Human rights and women rights protection and networking models

Human Rights Defenders Committee is a mechanism based in Kabul, first put forward by a group of activists to the EU delegation in 2014. The Committee is comprised of representatives of prominent human rights organisations and the AIHRC. EU provides technical support to the Committee including meeting facilitation. The aim of this establishment is to provide protection and reach out to well-known activists at risk. When Kunduz fell in the hands of Taliban in 2015, the Committee provided support to the vulnerable female activists by facilitating their evacuation from the province and for their accommodation in a safe house in Kabul. In some cases the activists even provided emergency relocation

in neighbouring countries. In such cases the facilitation of visa for urgent relocation becomes a challenge and is usually attained through personal contacts. The committee would also look into the specific needs of the affected rights defenders such as psychological wellbeing and the need to continue with their cause of action.

Accordingly, in South Asia, there is a need to create a strong local support network to back these organisations which assist vulnerable human rights defenders. Networks such as SAHR has been actively involved in promoting human rights in the region and would be in a better position in promoting the right to defend human rights and rights of the human rights defenders.

Recommendations

At the end of the consultation following conclusions were adopted by the participants for collaborative efforts:

- **Facilitation of travel through easy visa access for Afghan nationals and citizens of other South Asian countries**

Strengthening relations among civil society in the region and promoting track two diplomacy are crucial to ensure voices across South Asia. However, connectivity among the people in South Asian countries, even though it is repetitively promoted at official SAARC summits in various ways, has not improved. Thus, in a region where art, culture and religion and social and economic issues are common to the region and diversity could play a large role in vast development, inadequate connectivity among the civil society is an immediate issue to be addressed.

- **Engagement with youth and providing regional exposure**

It is essential to engage with the younger generation in order to pave the way for a harmonious and peaceful region with sustainable development eliminating extremism, intolerance towards diversity and elimination of poverty in the future. Education is the key to this end. It is quite worthwhile to look into to youth exchange programmes on sustainable

development, art and culture and human rights among countries in the region as well as scholarships at the South Asian University specifically for Afghan youth.

- **Addressing the refugee issue and related concerns between Pakistan and Afghanistan**

The issue of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has become a humanitarian as well as human rights concern. Pakistan has hosted Afghan refugees since the invasion by former Soviet Union during cold war period. At present according to the Human Rights Watch there are 1.5 million Afghan Proof of Residency (PoR) card holders in Pakistan. They undergo numerous hardship, especially women headed households. It is essential to carry out an assessment prior to a rapid action response. A fact finding mission is recommended as a rapid action response to be conducted preferably in the first quarter of 2017.

- **Emphasis on women and peace building at regional level**

Afghan women, through many struggles, have achieved much in reconciliation and peace building in Afghanistan. It is also crucial to reiterate the strength of peoples' voice, especially women's meaningful participation in the main security discourse at regional level as well. It is

worthwhile to look into the possibility of holding the annual symposium on women organised by the first lady's office under the theme of "Women and peace building in the region". The next symposium which is scheduled to be held in May 2017 should be a forum for the participants of this consultation to engage with.

- **Protecting the Human Rights Defenders**

Many human rights defenders and their loved ones have been harassed and abused by government agents as well as by non-state actors in conflict and in non - conflict situations. Their personal safety and the continuity of their work and responsibilities should be made a priority. Strengthening networking amongst activists, HRDs and organizations committed to promote the protection of the HRDs is important.

- **Promotion of the human interest stories and best practices of reconciliation and harmony among communities through media**

It is important to promote media with responsibility to oppose irrational and irresponsible media coverage. It is common to see negative consequences of such media coverage evoking violence through extremism and intolerance. Therefore, it is important to look into possibilities of recreating

Recommendations



an initiative like 'Aman Ki Asha' among Afghanistan, India and Pakistan.

- **Initiating and promoting civil society monitoring and critical analysis of the peace process and related proceedings**

Critical assessment on the peace process and the implementation of trade agreements are significant in identifying mistakes and rerouting the processes on the right track. It is essential if regular monitoring could be carried out of the current processes and assessments are conducted on the past ones and make these analyses

available in the public domain in order to promote transparency of the peace building and reconciliation processes.

