The major themes that dominated the working group’s discussions were the emerging situation in Afghanistan and its implications for regional security, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, and the relationship between India and Pakistan after the terror attacks in Mumbai. There was also considerable focus on the role of the international community in Afghanistan, especially that of the United States, and the need to contain terrorism in the region, which is undoubtedly the biggest threat it faces today.

The issue of Afghanistan was discussed at length in the working group. Participants agreed on the importance of Afghanistan in terms of regional peace in South Asia. It was clear from the discourse that there is substantial divergence in perceptions among American, Pakistani, Indian, and Afghani positions regarding the fundamental origins of the insurgency. The problem of American insensitivity to the local context was mentioned time and again; yet everyone agreed that American success in its operations against extremists was essential for all interested parties. Participants also acknowledged the urgent need for Track-II dialogues between all parties, for which Pugwash was repeatedly cited as a preferred forum.

In terms of recommendations, participants suggested truth finding on all sides to dispel perceptions which are unnecessarily taken as realities and create disharmony in relations. Afghani participants pointed to the need of holding a referendum or taking a *loya jirga* consensus on legitimizing the presence of the international forces. While international assistance needs to continue, instead of following the currently employed laborious processes of contractual arrangements that leave only one-fifth of the assistance in Afghanistan, the Indian model was suggested, whereby the projects are directly employed by builders after approval by the Afghan government. Participants emphasized the importance for a UNSC binding
arrangement on neutrality in Afghanistan from all interested parties, while assuaging Pakistan’s safety concerns in the country. However, there is still a need to build a minimal consensus by all parties before issues of neutrality and economic buildup (including a move away from poppy cultivation) can be seriously addressed.

The participants discussed at length the deteriorating state of relations between India and Pakistan and most felt that there was an urgent need for some corrective action. Many participants noted that the two countries had indeed, in the past, made significant progress in addressing many of their outstanding conflicts, including the Kashmir issue. Remarkable progress was also made on the Sir Creek and Siachen Glacier disputes.

Participants recognized the extraordinary challenges that the Pakistani state faces today. Pakistani participants underscored that Pakistan is riddled by multiple challenges that threaten its existence. It needs to be understood, they pointed out, that there are many actors within Pakistan who are no longer under the control of the state. Moreover, the state does not have the capacity to deal with these “Frankenstein”. Furthermore, the situation in Swat, NWFP, and on the Pakistani western border was discussed in detail.

In this context, it was pointed out that India needs to be more sensitive towards the “trauma” that Pakistan is experiencing. Sabre-rattling by India, it was felt, would only precipitate the inability of the Pakistani state to deal with its problems. India, therefore, needs to realize that a peaceful and stable Pakistan is in its own interest. Peaceful coexistence of neighbors presupposes the existence of responsible and stable governments.

While it is a fact that Pakistan has not delivered on terrorism to the satisfaction of India, there is a need to deal with Islamabad with more sensitivity and understanding. More importantly, India needs to deliver on certain issues in order to ensure that the militants based on Pakistani soil, and their leaders inside and outside Pakistan, do not have an opportunity to use the India bogey to whip up passions in Pakistan. Pakistani participants were persistent in their objection to the suspension of the peace process. The Indian participants, however, remained realistic in their assessment that resumption of talks would be unlikely until after the elections.
All participants agreed that terrorism is a common threat to all countries and most certainly so for India and Pakistan. However, the discourse on terrorism within India and Pakistan has not yet been able to capture the importance of perceiving terrorism as a common threat affecting both countries, with the potential to disrupt daily life. Terrorism in India is still widely perceived to be a handiwork of Pakistan, used as a policy of statecraft. The participants were, however, willing to go beyond this popular perception and understood the Pakistani argument that terrorism has gone beyond the control of the state and thus needs to be tackled jointly by the two countries. Indian participants pointed out that it is important to investigate, prosecute and punish the 26/11 Mumbai terror perpetrators in order for India to join Pakistan on joint anti-terror initiatives. A Pakistani lawyer present however explained Pakistan’s legal constraints, which slow this process despite unprecedented measures taken by Islamabad. In this regard, it was pointed out that the SAARC terrorism initiative can be explored for finding a common ground among the South Asian countries for effectively countering terrorism in the region.

