

UNRCCA

Programme of Action for 2018-2020

“Prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority”

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, 10 January 2017

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established on the initiative of the five Governments of Central Asia in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in 2007 to support national authorities in identifying and addressing existing and potential threats to regional peace and security. In implementing its initiatives, UNRCCA interacts with regional and international organizations. The Centre began operations in 2008 and is led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General.
2. At the time of its establishment, UNRCCA was one of the UN’s first conflict prevention institutions. In 2017, it marks ten years of working in the field of preventive diplomacy in Central Asia.
3. 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.
4. This is UNRCCA’s fourth Programme of Action. It draws on lessons learned from the Centre’s first decade, which reveals that successful prevention requires:
 - a. continued commitment by the countries of the region to maintaining peace and stability;
 - b. high-level political engagement in processes designed to promote bilateral and regional cooperation;
 - c. constructive partnership between UNRCCA and the Governments of the region;
 - d. further mainstreaming Central Asian matters into the UN’s global peace and security agenda;
 - e. close cooperation between UNRCCA and other members of the UN System in Central Asia; and
 - f. partnerships between the Centre and other relevant actors in the region engaged in preventive diplomacy.

Furthermore, over the past decade the Centre’s experience has underlined the importance of early warning and timely mobilizing national authorities, regional organizations and the international community to take early action.

This Programme of Action will guide UNRCCA's activities over the coming three-year period. In implementing this programme UNRCCA will help the Governments to be better prepared and to deal more effectively with the problems currently before the region and with emerging new challenges. These include (but are not limited to): transnational threats like terrorism and organized crime (drug trafficking in particular); violent extremism; water and energy security; socio-economic vulnerability; and inter-ethnic tensions.

5. The implementation of this Programme of Action will seek to take advantage of new opportunities in the region, including: a strengthening spirit of good-neighborly relations in the region; an increasing shared understanding of the need for greater regional economic connectivity; and a stronger focus on prevention as well as a growing appreciation for the close link between sustaining peace and sustainable development within the international community.

II. Key Priorities and Activities for 2018-2020

6. The Programme of Action for 2018-2020 focuses on five key priority areas which correspond to the Centre's mandate: (1.) promoting prevention among the governments of Central Asia; (2.) monitoring and early warning; (3.) building partnerships for prevention; (4.) strengthening the UN's preventive activities in the region; and (5.) encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan

A. Promoting prevention among the governments of Central Asia

7. UNRCCA works with governments in Central Asia to promote prevention through effective and accountable institutions at all levels. It cooperates with states of the region to reduce vulnerability to conflict, and to strengthen resilience.

8. UNRCCA will work with Governments of the region on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy by:

- (a) Promoting a culture of prevention and sustaining peace, consistent with SDG 16 and the sustaining peace resolutions;
- (b) Assisting states in Central Asia to identify factors of vulnerability at an early stage and promote prevention and preparedness to deal with them more effectively;
- (c) Providing good offices to assist countries of the region to prevent and manage disputes and to foster cooperation on issues of common interest;
- (d) Facilitating high-level dialogue among the Governments of Central Asia to promote cooperation on issues affecting regional peace and stability;

- (e) Involving organizations, civil society, academia and the media on topics related to preventive diplomacy;
- (f) Building national capacity for preventive diplomacy by providing training on conflict prevention, mediation and negotiation skills;
- (g) Disseminating best practices in the development of relevant international legal instruments and examples of mutually beneficial agreements;
- (h) Promoting the implementation in Central Asia of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism ;
- (i) Assisting the Governments of the region in the development of a comprehensive mechanism for the effective use of water and energy resources, on the basis of recognized norms of international law, and taking into consideration the interests and needs of all states;
- (j) Encouraging, in consultation with Governments of the region, bilateral and multilateral cooperation on border management issues, and enhancing the movement of goods and people across borders;
- (k) Promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation in support of effective management of migration processes;
- (l) Promoting peace, prevention and reconciliation by working with Governments to strengthen the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (m) Supporting preparedness for disaster risk reduction, inter alia through participation in the preparation process of UN Inter-Agency Contingency Plans and other relevant documents;
- (n) Promoting the participation of women in public life, mediation and prevention, as well as advocating for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and the broader women, peace and security agenda throughout the region;
- (o) Encouraging more active engagement of youth in preventive diplomacy (in the spirit of Security Council resolution 2250), and in promoting a culture of peace;
- (p) Encouraging initiatives focused on the integration of marginalized groups and promoting and protecting the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic minorities.

B. Monitoring and early warning

9. Pursuant to its mandate, the Centre will continue to monitor and analyze the situation on the ground and provide up-to-date information to the Secretary-General of the United Nations related to conflict prevention efforts.