Annexure 1: Kabul Declaration

We, the civil society members from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, met in Kabul on 28 - 29th November 2016, to discuss means of facilitating peace and security in Afghanistan and formulate recommendations for a joint approach between civil society groups and others in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. We concluded a successful meeting with the following recommendations:

1. Continued Regional dialogue -

We call on our governments to resume bi-lateral and multi-lateral talks at all levels: In addition to the regional dialogue through different official platforms like SAARC and Heart of Asia, it is essential to promote track two diplomacy despite the current challenges.

2. Afghan refugees in Pakistan -

We urge the Pakistani government to look at the issue of Afghan refugees in Pakistan on humanitarian grounds: They must be treated with respect and dignity and their security needs should be promptly fulfilled. We also recommend the need to revisit Pakistan's policy on forced repatriation of Afghan refugees and facilitation of

voluntary repatriation in order to take in the current relevant dimensions in planning and implementation.

3. Visa liberalisation - Over the past years visas for SAARC country nationals to visit the countries in the South Asian region have become more challenging due to the increased national security protocols. We call upon the SAARC governments to facilitate SAARC visas for civil society members from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and other SAARC country nationals, to facilitate connectivity and a people to people dialogue in the region.

4. Exchange programs - It is important to strengthen exchange between groups and individuals engaged in sustainable development, education and culture, promotion and protection of human rights, inclusive women's development and media across Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

5. Countering violence incited by extremism - We urge the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to work with youth through education to counter violence instigated by extremism and radicalisation.

6. Trade - We observe that the decline in inclusive dialogue has affected economic ties leading to increased suffering of Afghan people and their livelihoods. We call upon the governments of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to prioritise and promote trade, which in turn will improve relations among these countries.

Annexure 2: Conference Agenda

Dialogue among the Civil Society Representatives of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

28th November 2016 . Hotel Intercontinental, Kabul, Afghanistan

Day 1 (Monday 28 November)	
8:45 am	Registration
09.15 am	Welcome and Introduction of SAHR by Palwasha Hassan and Jatin Desai
09.30 am	Overview of the status of relations among Afghanistan, Pakistan and India by Palwasha Hassan - Discussion -
10.00 am	Tea
10.15 am	Session 1: Challenges and Best Practices in Cooperation among Civil Society of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India Moderator: Jatin Desai Presenters: Shandana Humayun Khan - Art and Culture: Pukhtoon Cultural Festival Naila Hussain - Pakistan Citizens' Drive: Afghan refugees, women's experience of building peace in conflict areas Mary Akrami - Women's Shelter in strengthening cooperation Shalini Nair - Role of the media in building cooperation Hasina Safi - Networking among women on peace and development - Discussion -
11:45 am	Session 2: Afghan Peace Talks: Regional ties and the way forward Moderator: Zohra Daud Presenters: Wazhma Frogh - Formal and informal peace processes in Afghanistan: chronology, strengths and weaknesses Bushra Gohar - Pakistan perspective Jatin Desai - Indian perspective - Discussion -
1.00 pm	Lunch
2.00 pm	Session 3: Enhancing civil society space for future engagement in Afghanistan - Identifying Themes and areas of Cooperation Moderator: Shaharзад Akbar Presenters: Mariam Bibi - Protection of women and Human Rights in the Tribal Belt areas Muzamil Shinwari - The link of economic development to regional security Shewta Singh - Conflict transformation and peace building: Lessons drawn from South Asian models Shandana Humayun Khan - Cooperation among communities: Linking the experience of Rural Support Program Network Samira Hamidi - Protecting the Human Rights Defenders Protection and Networking Models - Discussion -
3:30 pm	Tea
3:45 - 5pm	Conclusion and Recommendations Remarks: Jatin Desai and Sarwar Mamound

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Day 2 (Tuesday 29 November)

08:30am - 9:30am	Dr. Sima Samar - Head of Afghanistan Independent Human rights Commission, Human rights activist and former minister
10:00am - 11:00am	Mrs. Rula Ghani - Afghan First Lady
11:15am - 12:15pm	Nader Naderi - Advisor to President, Renowned activist and head of reform commission
1:30pm - 2:30pm	High Peace Council – leadership (Habiba Sarabi former minister of women affairs, Mr Qasimyar, Mr.Gillani and Hasina Safi leadership of HPC)

Annexure 3: Short Biographies of the Speakers

Jatin Desai - India

Jatin Desai is a Bureau Member of SAHR. He is an activist and journalist, and is the national joint secretary of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace & Democracy. He is also a Research Associate with Focus on the Global South, a policy research organization. Mr. Desai was also President of the Bombay Union of Journalists (BUJ) and he has worked with various organizations on the issues of communal amity, peace and nuclear disarmament.