Almost all participants shared the feeling that both the countries have indeed lost an opportunity to resolve some of their outstanding conflicts. It was pointed out that the two neighbors were very close to a solution to the Kashmir issue in 2006-2007. Participants also noted that public opinion in India, Pakistan, as well as in the Kashmir Valley, was in favor of a political solution along the lines of the Musharraf formula.

Perhaps the most important point of consensus among participants was that unofficial interaction between Pakistani and Indian experts should continue in an uninterrupted manner irrespective of the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. All participants felt that there was tremendous value added of such interactions; these could act as a genuine means to convince both governments of the need for rapprochement and provide new ideas to that effect. Overall, there was support for increased Track-II interaction.

Ultimately, the sense was clear: there were major differences of opinion amongst all players, each country was not a monolith in terms of opinion but in fact had varying constituencies. Some saw Pakistan and Afghanistan’s survival as mutually beneficial, while others remained more ambivalent to the threat of such failure. Furthermore, all participants were of the view that the
US needs to be more sensitive of the ground realities while dealing with the region. Additionally, the group, while having differences of opinion regarding the specific approach to resolve the disputes, was convinced that the future lies in removing points of contention rather than looking away from each other. However, all agreed that there were no short-term and miraculous decisions in the offing. So all parties would have to behave patiently.

Specific Recommendations:

- Issues in the region should be looked at from the regional rather than the bilateral perspective; there is a need to have a more common understanding and coordinated approach to issues of mutual concern
- Despite the suspension of the composite dialogue, efforts should be made to continue, in fact enhance, track-II and people-to-people engagements
- The CBMs on security related issues agreed upon in the past between India and Pakistan should be continued and reinforced. CBMs which were under negotiation when the peace process stalled must be completed and implemented as soon as possible. Specifically, the back channel negotiations on Kashmir and other issues which had reportedly made tremendous progress should be revived
- Efforts should be made as far as possible not to allow relations to break after incidents of concern to one or the other side; efforts should be made to reinitiate the current peace process and it should begin from the point where it was left off
- All non-state exchanges between regional countries, especially youth groups and student exchanges, must be enhanced irrespective of the existing tensions. All bona fide PhD students from India and Pakistan should be provided with free access to the other side through SAARC approved travel documents
- The potential positive role of the media was singled out and the need for broader and deeper contacts between media groups and relevant quarters of the civil society was suggested
- Terrorist threats notwithstanding, the sovereignty of countries in the region must be respected, given the backlash that such breaches cause
• There was a strong convergence that the ultimate hindrance is the mindset of all sides involved. There was a need to revisit textbooks and materials of learning on both sides (Pakistan and India) to ensure emancipation of thinking.

• The issue of terrorism should be singled out as the major problem for the region and should be addressed through coordination among all sides. A key issue is to determine where the militant groups are receiving their funding and how these channels can be checked.

• Both countries need to convince each other that the other’s stability is important and crucial for its own well-being. There was a level of divergence on this issue during the sessions.

• There is now a need to set an agenda for specific concerns that Pakistan and India share and bring these to the table to discuss in future Pugwash meetings.

• India and Pakistan should coordinate their strategies in international fora on issues of global importance which impact both countries.

• Though the primary responsibility rests on the people of Pakistan, the international community, and specifically the regional countries, should do their bit to ensure Pakistan’s security and stability. Pakistan’s security concerns vis-à-vis India should be assuaged satisfactorily.

• Although India’s ex-Pakistan security concerns are well understood, there was a feeling that India and Pakistan should discuss the potential danger of thrusting the region into an arms race.

• In future meetings, the presence of the Iranian point of view should be more pronounced given its role in ensuring Afghanistan’s stability.

• Afghanistan’s role in South Asian stability and the Indo-Pakistan relationship should be addressed more directly in the context of India-Pakistan relations. There should be an effort to increase track-II and business-to-business contact between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. There is a need to address the mutual concerns of India and Pakistan in Afghanistan.

• Cognizance of the recognition of the divergence that exists among the various Taliban groups so that the decision to engage the ‘reconcilable’ ones can be made. However,
there was a concern that the disconnect between democracy and their values should not be at the cost of virtues of democracy

- There is currently a lack of coordination among military establishments from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the US on the War on Terror. Since the militaries remain at the forefront of the counter-terrorism policy, there is a need to ensure smooth collaboration on intelligence and other related matters.
- Set up a joint force to address the issues of narcotics and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan