



# United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

15 years of engagement in the region

2007 - 2022

A close-up portrait of António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. He is an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. The background is a blurred blue and white pattern, likely the UN flag. The image is framed by a white border with decorative blue curved lines on the right side.

**«PREVENTION IS NOT MERELY A PRIORITY.  
BUT THE PRIORITY. IF WE LIVE UP TO OUR  
RESPONSIBILITIES, WE WILL SAVE LIVES,  
REDUCE SUFFERINGS AND GIVE HOPE  
TO MILLIONS.»**

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES,  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**UDK 341.123+327  
R 32  
CKPT 12  
BBK 67.412+66.4 (o)**





Promote Dialogue.  
Prevent Conflict.



## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established in 2007 in Ashgabat at 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 is one of the first United Nations entities dedicated to preventive diplomacy with a political mandate covering the region.

Establishment of the Regional Centre was preceded by several years of consultations between the UN and Governments of the Central Asian states. Initiating this proposal, the Governments of the region took into consideration the multiple threats that face Central Asia, including international terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, organized crime, environmental degradation and issues related to the use of common transboundary water resources\*

**Ceremony of Inauguration of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) with participation of Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and Lynn Pascoe, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs (10 December 2007, Ashgabat)**



## THE UNITED NATIONS LEADERSHIP



**- António Guterres,  
Secretary-General of the United Nations**

**"Serving the UN is an immense  
privilege and a most noble duty"**

António Guterres on taking over as the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 1 January 2017, put forward a vision of the Organization's work that prioritizes preventive diplomacy.

In his first statement to the Security Council Secretary-General António Guterres laid out his position clearly: "Prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority. If we live up to our responsibilities, we will save lives, reduce sufferings and give hope to millions".

António Guterres made his first official visit to Central Asia in his capacity as the UN Secretary-General in June 2017. He visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. While in Turkmenistan Secretary-General chaired a High-Level UN-Central Asian Dialogue on the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, organized by the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) and UNRCCA. As a result of the Central Asia-UN High-level Dialogue, the Ashgabat Declaration was adopted.

Continuing his visit to Central Asia, Secretary-General António Guterres witnessed one of the worst environmental disasters of the world, the Aral Sea.

«A visit to the Aral Sea - once the fourth largest inland sea, and is now almost dead, was a huge shock for me. What happened to the Aral Sea is the greatest environmental disaster of our time», - said the Secretary-General of the United Nations.



**Visit of the United Nations Secretary-General  
António Guterres to UNRCCA**



**Secretary-General António Guterres looks out  
at a portion of the Aral Sea, which is now  
dried completely**



## THE UNITED NATIONS LEADERSHIP



**-Ban Ki-Moon,  
Secretary-General of the  
United Nations (2007-2016)**

*"I am convinced that preventive diplomacy remains a sensible and cost-effective tool for maintaining international peace and security and creating conditions for steady and sustainable development."*

Since the establishment of UNRCCA, the region of Central Asia was also visited several times by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon. The tour to Central Asia in 2010 was Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's first visit to the region.

As part of his visit in 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon attended the High-Level International Conference on the Implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life 2005-2015" in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

In 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon visited Ashgabat to convene the International Conference on Global Sustainable Transport hosted by the Government of Turkmenistan. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon and President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov also participated in the opening ceremony of the new building of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) office in Ashgabat.

## BRIEFING THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

SRSR for Central Asia and Head of UNRCCA twice a year briefs the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the developments and trends affecting peace and security in the region and updates the Council on UNRCCA's work.

Get more information on the work of the United Nations Security Council at: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>



**United Nations Security Council meeting dedicated to  
Central Asia (January 2018, New York)**



**Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, President of Turkmenistan  
Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and UN agencies based in  
Ashgabat during the opening ceremony of UNCT office  
(2018, Ashgabat)**



## MISSION LEADERSHIP



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND NATALIA GHERMAN, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, HEAD OF THE UN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY FOR CENTRAL ASIA

Ms. Natalia Gherman was appointed as the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary - General for Central Asia, the Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) on 15 September 2017.

## MANDATE

The UN Regional Centre is an example of political engagement and preventive efforts by the United Nations in support of Member States. It is mandated to liaise with the Governments of the region on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy; to provide monitoring and analysis; to maintain contact with regional organizations and facilitate coordination and information exchange. In addition, the Centre is to provide an overall framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the UN country teams and to maintain close contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to ensure a comprehensive and integrated analysis of the situation in the region. It is mandated to assist and support the five countries of Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – in building their conflict prevention capacities through enhanced dialogue, confidence-building measures and genuine



partnership so as to respond to existing threats and emerging challenges in the region.

