

**United Nations Regional Centre for
Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)
Programme of Action for 2015-2017**

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established on the initiative of the five Central Asian Governments in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in 2007 to identify and address existing and potential threats and to strengthen cooperative security partnerships between the five Governments and with regional and international organizations, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The Centre began its operations in 2008 and is led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

2. This Programme of Action builds on the two previous triennial Programmes of Action, for 2009-2011 and 2012-2014, respectively. It is based on the Centre's mandate, taking into account lessons learned, current realities and emerging challenges in Central Asia and its neighborhood. It provides an indicative list of priorities and activities. The Programme of Action serves to guide UNRCCA's activities for a three-year period and is designed to be adaptable to developments in the region and beyond during this period. It emphasizes the need to address underlying vulnerabilities at an early stage in order to prevent potential instability.

II. Key Priorities for the period 2015 to 2017

3. The Programme of Action for the period 2015 to 2017 focuses on four key priority areas: (1) transnational threats and challenges; (2) management of common natural resources; (3) domestic factors affecting regional stability; and (4) building national/regional conflict prevention capacities.

A. Transnational threats and challenges

4. Central Asia is vulnerable to an array of transnational challenges, including extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and natural disasters, which continue to be major threats to peace and security in the region. Developments in Afghanistan, notably in the context of transition and reconciliation process, will determine the regional dynamics of these threats and may have a significant impact on the stability of its Central Asian neighbors. Politicized religious extremism, radicalization and domestic ethnic and sociopolitical disputes increase the risk of terrorism and conflict throughout the region. This situation is aggravated by complex and disputed borders

that often do not meet the needs of communities on the ground and a number of small enclaves/exclaves. Furthermore, Central Asia is prone to natural disasters, including floods, landslides, droughts and earthquakes. This spectrum of transnational threats can only be addressed efficiently and effectively through regional cooperation.

5. In order to assist stakeholders in Central Asia in their efforts to cope with these transnational threats and challenges, the Centre will:

- (a) *Encourage* dialogue and contacts among countries of the region in order to identify issues that could lead to tensions, and take steps to build confidence and cooperation and *carry out* good offices functions in countries of the region on behalf of the UN Secretary-General;
- (b) *Support* dialogue between actors in the region and beyond on issues related to transport, environment, food and energy security, including the reliable and stable transit of energy;
- (c) *Continue* to assist the Governments of Central Asia with the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in consultation and cooperation with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office, and further *support* the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action;
- (d) In cooperation with Central Asian Governments, UNODC, and relevant regional organizations, *contribute* to drug control and crime prevention efforts, and *cooperate* with relevant institutional partners to reduce the threat posed to stability and governance by illicit trafficking;
- (e) *Support* the five Governments of the region in improving border management and assist in reducing tensions related to disputed borders;
- (f) *Support* the Central Asian States to develop a more common understanding of risks and opportunities related to the situation in Afghanistan and potential impact on the region;
- (g) In cooperation with UNAMA, *provide* assistance to the Central Asian States in promoting cooperation with Afghanistan, inter alia on the fight against extremism and terrorism, drug control, and border management;
- (h) *Encourage* the participation in and contribution of Central Asian countries to ongoing international efforts and political processes to support stability in Afghanistan, including reconstruction activities, humanitarian assistance and enhanced technical cooperation;
- (i) In cooperation with other United Nations entities and relevant regional organizations, *support* the Central Asian States in the implementation of international legal instruments for nuclear safety and in their uranium sites remediation efforts;
- (j) In cooperation with UNISDR, OCHA and other relevant actors, *support* Governments in coping with trans-border disaster risks.

B. Management of common natural resources

6. Unresolved trans-boundary water/energy disputes may cause tensions between upstream countries reliant on hydropower and downstream countries dependent on reliable water flow for the development of agriculture. However, as a shared and finite resource, water should be a source of cooperation rather than competition. Over the long term, sustainable, and mutually beneficial solutions, reflecting interests of all States, are required.

7. The availability of significant resources at the regional level holds the prospect of supporting economic development in Central Asia. However, these resources are unequally distributed among and within the countries of the region. Some countries face food insecurity while others provide food aid. Some have significant hydrocarbon resources but face shortages of water; others have huge amounts of water but no hydrocarbons. Therefore, stability and development within the region depend on effective management of the water/energy nexus. Furthermore, the management of natural resources can have an impact on governance: mismanagement of natural resource wealth may increase the risk of violent and direct confrontations. Food or water shortages can also lead to social unrest and humanitarian crises.

