

- stereotypes the resistance groups and the Taliban.

Moreover, it was suggested that the grand assembly (Loya Jirga) is not representative.

On the other hand, some participants suggested that all possible efforts are being exhorted to include the interested parties (including women, ethnic groups and former leaders) in the peace process and to convene the *Loya Jirga* as soon as conditions permit (i.e., as soon as the lists of possible village candidates are received). Emphasis was made on leading Afghanistan toward free elections, without witch-hunts. War criminals should be brought to justice through legitimate channels, such as the International Criminal Court. (Still the question of what to do with the Taliban after the conflict ends remained largely unanswered.) High-level diplomatic efforts are also underway to assure the Pakistani government of good intentions and hope of future enhanced cooperation. **Nevertheless, it was suggested that the peace process include more Afghan groups and experts and that more efforts be made to develop understanding with neighbouring countries, and especially Pakistan. Moreover, the new Afghan leadership should strive to gain the trust of ordinary people and members of resistance parties.**

Several participants criticised the bombing of Afghanistan and pointed out that **the outset of the military campaign might have hindered the King's diplomatic efforts and boosted the chances of the Northern Alliance to retake Kabul** – a scenario some recommended against. Concerns about the military action actually thwarting chances for peace and democratic transformation were expressed several times. Caution was raised about the implications of the military intervention not only for the people of Afghanistan and the “face of the conflict” there, but for the region as a whole.

There are **opportunities and challenges for good governance on the micro, or grass-roots level in Afghanistan**. The opportunities lie primarily with Afghan civil society groups: local NGOs and similar social structures, groups and institutions (cultural, political, or economic in focus). These diverse groups constitute a rich human resource which may well be the first point of contact for externally supported reconstruction activities.

Afghan civil society groups include:

Groups within Afghanistan:

- NGOs established by the UN as implementing partners for projects (i.e., Council for Cooperation in Afghanistan, Cooperation for Peace and Afghan Unity, etc.)
- Local NGOs which are not UN-established (i.e., locally funded home schools)
- Nascent NGOs (include professional associations)
- Private sector (some private companies provide public services)
- Religious Foundations (i.e., Emam Jawad Foundation for indigenous Shias)
- Local power structures (include *shuras* or councils, neighbourhood *maliks* and *vakils*)
- *Loya Jirga* or the grand assembly
- functionaries who carry out most public administration and would be invaluable for strengthening state infrastructures during a rehabilitation phase

Groups in countries of first asylum

Groups in the greater Afghan diaspora (including transnational professions).