The Centre's Mandate is specified in its Programmes of Action designed in consultations with the Governments of Central Asian states. The current Programme of Action for 2021-2025 focuses on five key priority areas, which correspond to the Centre's mandate:

- 1 Promoting preventive diplomacy among the Governments of Central Asia;
- 2 Monitoring and early warning in support of conflict prevention;
- 3 Building partnerships for prevention, including with regional and sub-regional organizations;
- 4 Strengthening the United Nations preventive diplomacy in Central Asia;
- 5 Encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

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, the resolution 72/283 (2018) “Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region” and the resolution 75/272 (2021) on the Role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.



## KEY UNRCCA ACTIVITIES

### GOOD OFFICES FUNCTION

UNRCCA remains a trusted partner for the Central Asian states and continues to implement its mandate in the key priority areas relevant to maintaining peace and stability in the region. UNRCCA has been involved in preventive diplomacy efforts across a range of issues of high importance to the region. UNRCCA offers an impartial political platform for the Central Asian states for addressing issues of mutual concern.

Upon request of the Central Asian states, the SRSG conducts consultations and fact-finding missions, and explores avenues for a consolidated UN response to existing and emerging challenges.

### HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS

Since its establishment, UNRCCA has made preventive diplomacy efforts across a range of issues of high importance to the region. The Regional Centre has organized a number of high-level meetings, including the meetings of Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian states which are essential components for effective implementation of its mandate. These high-level meetings also serve as a unique informal platform to exchange views on challenges in Central Asia, affecting peace and security in the region and to explore ways in which the Regional Centre could further assist the Central Asian states in addressing existing and emerging threats to security and stability that the region is facing.

The meeting of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian states, held annually, is the main coordination body at which feedback and guidelines are given by the host countries regarding the activities of



**The Eleventh Annual Meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers of the Central Asian States  
(8 December 2021, Dushanbe)**

UNRCCA in Central Asia. Moreover, the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting contributes to trust building and closer interaction among the Central Asian states.

SRSG for Central Asia and Head of UNRCCA Natalia Gherman was invited to attend the high-level gatherings of Leaders of the Central Asian States where the key aspects of developing political, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian collaboration between the countries of the region were discussed.

These high-level meetings provide with the possibility to discuss urgent regional issues, affecting security and stability such as the current situation on the border with Afghanistan, the disastrous effects of climate change on the ecosystem of the region, matters related to economic recovery and modernization, as well as greater cooperation





**The Third Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia (8 August 2021, Avaza, Turkmenistan)**

and coordination in matters of foreign policy and management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first Consultative Meeting of the Heads of Central Asian States was held in March 2018 in Astana, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the second in November 2019 in Tashkent, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the third Consultative Meeting of the Heads of Central Asian States was held in Avaza National Tourist Zone, Turkmenistan on 5-6 August 2021 and the fourth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of Central Asian States was held in Cholpon-Ata, Issyk-Kul region of the Kyrgyz Republic on 21 July 2022.

Holding of meetings of this nature are of great political importance which once again prove the commitment of Central Asian countries in promoting the implementation of the United Nations Resolutions as well as Global Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**Natalia Gherman, SRSG and Head of UNRCCA on joining of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Human Rights Council (October 2020, Tashkent, Uzbekistan)**



## COOPERATION WITH CENTRAL ASIAN INSTITUTES FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

UNRCCA, since its establishment, has developed very close ties with the Institutes for Strategic Studies of Central Asian states.

The Institutes for Strategic Studies have been active contributors to numerous events organized by UNRCCA in areas such as preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism, trans-boundary water management, impact of developments in Afghanistan.

They have also contributed to the efforts of UNRCCA to promote **“Women, Peace and Security”** and **“Youth, Peace and Security”** agendas.

As more intense contacts at the highest political level in Central Asia were developing, close cooperation of UNRCCA with the Institutes for Strategic Studies was also growing to support the high level consultations processes.

The Regional Centre has significantly benefited from the expertise provided by the Institutes and was able to offer a platform for discussions and to share its vision on issues related to preventive diplomacy.



**Online meeting with Institutes for Strategic Studies and other state institutions of Central Asia (4 June 2020, Ashgabat)**

**The Second Central Asian Expert Forum (September 2019, Burabay, Kazakhstan)**





## COUNTER-TERRORISM

Preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism is one of the main UNRCCA priority areas of work. Since 2010, the Central Asian states have committed themselves to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in their region through the joint UNRCCA - UNOCT project, "Towards a Comprehensive Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia."

**The first phase** of the project culminated in the adoption of a Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) for Central Asia during the high-level meeting in Ashgabat in November 2011. It was the first of its kind plan on the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy tailored to a specific region.

