

UNRCCA Programme of Action for 2021-2025

The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established in 2007 on the initiative of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as a special political mission of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). UNRCCA began operations in 2008 and is led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General. It was one of the first United Nations entities dedicated to preventive diplomacy with a political mandate covering the region.

The Centre puts into practice the Secretary-General's call for a stronger focus on prevention. It supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the region particularly SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. In addition, its activities promote General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on sustaining peace, among others.

According to the Centre's mandate, UNRCCA has the following functions:

- To liaise with the Governments of the region and, with their concurrence, with other parties concerned on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy.
- To monitor and analyse the situation on the ground and to provide the Secretary-General of the United Nations with up-to-date information related to conflict prevention efforts.
- To maintain contact with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional organizations, encourage their peacemaking efforts and initiatives, and facilitate coordination and information exchange with due regard to their specific mandates.
- 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.
- 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.

In order to operationalize this mandate and guide its work, the Centre, after it became operational in 2008, has developed four programmes of action. This current programme of action, the Centre's fifth, covers the period 2021 to 2025.

It is based on the Centre's mandate and takes into account lessons learned, current realities, as well as emerging challenges in Central Asia and its neighborhood. It takes into consideration the DPPA Strategic Plan and General Assembly and Security Council resolutions related to peace and security.

The current Programme of Action also draws on the following General Assembly resolutions passed at the initiative of the countries of the region – the resolution 72/7 (2017), entitled “Role of

the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia”, to mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Centre, and on UNGA resolution 72/283 (2018) “Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region”. In them, the General Assembly:

- Encourages the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia to continue to liaise with the Governments of the region and, with their concurrence, with other parties concerned on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy;
- Welcomes the assistance of the Regional Centre in implementing the initiatives of the Central Asian countries towards a stable, peaceful and prosperous region;
- Encourages the Regional Centre to continue close cooperation with the Governments of the region to strengthen the capacity of the region to overcome challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development through preventive diplomacy and dialogue.
- Encourages the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia to continue its efforts to promote peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region, within its mandate, in promoting preventive diplomacy in cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations.

Key Priorities for 2021-2025

The UNRCCA Programme of Action for 2021-2025 contains five priorities corresponding to the functions indicated in the Centre’s mandate, namely: (I) promoting preventive diplomacy among the Governments of Central Asia; (II) monitoring and early warning in support of conflict prevention; (III) building partnerships for prevention, including with regional and sub-regional organizations; (IV) strengthening United Nations preventive diplomacy in Central Asia; and (V) encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan in close contact with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

I. Promoting preventive diplomacy among the Governments of Central Asia

This priority goes to the core of UNRCCA’s work: preventive diplomacy. One key tool in implementing this priority is the Good Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Asia. In implementing this priority, UNRCCA works with the Governments of the region to reinforce and support the intensifying momentum within the region to cooperate on sustaining peace and promoting good neighbourly relations. In particular, UNRCCA will facilitate high-level dialogue among the Governments of Central Asia to promote cooperation on issues affecting regional peace and stability. UNRCCA will be working with Governments to strengthen the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the same time, UNRCCA is to identify new and emerging opportunities to support conflict prevention efforts in Central Asia and fostering cooperation on issues of common interest, such as with regard to management of natural resources and climate change, the countering terrorism and regional Government-youth dialogue. Particularly in the context of the global COVID-19

pandemic, UNRCCA strives to identify innovative approaches in this aspect of its work to ensure continued efficacy in constantly evolving circumstances.

In addition, in line with the “Inclusive Peacemaking” strategic objective of the DPPA Strategic Plan, UNRCCA’s work to support implementation of the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas in the region also form part of this priority. UNRCCA also works to build national and regional capacities through relevant training initiatives and undertakes outreach to raise awareness of the tools of preventive diplomacy among academia, civil society, the media and other stakeholders.

II. Monitoring and early warning in support of conflict prevention

In line with this priority, UNRCCA continuously monitors developments in Central Asia and provides political analysis to the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials, through DPPA. Following the DPPA Strategic Plan, the Centre is responsible for generating multi-dimensional gender-sensitive analysis and recommendations where appropriate. Political analysis is also provided to the Security Council through the twice-annual briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on developments in Central Asia and the implementation of the mandate. In addition, focused efforts related to specific issues are also undertaken, including cooperation with the regional centre of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Interstate Coordination Water Commission, a subsidiary body of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and others. In the period covered by this Programme of Action, special attention will be paid to the evolution of regional peace and security in conditions of global pandemic.

III. Building partnerships for prevention, including with regional and sub-regional organizations

The third priority focuses on developing and operationalizing substantive partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, a key requirement for successful preventive diplomacy. In executing its mandate, UNRCCA partners with a wide range of regional and sub-regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of SCO (RATS SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union, and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC). This cooperation mainly includes exchange of information and analysis, support to one another’s preventive diplomacy efforts and other initiatives, within the framework of respective mandates. On the basis of a memorandum of understanding, UNRCCA partners with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and its subsidiary bodies. UNRCCA will continue cooperation with the Conference on Inter-action and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA), particularly in the further promotion of confidence-building measures in the region.

In addition, UNRCCA also partners, as appropriate, with other relevant institutions, including academic and non-governmental organizations as well as strategic research and international relations entities throughout Central Asia to promote preventive diplomacy and a culture of peace through building needed capacity at all levels of society.

IV. Strengthening United Nations preventive diplomacy in Central Asia

In line with the Centre's mandate, this priority focuses on cooperation with United Nations entities across the region Asia and around the world in supporting peace and security in Central Asia. Key partners in this regard are the United Nations Country Teams in each of the five countries, led by the respective Resident Coordinators. Important partnership exists with United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism/United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNOCT/UNCCT) on implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia through the Joint Plan of Action. UNRCCA also works with a range of Agencies, Funds and Programmes, including OHCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA, IOM, UNODC, UNECE, UNECSO and ESCAP, as well as with the Bretton Woods institutions. UNRCCA continuously seeks out new partnerships of this sort to ensure coherence to United Nations preventive diplomacy efforts in Central Asia and to develop new synergies and maximise those that already exist. These efforts take on new urgency in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic and its cross-sectoral impacts throughout Central Asia and the wider world.

V. Encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan in close contact with UNAMA

Although the previous priority focuses on cooperation with United Nations entities, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) merits separate mention. Like UNRCCA, UNAMA is a special political mission of DPPA and the two missions are in continuous contact, including through annual inter-mission meetings for political staff, in order to share information and assessment of the situation in the wider region, as well as to support each other's activities.

In recent years, as the countries of Central Asia have increasingly welcomed Afghanistan as not only a key partner but considering it rather as an integral part of the region, UNRCCA's cooperation with UNAMA has expanded to support these developments. Of particular note is UNRCCA's support for and contributions to the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process, the Regional Economic Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs) and other global and regional efforts to encourage economic development and political stability in Afghanistan. Specifically, UNRCCA has been supporting the states of the region in promoting large infrastructural and interconnectivity projects, which Afghanistan could benefit from, such as TAPI, TAP, CASA-1000, and others.

Since 2017, UNRCCA has been inviting Afghanistan as a counterpart to the annual Deputy Foreign Ministers meetings of the Central Asian states. UNRCCA will continue its useful practice of involving the Afghan representatives to all of its programmatic and other form of activities in the Region.