Dr. Shweta Singh - India

Shweta Singh is an Assistant Professor, in the Department of International Relations, South Asian University (SAU). She was also a Fellow at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand and is the recipient of the prestigious United States, Department of State, International Leadership Award in 2010 and Mahbub Ul Haq Award in 2013. Her research focuses on Conflict Transformation and Peace building (particularly interventions designs and conflict assessment tools), Mediation and Armed Conflicts in South Asia (specifically Sri Lanka and Kashmir) and Gender, Conflict & Security.

Shalini Nair - India

Shalini Nair is a Senior Assistant Editor of The Indian Express (New Delhi) with over twelve years of experience working as a journalist. As part of the national bureau of the publication, she reports and writes columns on various development policies of the Indian government and its impact on the ground. Her writing focuses mainly on gender, social justice and urban and rural development. Shalini holds a distinction in MSc in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London). She is also a Chevening South Asian Journalism Fellow, Aga Khan Development Network Scholar, JN Tata Scholar and has received a letter of appreciation from the jury of the Anupama Jayaraman Memorial Award 2008 for her journalistic work on human rights and social justice.

Ms. Bushra Gohar - Pakistan

Bushra Gohar is the Central Vice President of the Awami National Party (ANP). She is a former member of Parliament (2008-2013). She chaired the Parliamentary Committee for appointing chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Pakistan. She was elected chair of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Women's Development and was member of the National Assembly's Standing Committees on Interior, Finance and Kashmir Affairs. She was a member of the National Assembly's special committee on Millennium Development Goals & Energy Sector. Ms. Gohar was also a member of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus' working council. Ms. Gohar has a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from USA, with over 20 years experience in policy influence, development, human rights in Pakistan and the region. She is also the Adviser of Women Regional Network (WRN), member of the Advisory Council of the Women, Peace and Security Research Institute (RIWPS) and a Member of the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention which works on women, peace and security.

Dr. Maryam Bibi - Pakistan

Maryam Bibi comes from a small village in the Frontier Region of Bannu in Pakistan. She obtained her M.Phil. in Social Policy from the University of York, UK in 2008 and has conducted a research study on gender and women and children related issues in FATA.

Maryam Bibi's early experience also led her to become the founder and Chief Executive of KhwendoKor, which began in 1993 in a single village with four staff members, and now works in more than 300 villages and has 343 staff. This NGO is based in Pakistan and works in the remote and undeveloped areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In addition, Maryam Bibi also serves on the boards of the Society for Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) and full board member of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership, FATA Education Agency, the Elementary Education Foundation (EEF) of the Government of KPK; Beijing + 15 ; KASHAF; the Dost Foundation and the SUNGI Development Foundation. She contributes to the work of the Social Welfare Department of the Government of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province; the Women's Study Centre, University of Peshawar; the NWFP Women's Writers' Forum; the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPABE) and member of National Commission on the status of Women. She is also actively involved in the peace movement in AmanTehreek (Provincial level) and Amaniteehad (National level). Her efforts for women and children empowerment have been acknowledged by different national and international organizations.

Shandana Humayun Khan - Pakistan

Shandana Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) has over eighteen years of extensive grassroots and policy level experience in rural development, mainly in the Rural Support Programmes. Her strengths are in project management, their design and social assessment. Her work at the RSPN has involved undertaking policy advocacy with donors as well as with the highest levels of government and associated institutions (e.g. the National Reconstruction Bureau and the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment). She contributed strategic insights and inputs into the Pakistan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Local Government Ordinance 2001, gender mainstreaming policies, and inclusion of social mobilisation in government programmes at all levels. She has been an advocate for meaningful, result-oriented partnerships between the poor communities and the government and private sector. Shandana Khan is a strong team player and leader, managing a team of over 100 multidisciplinary professionals at RSPN. She has a social sciences background, with a Masters degree in the Social and Political Sciences from Pembroke College, University of Cambridge as well as a Masters in International Public Policy from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University.

