



Afghan People’s 10-Point Road Map for Peace

The report of the Afghan People’s Dialogue on Peace contains 33 recommendations to the Government of Afghanistan, the armed opposition, the international community and Afghan civil society on steps needed to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan. The recommendations of the 4,648 Afghan men, women and youth involved in (phase II) of the Afghan People’s Dialogue on Peace have been expanded into provincial road maps for peace. Thirty (30) road maps have been completed to date.

Afghan men, women and youth nationwide urged national and international policymakers at all levels to promptly and adequately address the root-causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace through focus on the following 10 identified priorities:

1) **Promote Responsive State Institutions**

- Rampant corruption within local government institutions (police, prosecution departments and judiciary) and parliament requires stronger checks and balances to improve oversight of these institutions.
- Reform programmes need to be implemented, including independent and non-political measures to remove corrupt Government officials, enhanced training and capacity building initiatives for local government employees, ensuring transparent and merit-based appointments of local government employees with priority given to eligible candidates from provinces where the post is located, and introducing more efficient administrative procedures.
- A performance-based system should be introduced with rewards (*makafat*) and punishments (*majazat*) that would recognise well-performing officials and reprimand those engaged in corruption.

2) **Strengthen Security Institutions**

- The Government’s limited reach was viewed as a main factor in the Government’s lack of authority over territory and its ability to peacefully manage local conflicts. Afghans in general acknowledged progress on reforming and strengthening the Afghan national security forces (ANSF) and reported a high-level of confidence in the Afghan National Army. Afghans repeatedly raised serious complaints, however, about criminal and abusive behaviour, including gross violations of human rights, by the Afghan National Police, Afghan Local Police and pro-Government militias.
- To build effective, responsive and democratic security forces, the People’s Dialogue proposed establishing and expanding the functions of security institutions.
- Afghans asserted the need for continued international support to professionalize and build a community-responsive ANSF, and stressed the need for continuous support and cooperation in equipping and training the ANSF to strengthen ANSF capacity which was viewed as vital to maintaining security after withdrawal of international military forces at the end of 2014.
- To build confidence in the ANSF, people proposed the establishment of an effective oversight mechanism with local communities empowered and enabled to report human rights violations by the ANSF with unlawful actions investigated and punished.

3) Disarm and Disempower Illegal Armed Groups and Other Pro-Government Militias

- Afghans emphasised the imperative to end the illegitimate influence of local powerbrokers and warlords over local government institutions. This action, people asserted, would in turn strengthen peace and stability at the district-level. Afghans throughout the country strongly sought re-introduction of the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme, launched by the Government in June 2005 and ended in March 2011.
- Afghans stressed that opium poppy cultivation, drugs smuggling and illegal extortions by drug-traffickers have sustained or exacerbated the conflict in many areas. People stated that revenues generated from cultivation, processing, and trafficking of opium poppy, as well as drug addiction, directly benefitted insurgent groups and local militias. People blamed these groups for contributing in a direct way to further destabilisation and insecurity in remote areas where the illicit economy thrives.
- Afghans called on the Government to prioritise eradication of the illicit drugs trade and the revenues it generates by strategically locating Afghan national security forces in areas where the drugs trade flourishes to curb insurgent activities and disempower illegal armed groups.

4) Promote Human Rights, Rule of Law and Tackle Impunity

- Afghans strongly advocated that the Government and international community should take practical steps to ensure the safety and security of civilians during armed counterinsurgency operations and protect their basic human rights in that context. Afghans were very vocal in their desire for stronger rule of law, transparent, accountable and efficient State institutions, and an end to Afghanistan's legacy of impunity.
- The overwhelming majority of Afghans involved in the People's Dialogue suggested that reforming law enforcement and the judicial system must remain at the centre of any efforts to establish durable peace. They proposed vetting of key justice sector personnel, developing and enforcing comprehensive laws and institutional and procedural changes aimed at combatting corruption and abuse of authority in justice sector institutions, along with adequate oversight to ensure the independence of justice institutions.

5) Promote Women's Rights and their Role in Peacebuilding

- Nationwide, people called for urgent action by the Government and international community to implement measures which would end the negative impact of harmful traditional practices on women's rights, and allow women to participate meaningfully in all peacebuilding initiatives.
- Afghans called on the Government to work proactively to raise awareness in all communities on harmful practices against women and girls, and work to fully implement the 2009 law on the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW law). Many Afghans agreed "*we must not allow either women's rights or human rights to be victimised*" (as part of any efforts to secure peace).