The Plan, mirroring the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy, consists of four segments (called pillars):

- **Pillar I:** Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism,
- **Pillar II:** Preventing and combating terrorism,
- **Pillar III:** Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard;
- **Pillar IV:** Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

**During the second phase** (2013 – 2017) particular attention was paid to capacity building activities in such areas as countering the financing of terrorism, the role of media in preventing extremism and terrorism, border security and the role of religious leaders.

**The second phase** ended with the High Level UN-Central Asian Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia convened in Ashgabat in June 2017, with participation of the UN Secretary-General.

**The third phase** of the project (2018 – 2021) continued with more than 21 capacity building activities focusing additionally to online propaganda and recruitment as well as cybersecurity and human rights. During this phase UNRCCA and UNOCT also assisted Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in developing their national strategies and action plans in the field of counter-terrorism.

**The fourth phase** of the UNRCCA-UNOCT project was launched officially during the eleventh annual Meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the Central Asian states convened by UNRCCA in Dushanbe in December 2021.



**High-level meeting on the adoption of the Joint Plan of Action on implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia (11 November 2011, Ashgabat)**





**The fourth phase** has the following priority areas:

- 1) strengthening capacities in development and implementation of national strategies and plans;
- 2) building resilience among youth against terrorist propaganda on the Internet and hate speech;
- 3) addressing marginalization and empowering women and youth;
- 4) promoting culture of tolerance and respect for diversity among ethnic and religious groups;
- 5) intensifying cooperation among law enforcement agencies;
- 6) contributing to the stability and peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Taking into consideration significant developments in the region and globally during recent years, including ones related to cybersecurity, combating the financing of terrorism, border security, return of foreign terrorist fighters and situation in Afghanistan, the Central Asian states endorsed an updated JPoA, developed with the support of UNRCCA and UNOCT, at the high-level conference in Tashkent in March 2022.



**High-level Launch of the Third Phase of the Counter-Terrorism Project in Central Asia (April 2018, Ashgabat)**

It is envisaged that the updated JPoA will continue to serve as a robust basis for regional and country specific counter-terrorism related activities during coming years.



**Adoption of an updated Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia (March 2022, Tashkent)**



**High level UN-Central Asian Dialogue on the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (17 June 2017, Ashgabat)**



Water diplomacy has always been one of the most important aspects of UNRCCA's activities in accordance with the mandate. UNRCCA has been focusing on trans-boundary water issues since 2008 towards the goal of supporting and fostering regional cooperation on water, energy, environment and climate change among the five countries of the region.

The Centre provides a political platform for consultations and exchanges among the Governments of Central Asia so as to promote dialogue, build trust and identify elements that could ultimately form a sustainable solution for water-sharing in the region in accordance with international law and taking into account the interests and needs of all the regional countries.

In 2022 UNRCCA launched a new Water Strategy on supporting cooperation between the countries of Central Asia on Water, Energy, Environment and Climate for 2022-2025. The Strategy was drafted and coordinated together with and agreed by all five states of the region.

The Strategy aims to encourage the improvement of regional peace and stability in Central Asia through advocating sustainable political solutions in transboundary water management. Changing

dynamics in the region open a new window of opportunity and efforts in this direction.

Through convening of capacity-building events, UNRCCA has been working to increase decision-makers' knowledge of water diplomacy, international water law, best practices from around the world. UNRCCA also considered options for regional agreements tailored to Central Asia's particular needs and circumstances.

The Regional Centre plans to intensify efforts on Climate through the prism of regional security, as well as to promote women and youth engagement in transboundary water management in the region. UNRCCA has also been promoting partnerships and teaming with the UN country teams, UN agencies as well as other relevant stakeholders to join expertise and resources.

UNRCCA is also a long-term and reliable partner of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and actively works with the Fund on water and energy issues in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between UNRCCA and IFAS signed in 2010, and in line with the mandate of the Regional Centre.

UNRCCA in collaboration with the Scientific and Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) have developed a set of indicators and began collecting data that has enabled the Centre to publish since 2013 seasonally (four issues annually) Early Warning Bulletins on water resources of the transboundary rivers of the Aral Sea Basin. These bulletins are a unique source of essential information and data for decision makers in the region.





**SRSNG NATALIA GHERMAN and Chair of UN-Water  
GILBERT HOUNGBO visit Sarez Lake in the Republic  
of Tajikistan (June 2018, Tajikistan)**

Starting from 2018, the UNRCCA expanded cooperation with the SIC ICWC by jointly publishing the Water Yearbook for Central Asia, which includes information on events in the water sector at the national, regional and global levels.

In 2019, together with a group of international experts, the UNRCCA launched a special Internet Portal for Knowledge Management, “Water Unites” - <https://waterunites-ca.org>, which aims to be a clearing house for the stakeholders.