Naila Hussain - Pakistan

Naila Hussain is a Lahore-based development researcher with a focus on environment, gender and development. In that context she has written extensively on women, development and poverty alleviation. Her work includes a book on Afghan case studies titled, *Afghan Women: tales of sorrow and hope*. The book has been published in September 2005, with a foreword by Nancy Dupree -a well-known writer and a long term observer of Afghanistan since 1962. She has also worked with WWF on Health Assessment in the Palas Valley, Kohistan, which happens to be among the most hostile and conservative areas of Pakistan. She

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wrote a report titled *Poisoned Lives: The Effects of Cotton Pesticides*. The report seeks to investigate the adverse effects on environment as a result of excessive and an indiscriminate use of pesticides in South Punjab. These include: health hazards, particularly pertaining to women. Whilst working in the Nation newspaper, she wrote a number of articles on environment, women and culture. She has done extensive voluntary work independently and with various organizations; especially, in the aftermath of the devastating October 2005 earth quake in Pakistan. In September 2001, along with some friends Naila Hussain initiated a Pakistani Citizens Support Initiative for Afghan Refugees. This was purely a voluntary initiative undertaken by Pakistani women and contributed to largely by Pakistani citizens. These days apart from the usual work, she is doing a diploma in painting.

Shaharzad Akbar - Afghanistan

Shaharzad Akbar joined Open Society Afghanistan as Country Director in September 2014. Previously, she was Partner and Chief Operating Officer with QARA Consulting, Inc., which she had co-founded in 2010. Shaharzad was also the first elected Chairperson for Afghanistan 1400 movement (July 2012-July 2013). Shaharzad studied anthropology in Smith College and completed the M.Phil in Development Studies at the University of Oxford, as a Weidenfeld Scholar. Shaharzad has several years of leadership and management experience. Previously, she represented Afghanistan 1400 in numerous high level gatherings and has led several political initiatives of the movement. In her capacity as QARA's COO, she has designed, led and implemented major projects covering various provinces of Afghanistan and engaging high-level government officials and prominent international and Afghan scholars. Shaharzad has extensive media and research background. She worked as analyst for Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), journalist for BBC Afghanistan and several other media entities and research assistant with Women of Courage book project. She has published in both international and Afghan platforms. Her publications include articles in academic journals as well as political analysis pieces for major Afghan newspapers.

Palwasha Hassan - Afghanistan

Ms. Hassan holds a master's degree in Post-war Recovery Studies from York University, UK and has been former fellow in United States Institute of Peace. She is a dedicated Women's Rights activist pioneering much critical initiatives for promotion of Women's rights and civil society in Afghanistan that includes first women legal support organization Roazana, Women and street Children Center, Madadagar Women and Children Safe Home Network, Irfan Cultural Center among others. She is a strong advocate on women peace building and women participation in social and political development.

Ms. Hassan is born and raised in Afghanistan in her early teens she migrated with her family to Pakistan where she completed her school and acquired under graduation degree in Science. Ms. Hassan remains director of Afghan Women Educational Center (1995-2002). In her work with AWEC she laid the with collaboration of other women in exile the foundation of Afghan Women Network, a visionary movement of women which is playing pivotal role in Women's right lobby in the country from last twenty years.

Wazhma Frogh - Afghanistan

Wazhma Frogh has a Masters in Law and Human Rights. She is a leading civil society and human rights activist with specialization in women peace and security. She has over 20 years of experience working with women. She is currently an Advisor on Human Rights and Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Defense. Ms. Frogh conceptualized the Institute for Women Peace and Security (RIWPS-Afghanistan) following the first Peace Jirga in 2010 with an effort to include the voices and perspectives of people, particularly women in the peace process. Meanwhile, she continues promoting and supporting female police in the national security forces, has been part of the key actors behind the first Female Police Integration Strategy by the Ministry of Interior and appointed as first woman to be the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Minister of Interior. Besides having implemented numerous projects & initiatives for protection & promotion of women's rights and human rights along with the local women groups, her work around the Afghan Constitution, the Elimination of Violence against Women Law, advocating for women's rights in the Shia Personal Status Law, women's involvement in international platforms such as the London and Bonn Conference as well as work on the High Level Commission against Child Abuse are examples of her campaigning & activism.

Samira Hamidi - Afghanistan

Samira Hamidi is holding a Masters (LLM) in International Human Rights Law and Practice from University of York, UK. Ms. Hamidi is a freelance consultant, women's rights activist, Chairperson of board for Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Chairperson of the Human Rights Defenders Committee. Previously she has worked as Program Director with Empowerment Center for Women (ECW) (2013), Country Director for AWN (2010-2012), Gender Coordinator with UNDP (2006-2009) and Deputy Human Resources Director with the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (2004-2005). Ms. Hamidi has contributed towards the women's rights agenda through her different roles and responsibilities since 2004. She has been able to carry on policy advocacy, contribute in strategic decisions of the organizations towards women's empowerment agenda, design and conduct conferences, trainings, workshops and advocacy events, participate in lobby initiatives at the national and international platforms. Ms. Hamidi has participated in national peace consultative Jirga, BSA Jirga, Tokyo International Conference on Afghanistan as civil society elected speaker and selected civil society delegate for Brussels Conference on Afghanistan.