6) Enable Youth through Fostering Job Creation and Strengthening the Education System

- Afghans noted with huge concern that the Taliban and other armed groups are easily able to recruit disenfranchised youth who struggle to otherwise find meaningful employment. People stressed the need for specialised skills training centres and a robust job creation process including increased investment into construction and development projects which would require human resources.

- Afghan men, women and youth also stressed the need for the Government to establish a more functional and efficient education system for youth which would include more adequate infrastructure and quality of lessons. Afghans reiterated that improved educational infrastructure would help to accommodate additional students.
- Afghans called on the Government to ramp up efforts to reopen schools for girls in those districts where the presence of armed groups has violated Afghan girls' right to education.
- Ensuring a sounder quality of education was also said to require efforts towards building the capacity of teachers and adopting modern curricula, including science and technology, at all levels tailored more specifically to the capacity of students.

7) Realise Equitable Social and Economic Development

- Afghans all viewed tangible progress in economic and social development, including concerted efforts towards strengthening the education system, creating employment opportunities and ensuring equitable access to development, as crucial to sustainable peace. A majority of Afghan men, women and youth stressed that despite some clear improvements, achievements have not been equal to the billions of dollars in donor aid spent in Afghanistan over the past 12 years. Progress should be measured not only on the quantity of services, such as the number of schools and hospitals built, but on the quality of these critical services.
- Afghans stressed that fostering employment opportunities, particularly for youth is imperative.
- Afghans noted that the persistent lack of equitable and sustainable development has had a particularly severe impact on vulnerable youth and destitute farmers, two segments of society affected by high rates of unemployment and lack of opportunity, illiteracy, susceptibility to drugs and the drugs trade in certain strategic provinces. They called on the Government to focus more proactively on fostering job creation and emphasised development investment in educational facilities for youth as ways to help curb the problem.
- Sustainable investment in the agricultural sector such as land extension and sufficient irrigation systems would also help improve rural economies. Private and Government-owned enterprises such as textile production, carpet production, resin cleaning, oil production and dairy factories could also create employment opportunities if they received adequate Government support.
- Afghans also noted that a large portion of communal disputes often arose around issues concerning uneven access to development assistance. The people highlighted that all Afghan citizens are equally entitled to benefit from development assistance regardless of their ethnicity, political connections, links with Government, geographic location or existence of conflict in their respective regions. Throughout the country Afghans emphasised the use of countrywide assessments to monitor development projects as a way to increase the effectiveness of development assistance.
- Overall, Afghans offered several concrete proposals on how sustainable development could be achieved in their regions. Due to the agrarian character of many Afghan provinces, a number of Dialogue participants stated that development aid should be directed towards the construction of hydro-electric water dams, which they stated would assist in combatting draught, foster job creation and provide a steady supply of power to their provinces.

8) Ensure Inclusivity in the Peace Process

- Throughout the People's Dialogue, ordinary Afghans consistently emphasised that ensuring wider participation in the peace and reconciliation process – including by men, women, minority groups, civil society and especially youth – is central to its success. People believe increased

participation by these segments of society would better ensure inclusivity and local ownership of the process.

- Many Afghans expressed concern that Afghan youth are not being encouraged to participate in local governance, which they believed also serves to frustrate peace. Greater youth participation could be achieved through the introduction of youth incentive programmes or through recruitment policies specifically aimed at targeting youth.

9) **Strengthen Community-based Dispute Resolution Mechanisms**

- Dialogue participants noted that Afghans have a strong culture of addressing conflict and local dispute through people-led councils (*jirgas* and *shuras*). They universally stated that supporting such local conflict resolution mechanisms in a way that serves the community's interests, including those of women and ethnic minority groups, would foster a political and social space in which ordinary people could engage with each other and with conflicting parties in a constructive dialogue for peace.
- A number of Afghans cautioned however that *jirgas* and *shuras* should not serve as forums for adjudication of serious human rights violations or for acts of violence against women.

10) **Neutralise Spoilers of Peace**

- To address the negative influence of peace spoilers, Afghans strongly advocated for vetting mechanisms based on objective criteria for both ex-armed combatants and leaders of the peace and reconciliation process. Afghans throughout the country believed that those who are involved in the peace process should be honest, influential, well-respected in their communities and democratically elected/appointed. People strongly recommended that those who have been accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity should be excluded from the peace process.
- Afghans living in border provinces urged the Government to do more to secure Afghanistan's borders and prevent the infiltration of armed groups into Afghanistan. Afghans reiterated their call for neighbouring governments to cease backing armed groups through the provision of material support (weapons and/or safe havens).