**Regional capacity-building workshop dedicated to  
water cooperation in the Central Asian region  
(December 2019, Ashgabat)**

At the initiative of the Central Asian states, a number of resolutions of the UN General Assembly were adopted to support the intensification and strengthening of regional and bilateral dialogue, taking into account national interests of all countries for sustainable development and undertaking measures to improve the water and energy, environmental, climate and socio-economic situation in the region.

Adopted resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):

- 71/222 declaring 2018-2028 international Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”;
- 72/273 and 73/297 “Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea”;
- 75/271 “Nature knows no boundaries: Transboundary cooperation is a key factor in the conservation and use of biodiversity”;
- 75/278 “Declaring the Aral Sea region as a zone of environmental innovations and technologies”;
- In 2021, UNESCO, the member states unanimously supported adoption of the resolution «Expanding monitoring and research of mountain glaciers» and UNGA declared the year 2022 as the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development, at the proposal of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- 72/283 “Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Asia”.





## PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY ACADEMY

«Young people are an enormous asset to our societies. We must cherish them, invest in them and empower them.»

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

### UNRCCA PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY ACADEMY

Young people under the age of 29 make up more than 50% of the population in Central Asia. They represent a tremendous resource to support peace and development across the region, but their potential remains largely untapped. UNRCCA considers that it is impossible to fulfill its preventive diplomacy mandate without engaging with the region's young people on the basis of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions such as 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on **Youth, Peace and Security**. These resolutions emphasize the crucial role of youth in prevention and resolution of conflicts.

In 2019, UNRCCA launched its new youth initiative, the Preventive Diplomacy Academy, to work with young people across Central Asia and Afghanistan to help unlock their enormous potential to support peace and security and promote the **Youth, Peace and Security** (YPS) agenda in the region.

Since its launch in 2019, cross-border workshops, a series of training seminars and sessions have been conducted for the young men and women between



the ages of 18 and 29 from border regions of Central Asia, including Afghanistan on tools of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention strategies, intercultural communication and leadership. In addition to the resolutions on **Youth, Peace and Security**, the young people were also informed about the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on **Women, Peace and Security**.

During the annual Deputy Foreign Ministers meetings of Central Asia, UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Academy also provides the opportunity for youth to develop a series of messages to their political leaders on the most important regional peace and security topics during the Government-Youth Dialogue organized by UNRCCA.





CENTRAL ASIA  
WOMEN LEADERS  
CAUCUS

## WOMEN LEADERS' CAUCUS

The Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus (CAWLC) was launched in late 2020 with the support of UNRCCA and the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (UNDP) as a regional platform aimed at strengthening political and economic potential, enhanced cooperation between women in the region and promoting the implementation of the Global Agenda "Women, Peace and Security" in Central Asia.

The first meeting with participation of the high-level women representatives, including the Speakers of the Parliaments, from the five Central Asian states took place in December 2020. It was agreed that the Caucus would serve to strengthen the enabling environment for women's socio-economic and political participation and leadership in the region. It would also help to mobilize action for gender empowerment.

The high-level representatives of the Central Asian states adopted a Declaration pledging to harness the potential of women leadership throughout the region. The CAWLC have made notable strides in promoting implementation of the **Women, Peace and Security** Agenda across the region.

The CAWLC Forum held alongside the 3rd Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in Avaza, Turkmenistan, proves the growing prominence and importance afforded to these issues by the leadership of the countries in the region and commitment to the **Global Agenda for Women, Peace and Security**, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Decade of Action to Achieve Global Goals under the auspices of the United Nations.



**Dialogue of Women Leaders of Central Asian States (6 August 2020, Avaza, Turkmenistan)**



**The Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus addresses the UN Peacebuilding Commission in UNHQ on Women leadership for Women, Peace and Security agenda and the role of women in the context of climate change (11 November 2022, New York)**



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Regional Centre also regularly organizes training events aimed at strengthening the capacities of Central Asia's young diplomats, members of parliaments, civil servants and others to prevent and peacefully resolve disputes using modern techniques and the tools of preventive diplomacy. The Regional Centre also organizes sports and cultural events as well as lectures to promote preventive diplomacy.



**Seminar on the role of parliaments in engaging Afghanistan in Central Asian cooperation frameworks through preventive diplomacy (11-12 September 2018, Tashkent)**





**"Brain ring" about the United Nations Organization, organized for the Turkmen students**



**Awarding ceremony of the UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Cup**



**Cultural Festival "Novruz" organized by UNRCCA**



## United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

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43 Archabil Avenue  
Ashgabat, 744036, Turkmenistan

Tel: (+99312) 48 16 12/13/14

Fax: (+99312) 48 16 07

E-mail: [unrcca-dpa@un.org](mailto:unrcca-dpa@un.org)

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HK "Altyn nusga" Parahat 2/1, # 21,  
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 744017