

United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia

Programme of Action

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Preamble

Few regions of the world are as interdependent as Central Asia. Despite the existence of new and old security threats, the Central Asian countries have been successful in avoiding open conflicts. This is testimony that political will, mutual dialogue and supportive measures for conflict prevention are in place in the region. Yet, the existence of common threats requires common responses, given the risks of potential destabilization. Trans-border illegal networks of weapons, drugs and crime and terrorism; environmental degradation, conflictual water and border management; and ongoing instability in Afghanistan make conflict prevention and cooperation a necessity in the region.

The United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) has been established in Ashgabat to identify and address existing and potential threats and to strengthen cooperative security partnerships between the five governments of Central Asia, regional and international organizations. The Centre is led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The choice of priority areas for UNRCCA activities in 2009-2011 is based on the mandate of the Centre (UN documents S/2007/279 and S/2007/280), consideration of the multiple threats facing the region, and on the basis of consultations held with the governments of the region, international and regional organizations. Three clusters of priority areas for Central Asia have been identified. They include:

1) Cross-border Threats from Illicit Activities: Terrorism, Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking

The stability of Central Asian countries has increasingly been threatened by terrorism and religious extremism, often fueled by instability in the wider region and cross border factors such as arms and drug trafficking. Organized crime has a potentially destabilizing impact on internal and regional political systems, on trade as well as on the security and safety of communities in Central Asia.

Since the 1990s, the Central Asian region has become caught between a hub of production (Afghanistan) and a hub of consumption (Europe, Russia, China). Drug trafficking provides a major financial income for organized crime, money launderers, extremists and terrorists. In addition to increased criminalization of cross-border trade, drug transiting Central Asia is increasingly associated with corruption and consumption within the region.

Border regimes are necessary as a security measure against instability within the region and for curbing illegal flows of organized criminal networks, arms and drugs from neighboring regions. At the same time, however, open borders are necessary for economic cooperation and trade as most countries are landlocked in the region with little access to world market. Facilitating regional cooperation on border security and effective border management and supporting the Central Asian states in their own efforts to secure borders are therefore, key to regional stability, security and development.

2) Environment Degradation and Management of Common Resources such as Water and Energy

Environmental insecurities in Central Asia are the result of poor management of water resources, waste management, including of toxic and biological waste, radio-activity and pollution from uranium in the region, as well as ineffective agriculture policies which previously led to mono-culture, desertification and health pollution from the overuse of pesticides. Nuclear contamination is a problem for all countries in the region without exception. Fast developing extractive industries bring prosperity, but at the same time can have a negative impact on the region's bio-diversity. Climate change could also have security implications in terms of environmental conflicts and migration. The Aral Sea tragedy affects climate change far beyond Central Asia.

Problems related to water management have a significant conflict potential in the region. With the region connected through cross-boundary rivers, lakes and seas, a regional approach to the allocation, use and protection of the quality of water resources is essential. Furthermore, reconstruction in Afghanistan will necessitate more water for agriculture production, putting added pressures on downstream countries such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

The even distribution of energy and water sources in the region has been complicated by the decentralization process after the breakup of the Soviet system. Despite a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements, the system remains fragmented and compliance to agreements lag behind.

There is a need for a strong regional regime of exploration and management of water and energy resources with proper consideration of interests of all Central Asian countries and with due attention to environmental implications. An integrated water management policy is necessary which regulates upstream and downstream use, involving Central Asian countries as well as Afghanistan. The development of extracting industries in Central Asia should also be conducted in a manner that is beneficial for the environment and people of the region.

3) Implications from the Precarious Situation of Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan has a direct link to stability in Central Asia. The use of common resources such as water and energy in the region require cooperation to prevent conflicts. The stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan could lead to an opportunity for Central Asia for increased cooperation over electricity, gas, roads, pipelines, hydroelectric power, equipment, technology transfer, agriculture knowhow and technical support.

International efforts towards stabilization and development of Afghanistan need to be supported so that the conflict there does not escalate horizontally to neighboring Central Asia. Experiences in border control, interdiction of drug trafficking, and negotiations, learned from peacemaking efforts in Central Asia, including in Tajikistan, could be shared with Afghanistan.

Mandate, Objectives and Functions of the UNRCCA

I. Mandate

The United Nations Regional Office for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) is tasked with assisting the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in building capacities to peacefully prevent conflict, in facilitating dialogue, and in catalyzing international support behind projects and initiatives.

II. Objectives, functions and activities

Objective 1: To strengthen the preventive action and preventive capacities of Central Asian countries and recommend collaborative measures for meeting common multiple threats, including international terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, organized crime and environmental degradation.

Function 1.1

To liaise with the Governments of the region and, with their concurrence, with other parties concerned on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy.

Activities

- The SRSO to conduct regular travels to the capitals and seats of regional organizations for consultation, encouragement of political will, and identification of situations that could generate conflicts.
- Carry out good offices functions in countries of the region on behalf of the Secretary-General.
- Support the adoption by the governments of the region of conflict prevention measures related to cooperation on border issues, water and energy distribution, and combating all forms of illicit trafficking.
- Draw the attention of national governments and highest political leadership of the dangers of conflict and the benefits of prevention.
- Institutionalize consultative groups, such as the creation of a high level forum of Deputy Foreign Ministers and regular meetings of Central Asian ambassadors.
- Convene ad hoc “friends of Central Asia” meetings involving a variety of international and regional players in order to address specific developments in the region.