10. To that end, the Centre will:

- (a) Provide good offices, at the request of concerned parties, to de-escalate disputes, and early warning to the international community where tensions arise;
- (b) Provide early warning on the effective use of water and energy resources, and cooperate, *inter alia*, with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS);
- (c) In cooperation with the Governments of Central Asia and other relevant actors, analyze the impact of the food-water-energy nexus on regional stability and development and propose appropriate preventive measures;
- (d) Monitor situations regarding potential inter-ethnic tensions and provide early warning in order to prevent tensions from erupting into violence;
- (e) Work with Governments of the region to identify drivers of radicalization, and enable them to draw on good practices for preventing and countering violent extremism that can lead to terrorism.

C. Building partnerships for prevention

11. Preventive diplomacy depends on effective partnerships. Furthermore, since many of today's threats are transnational, regional cooperation is essential.

12. Pursuant to its mandate, UNRCCA will:

- (a) Maintain contacts 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 and foreign policies of the countries concerned;
- (b) Promote the link between development and stability and cooperate with relevant actors, including UNCTs, development banks, and international financial institutions to promote sustainable peace and development;
- (c) Forge partnerships with relevant institutions, including academic and non-governmental, as well as strategic research and international relations institutions, to develop sustainable mediation capacity within the region, negotiation skills, as well as conflict prevention;
- (d) 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) and its entities, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and other relevant actors;

- (e) In the framework of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, support efforts of countries in the region to develop appropriate national strategies, counter extremist ideologies, including in the media and on internet, and strengthen coordination between regional and international partners;
- (f) Work with IOM, UNHCR and the Governments of the region to identify the causes and consequences of mixed migration, and strengthen regional cooperation on migration issues;
- (g) In consultation with OHCHR and Governments of the region, support Central Asian countries in meeting their international human rights obligations, and cooperate with human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies and to fully implement Universal Periodic Review recommendations accepted by countries;
- (h) Continue to partner with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and its subsidiary organs based on the MoU between the UN and EC IFAS;
- (i) Contribute to the efforts of Central Asian states to combat the illegal production, trafficking and use of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and their precursors, in cooperation with UNODC, CARICC and other relevant organizations, and in line with the 1996 MOU on Sub-regional Drug Control Cooperation;
- (j) Continue cooperation with the Conference on Inter-action and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA), particularly in the further development and implementation of confidence-building measures in the region.

D. Strengthening the UN's preventive activities in the region

13. One of the Centre's tasks is to provide a political framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the United Nations country teams in the region, and to support efforts in promoting an integrated approach to preventive development and humanitarian assistance. To that end, the UNRCCA will:

- (a) Encourage the mainstreaming of prevention into UN-related regional security and development programmes and initiatives including Common Country Assessments and UN Develop Action Frameworks;
- (b) Provide a political framework for UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators in the region as well as relevant entities of the UN system to share information inter alia for risk assessments and early warning indicators;
- (c) Collaborate with UNDP, DPA, UN Peace and Development Advisers and relevant countries in the region to build

national capacity for conflict prevention, *inter alia* through the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF) of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF);

- (d) Work with UNITAR, DPA and other relevant parts of the UN family to provide training and build capacity on mediation, conflict prevention and reconciliation;
- (e) Partner with UNECE and UNESCAP to promote economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia as part of wider efforts to promote regional cooperation;
- (f) In consultation with Central Asian states, cooperate with UNISDR, OCHA and other relevant actors to promote disaster risk preparedness and reduction in Central Asia.

E. Encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan

14. Developments in Afghanistan, particularly in provinces bordering Central Asia, have an impact on peace and stability in the wider region, while regional initiatives involving Afghanistan can help to promote stability, cooperation, and development. With this in mind, UNRCCA will:

- (a) Maintain close contact with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to ensure a comprehensive and integrated analysis of the situation in the region and address its conflict potential;
- (b) Provide political support to Central Asian states in assessing potential threats emanating from developments in Afghanistan;
- (c) In cooperation with UNAMA, promote further engagement and joint efforts between Central Asian states and Afghanistan on issues of mutual interest affecting peace and security;
- (d) Encourage the participation and contribution of Central Asian countries in ongoing international efforts and political processes to stabilize Afghanistan, including the Istanbul Process;
- (e) In cooperation with concerned Central Asian Governments, provide political support to regional initiatives that take into consideration interests of all parties such as the Regional Economic Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), TAPI, and CASA 1000, in order to promote greater economic connectivity and integration in Central Asia and its neighborhood;
- (f) Involve, as appropriate, interlocutors from Afghanistan in relevant UNRCCA activities.