Mozammil Shinwari - Afghanistan

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari is the Former Deputy Minister of Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) (Dec 2011 - Aug 2016). He also served as Acting Minister for 5 months in the start of the National Unity Government in 2015. Mr. Shinwari has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the American University of Afghanistan. Mr. Shinwari brings more than nine years of highly specialized experience in the fields of international trade, bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations of trade agreements, public finance management and budget formulation. Mr. Shinwari held several key positions before being promoted as Deputy Minister. He was the Director General of the International Trade of the MoCI from October 2009 to December 2011, Advisor to the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Budget Formulation and Policy Manager at the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Shinwari is an adjunct Lecturer at American University of Afghanistan, where he teaches Business. He has been the Chief Negotiator for Afghanistan in Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) 2010, Chief Negotiator for Afghanistan's WTO Accession, Chief Negotiator for Afghanistan in bilateral negotiations with USA, EU, Turkey, Japan,

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Canada, Chinese Taipei, Norway, Thailand and South Korea in WTO, Chief Negotiator for Afghanistan in Cross Border Transport Agreement with Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, and Trade Policy Focal Point for Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) During his work with the government, Mr. Shinwari was the main representative of the government of Afghanistan for Trade and has represented Afghanistan in numerous bilateral, regional and international conferences and forums related to South Asian Association for Regional Economic Cooperation (SAARC), the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Zohra Yusuf Daud - Afghanistan

Zohra Yusuf Daud is Media and Public Relations Advisor to the office of First Lady from 2015 onwards. She is wife of Presidential Candidate Daud Sultanzoy. Zohra Yusuf graduated with a Degree in Journalism and French Literature from University of Kabul. She holds a Diploma in French Literature from Sorbonne University, France. Ms. Zohra has hosted a number of shows on TV from 1973 till 1980 ranging from news casting, interviews, quiz shows and interviews on Radio Television Afghanistan. She also served as an employee of Ministry of Cultural Affairs Afghanistan. From 2004 till 2014 she produced and hosted the show "Zohra Night" from Arianna Channel in Los Angeles California. In December 1972 Zohra became the only woman to this date ever to be crowned Miss Afghanistan. Zohra Yusuf is a Social activist and throughout her stay in America, she remained involved in the Afghan American community, using her spare time volunteering for her community's cause. In 1996 she co-founded the Afghan Women Association of Southern California; Zohra began her new project Women for Afghan Women, an organization to promote Afghan women's human rights, in April 2001. As a part of that project she also co-authored a book by the same name which was edited by Sunita Mehta, and also featured contributions from Homaira Mamoor, Gloria Steinem and Eleanor Smeal and others. Zohra has had more than 22 interviews with TV, newspaper and radios in relations to the project.

Mary Akrami - Afghanistan

Mary Akrami is the Executive Director of the Afghan Women Skills Development Center (AWSDC), the organization that established the first shelter for women at risk in 2003. In 2015, AWSDC successfully established the first Women Human Rights Defenders' safe house in Kabul. Ms. Akrami envisions an equitable and peaceful society through the vehicle of AWSDC. To this end, she initiated the community based peace shuras in various provinces of Afghanistan. These peace councils became the only platform where women had the opportunity to engage in conflict resolution at the local level, thus enabling women's inclusion in community-based peace building. Ms. Akrami's organization has been working with other civil society organizations engaged in peace building and conflict resolution by providing them with training and mentorship on women's engagement in political and community based peace building. Ms. Akrami is engaged in advocacy and campaigning for women's inclusion within the political and peace processes including the 2010 Peace Consultative Jirga and the 2011 Grand Assembly for the Peace Process. Since 2013, she has been the Chairperson of the Board of Directors at Afghan Women's Network (AWN). Because of her struggles for women's rights, Ms. Akrami received the first international Women of Courage Award from the United States Department of State in 2007. Ms. Akrami has also participated in numerous international conferences and regional platforms for women in peace in the Afghanistan Pakistan region. Ms. Akrami is an alumna of New York University's Human Rights Advocacy Fellowship in New York, United States.



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