Function 1.2

Provide support for the enactment of resolutions and frameworks of action to address emerging problems and potential threats.

Activities

- Support the governments of the region in combating terrorism and religious extremism within the framework of the international treaties and relevant United Nations Resolutions, such as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, while respecting human rights.
- Facilitate the implementation of existing international norms and United Nations Resolutions related to priority areas of the UNRCCA.
- Assist in the introduction of new legal documents and frameworks, including on

curbing trans-national crimes and trans-boundary water management and energy supply. Attention should be given to ensure reliability of energy supply.

- Organize expert meetings and consultations on the adoption and implementation of regional and bilateral agreements, for example, ones related to trans-boundary water management and reliable energy supply among CA states and in a broader context.
- Support the commitment of the Central Asian countries to non-proliferation and disarmament, confirmed by the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

Function 1.3

Enhance regional capacities for preventive diplomacy through training and informing leading figures, decision makers and specialists of the region.

Activities

- Organize regular trainings and workshops by bringing together policy makers, practitioners and experts on preventive diplomacy, mediation, and negotiation skills.
- Liaise with diplomatic academies and institutes of strategic studies and international relations within the region and internationally to create new opportunities for training, study, and exchange of experiences for the young generation in Central Asia interested in conflict prevention diplomacy.
- Create linkages between think tanks within the region for improved analysis and assessment of common vulnerabilities and mechanisms for cooperation.

Objective 2: To promote actions of regional and international organizations for the harmonization of activities related to conflict prevention in Central Asia with due regard to their specific mandates and to provide leadership for the preventive activities of the United Nations.

Function 2.1

To maintain contact with the OSCE, CIS, SCO, ECO, EU and other regional organizations and encourage their peacemaking efforts and initiatives.

Activities

- Liaise with the regional organizations where Central Asian countries are member states or are cooperating closely with to assist in their conflict preventive efforts and initiatives and promote integrated regional approaches.
- Assist in raising political will for the design and implementation of regional initiatives launched by regional and international organizations.

Function 2.2

To facilitate the coordination of initiatives and exchange of information among national governments, regional organizations and the United Nations system and Bretton Woods Institutions.

Activities

- Convene forums of cooperation and dialogue for representatives of national governments, regional organizations, UN agencies and Bretton Woods Institutions around priority areas.
- Convene ad-hoc forums of working groups at the technical level between specialized agencies and with experts of countries.

Function 2.3

To provide a political framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the United Nations country teams in the region; and to support the efforts of the Resident Coordinators and those of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, in promoting an integrated approach to preventive development and humanitarian assistance.

Activities

- Coordinate with the United Nations Country Teams in all five republics for regular exchanges of information and provide political leadership and advice to their activities.
- Facilitate inter-mission and inter-agency cooperation among United Nations country offices in the region at the political level (for example, holding regular meetings of the heads of agencies in Central Asia) to develop common strategies.
- Encourage a coordinated programme of action around priority areas among UN agencies and international organizations by pooling of experiences.

Objective 3: To monitor and analyze the situation in Central Asia in order to give early warning and recommend necessary action to prevent risks and threats.

Function 3.1

To monitor and analyze the situation on the ground and to provide the Secretary-General of the United Nations and national governments with up-to-date information and early warning related to conflict prevention efforts.

Activities

- Facilitate the development of an integrated regional early warning and monitoring system among the United Nations entities and other regional partners active on preventive efforts
- Provide regular reporting to the Secretary General of the United Nations with special emphasis on regional threats and opportunities for collaboration.
- Reinforce regular exchanges of information and analysis within the region and at the international level through collaboration between analysis and research centres in the Central Asian countries and internationally. This could involve the institutionalization of regular consultations for example with Institutes of Strategic Studies, Institutes for International Relations/Diplomatic Academies in the region for the identification and assessment of conflict potentials and ways to address them.

Function 3.2

To draw awareness to conflict potential of trans-border criminal networks and extremism, environmental degradation and water/energy management, and the situation in Afghanistan.

Activities

- Help identify new initiatives and priorities based on the needs and political wills of concerned governments
- Use political influence to alert international donors about the needs of the Central

Asian states and act as catalyzer of international support behind projects and initiatives.

- Organize events at the high political level to build consensus and mutual trust around priority areas identified as trans-border cooperation, joint efforts towards organized crime and management of common natural resources and on the impact of the situation of Afghanistan in Central Asia.
- Develop targeted public information mechanism to support preventive diplomacy measures in Central Asia in cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities and partners in the Region.

Function 3.3

To maintain close contact with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to ensure a comprehensive and integrated analysis of the situation in the region.

Activities

- Organize high level meetings to raise awareness about the implications of stability/instability in Afghanistan for Central Asia.
- Contribute to the maintenance of direct linkages and regular exchange of information between Central Asian governments, the Afghan government, UN Agencies operating in Central Asia and UNAMA in Afghanistan.
- Help disseminate the lessons learned from peacemaking in Central Asia.
- Support the participation of Central Asian countries in reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and enhanced technical cooperation.
- Support the cooperation between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan on cross-border issues and management of water and energy.