8. Therefore, to improve the management of common natural resources in the context of preventive diplomacy, the Centre will support various bilateral and multilateral approaches, including by:

- (a) *Provide* good offices to assist in de-escalating water-related disputes, and *provide* early warning on potential problem situations;
- (b) *Share* with the Governments of the region best practices in the development of relevant international legal instruments and examples of mutually beneficial agreements;
- (c) *Assist* the Governments of the region in the development of a comprehensive mechanism for the management of trans-boundary water resources that takes into consideration the interests of all Central Asian states;
- (d) *Continue* to support the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and its subsidiary organs, in line with the MoU signed between the UN and EC IFAS;
- (e) *Analyze* the impact of the food-water-energy nexus on regional stability and *propose* appropriate actions, in cooperation with the Governments of Central Asia and other relevant actors;
- (f) *Continue* to raise awareness of possible impacts of global climate change on the Central Asian region, including the melting of the glaciers upon which the region depends for its water supply, and *explore* possible mitigating measures that Central Asian Governments may choose to apply.

C. Domestic factors affecting regional stability

9. Crises in several parts of the world have demonstrated that governance challenges, social inequalities, demographic changes, the lack of transparency, limited/effective democratic participation and rule of law can lead to instability and unrest. Conversely, good and democratic governance and sustainable development are key pillars of stability, and improvements in these areas will also make the States of the region more resilient to challenges and threats emerging from beyond their borders.

10. Therefore, to support Governments in ensuring inclusiveness, accountability and participation, the Centre will, in accordance with its mandate:

- (a) *Emphasize* the link between development and stability, and cooperate with relevant actors, including UNDP, development banks and international financial institutions, to promote sustainable development and enhance peace and security, in line with the framework of the post-2015 Development Agenda;
- (b) *Enhance* cooperation with United Nations Peace and Development Advisors based in the region in the area of early warning and conflict prevention;
- (c) *Assist* Governments in the region, in consultation with relevant inter-governmental organizations, such as OHCHR and the OSCE, in meeting their international human rights obligations, cooperating with relevant human rights mechanisms and procedures and implementing relevant recommendations of international human rights bodies;
- (d) *Cooperate* with the Governments, civil society organizations and UN Women in the region to enhance the participation of women in public life and *encourage* the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, as requested;
- (e) *Support* the implementation of projects to strengthen governance in Central Asian countries through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, as requested;
- (f) *Promote* the integration of marginalized groups and respect for the rights of members of minority groups, as appropriate;
- (g) In close cooperation with Central Asian Governments and other international partners, *monitor* inter-ethnic relations and support relevant initiatives meant to address and reduce inter-ethnic tensions, as appropriate.
- (h) *Assist* in mainstreaming preventive activities into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for affected countries.

D. Building national/regional conflict prevention capacities

11. There is substantial scope for raising awareness of international rules and models of peaceful dispute resolution among Central Asian stakeholders. It is important to ensure that professionals, particularly the young generation, are aware of contemporary methods and instruments of preventive diplomacy. Capacity building among this younger generation is a valuable investment in preventive diplomacy in the future.

12. To contribute to building national capacity in the countries of Central Asia, to strengthen a culture of prevention and to assist diplomats and other relevant parties in enhancing their skills in preventive diplomacy, the Centre will:

- (a) *Apply* its regional mandate and convening power to facilitate meetings involving countries and organizations on topics related to preventive diplomacy, with a view to enhancing the coordination of international efforts;
- (b) Together with UNITAR, UNSSC, and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, *organize* and *conduct* trainings and workshops for Central Asian officials on preventive diplomacy, mediation, negotiation skills and other relevant topics;
- (c) *Liaise* with diplomatic academies and institutes of strategic studies and international relations within the region and internationally to promote the concept of preventive diplomacy;
- (d) Using various formats (lectures, training, model UN exercises etc.), *organize* opportunities for the young generation in Central Asia to exchange experiences on conflict prevention and diplomacy;
- (e) In cooperation with UNAMA, *involve* Afghan officials in relevant training and capacity-building activities to encourage exchange of perspectives and experiences with their Central Asian counterparts;
- (f) *Promote* interaction with diplomatic academies and institutes of strategic studies on issues related to preventive diplomacy.