

YOUTH VOICES FROM CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN - UN75 AND REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY



Dear Reader,

In 2019, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia launched the UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Academy to help unlock the enormous potential of young people to support peace and security across the region and to promote the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.

In our first year, the Academy trained nearly 100 young people in border areas across the region and our efforts culminated in the first-ever Government-Youth Dialogue for Central Asia and Afghanistan, where young people delivered a series of messages on regional peace and security to the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the six countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

Like the rest of the world, the ongoing pandemic disrupted our plans for 2020. But our work nevertheless continues.

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and so we have combined our youth engagement efforts with the global UN75 initiative. In the run-up to the opening of the landmark 75th session of the General Assembly on 15 September 2020, the Organization has been striving to build a global partnership with a wide range of people all over the world to realize their shared aspirations for a just, peaceful and sustainable future. We resolved to ensure that the youth of Central Asia and Afghanistan had a prominent opportunity to contribute as a region as well.

On 1 June 2020, we launched an essay contest for young people from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan entitled “Youth Voices from Central Asia and Afghanistan: UN75 and Regional Peace and Security.” We received more than 50 entries from young people describing their vision of the world in 2045 and what we as a global community need to do to make it a reality.

The publication you are currently reading offers a sneak-peek at the winners and their essays. The full essays will be translated and printed in a compendium later in the year, on the occasion of our second Government-Youth Dialogue.

But for now, I invite you to meet our new Young Ambassadors for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and Afghanistan and get a first taste of their ideas, concerns and vision for the future. I am sure you will agree that

the perspective of the youth of the region is vital and indeed critical to the future development of all six countries. I sincerely hope that this publication helps to amplify their voices at the national, regional and global level.

Natalia Gherman

*Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Asia,
Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia*



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Each State that invests in youth is investing in the modern development of the country and the world.

DULAT ABDISAMAT, 20

Taraz, Zhambyl Province, Kazakhstan





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I see a world in which we will be protected from injustice, stereotypes and false information. A world in which you can really believe in high ideals, not be afraid of your opinion and feel a sense of security, to be yourself.

ZHANNA TURGUMBAEVA, 22

Temurtau, Karaganda Province, Kazakhstan





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For young people to have a positive impact on peace and security, fundamental human rights must first be respected and protected.

ASSEM ZAYEVA, 20

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan



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... I see my world as kind and fair, where there is no inequality, where there is no violence. It will flourish and develop and provide every person with a home, family and security. And people will provide the same to the planet. If we learn to respect, love and protect nature and each other, I believe that a wonderful future will come.

UMUT ASYLBEKOVA, 20

Talas, Kyrgyzstan





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Inequality and lack of sensitivity to diversity in society have not yet found their solutions in the mosaic of ineffective government systems. In turn, these are the root causes of corruption, conflict and violence, often accompanied by brutality.

CHYNGYZ ISRAYILOV, 31

Osh, Kyrgyzstan





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There is an excellent saying of the legendary writer Chingiz Aitmatov: "The most difficult thing in life is to remain human every day." It has a deep meaning: **it doesn't matter if you achieve a high position in life or if you become the most popular person – the most important thing is to remain a person of good conscience.**

ALIYA ZHOLDOSHBKOVA, 22

Talas, Kyrgyzstan





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Maybe we can change the world. After all, if a person changes himself, then they will change the world. We can start by educating people about the threats that emanate from the darkest corners of the world so that they are prepared for anything. After all, as the saying goes, ‘forewarned is forearmed’.

ALIYOR BOYNZAROV, 23

Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Tajikistan



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Waging a war for resources, competing for dominance, following political ambitions These are the evils that ruin the efforts of the best of intentions. My personal opinion is that the UN is not panacea for all of the evils and ills. **Each of us is forming a piece of the UN. Each of us is a tiny contributor to either building the best future or, on the contrary, ruining it all.**

ALISHO MIRZOSHIRINOV, 22

Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, Tajikistan





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It will be an honor for me to become at least a small part of the UN, helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That is why we in the Republic of Tajikistan under the NGO ‘Independent Center for the Protection of Human Rights’ have started our SDG Youth Initiative Group ‘Tajikistan 2030.’ Thanks to this, we will be able to develop our society by achieving the goals of the SDGs and the UN.

SAODAT USMONOVA, 21

Dushanbe, Tajikistan





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We young men and women represent future generations, and it is important that our voices are heard. **It is the young who are the source of fresh ideas. The presence of young men and women must be increased in all fields.**

BEKNIYAZ BEGLIYEV, 26

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan





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From time immemorial, the Central Asian countries are linked by economic and cultural ties. This familiarization with the culture of each nation makes people not only aware, but also destroys false stereotypes. **As a messenger of good will and an Ambassador of Preventive Diplomacy, I can say for sure that everything starts with us. Local actions make global changes.**

SHUKURGELDI MYRADOV, 17

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan





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I see the positive impact on trends in promoting youth advocacy and peer-to-peer exchange, but for young perfectionists like me it is still not enough. **To ensure a prosperous future, the full potential of young people should be tapped.** It is evident that youth are now more powerful than ever before: we have acquired IT knowledge at an early age and have developed critical thinking and analytical skills to move beyond limiting models.

KRISTINA ORLOVA, 27

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan





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I am convinced that the promotion of gender equality must also go from the bottom to the top through education. If schools, from the first grades, raise awareness among boys and girls and explain gender and gender equality, then positive changes in society will have an increasing effect and will strengthen in the mentality of the younger generation.

MOKHINUR BOSAKOVA, 27

Tashkent, Uzbekistan



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In my humble opinion, it is unfair living and working in conditions that lead people to join criminal gangs. **When justice reigns in the world, people live peacefully.**

MUKHAMMAD SAYFIDDINOV, 20

Bukhara, Uzbekistan





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My dream is that my children will have a better life than mine. For instance, living in a good, ecologically safe and economically developed country, caring for their old parents and taking advantage of everyday life without bad things like violence, crime and drugs.

SHAKHODAT OBIDOVA, 27

Kagan, Bukhara Region, Uzbekistan



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Central Asia and Afghanistan could have very strong economic ties by making a strategic partnership with each other on the basis of the strong traditional bonds among the nations that have existed for centuries. **As a result, multilateral cooperation among these states could reduce security threats and strengthen regional and international peace and security.**

ZAKRIA FAZL, 20

Qala-i-Now, Badghis Province, Afghanistan





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We, the youth, want a world in which the rights of every human being are considered and respected equally, without any discrimination against them. We want peace and equal rights, we expect equal access to educational opportunities and the right to work.

SALWA NEZAMI, 25

Kabul, Afghanistan





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Since the family is the first school for everyone, we can say that the beginning of women's problems also lies with the family. And too often from childhood, they are discriminated against and not treated as human beings, they are subjected to physical and psychological violence and even raped. They are deprived of basic rights such as studying and working.

MARIAM ABDUL SHUKUR SHUKURI, 25

Afghanistan (currently living in Dushanbe, Tajikistan)





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By loosening or opening borders between nations that share a similar history and ideology, they will benefit more as they will be able to collaborate more effectively. Populations that have been divided will be reunited, and this will promote better relations and mutual understanding between the nations.

TAEHWAN KIM, 17

Republic of Korea (currently living in Tashkent, Uzbekistan)



UNRCCA PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY ACADEMY IN 2020

Building on the successful debut of the UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Academy in 2019, the Centre is continuing its work to engage with young people across Central Asia and Afghanistan.

In June 2020, we organized an essay contest, “Youth Voices from Central Asia and Afghanistan – UN75 and Regional Peace and Security.” This contest was open to young people between the ages of 18 and 35 who are citizens of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Citizens of these countries living abroad were also eligible, as well as citizens of other countries currently studying in any of these six countries.

Young people were asked to think about the world they wanted to see in 25 years – the 100th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations – and the ways that preventive diplomacy and regional peace and security can impact that vision. They were requested to reflect on regional peace and security, the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, the Women, Peace and Security agenda or any other area of the work of the United Nations Security Council.

This provided a unique opportunity for young people from around Central Asia and Afghanistan to convey their opinions, ideas and even criticism to some of the most influential people in the world. We hope that by collecting and disseminating their ideas, they will be used to inform public debate by national and international decision-makers, inspire broader civic engagement and help deepen international cooperation.

The complete text of the winning essays will be published in a volume in English and in Russian later in 2020. The book will be distributed across the United Nations and its Member States. It will also be distributed to Government officials in Central Asia and Afghanistan and an electronic version will be available to the general public through the UNRCCA website.

Later this year, UNRCCA will convene its annual Meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers of Central Asia and Afghanistan and one session will be dedicated to the second Government-Youth Dialogue for Central Asia. This will enable our essay contest winners to present their ideas to high-ranking governmental officials from all six countries. In the weeks leading up to the Dialogue, our participants will join a series of online workshops, where they will receive training that will help them make the most of this unique opportunity.



2020

YOUTH ESSAYS COMPILATION

UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL CENTRE

FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY FOR CENTRAL ASIA