

Conflict Prevention in Central Asia

The Role of the OSCE

A Report on a Conference organised by the European Centre for Conflict
Prevention and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Hague, March 7th and 8th, 2002



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Edited by

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Ministerie van
Buitenlandse Zaken



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Preface

On March 7, 2002, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought together a group of some fifty experts on Central Asia, development co-operation, conflict prevention and resolution, and related topics for a roundtable discussion on the role of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in preventing conflict in Central Asia. The March 7 meeting was followed on March 8 by a conference on the same subject open to the public. Some 160 people participated in this meeting. An important motivation for these events was the desire of the Dutch government to consult experts for guidance on positive strategies it might develop, as it prepares to assume the chair of the OSCE in 2003.

The overall aim of this conference was to inform a broader public about the current situation in Central Asia. Through this event we hope to raise public awareness of the possibilities and different strategies for working for peace and stability in the region. The Netherlands has been appointed to the chair of the OSCE for 2003 and has joined the Troika in 2002. This is a good opportunity to explore how best to apply the available instruments of the OSCE to strengthen stability and cooperation in the region. Lastly, we would like to stimulate more civil society actors in the Netherlands to commit their efforts to working for peace and stability in Central Asia.

There is currently an urgent need for a balanced analysis of the social and political situation in Central Asia, and for information about the role civil society actors play in the region. The changing regional security context and increased international attention requires new strategies for conflict prevention. This includes information on the effects of the international intervention in Afghanistan. The OSCE's growing interest in Central Asia has led to a particular need for better information and insights into the region, and how best to apply the available instruments of the OSCE.

The OSCE holds a unique position in relation to conflict prevention. It is a security organisation whose 55 participating states span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. In its region it is the primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE approach to security is comprehensive and co-operative. It deals with a wide range of security issues, including arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, election monitoring and economic and environmental security. Because decisions are made on the basis of consensus, all states participating in OSCE activities have an equal status. The work of the OSCE High

Commissioner on National Minorities in recent years is a good example of what the organisation can achieve in the field of conflict prevention.

The meetings were part of the Searching for Peace in Europe & Eurasia programme of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. The programme's objective is to promote effective conflict prevention and peace-building strategies and to produce surveys on the prevention and management activities in the main conflicts in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. A new book with these surveys was published by Lynne Rienner Publishers in February 2002. Many international and local scholars and practitioners contributed to the publication. It contains chapters about the role of the OSCE, policy recommendations, and surveys on the situation in Tajikistan and the Ferghana Valley. The book was officially launched during the conference and presented to Jozias van Aartsen, Netherlands minister of Foreign Affairs.

Participants at the Roundtable included experts from both Europe-based and locally-based NGOs, government agencies and ministries, academic and policy development institutions, and the OSCE. The program included three plenary sessions, beginning in the opening session with several presentations tracing developments over the past ten years and identifying the range of threats to security in Central Asia. During the second session, speakers discussed conflict resolution/prevention activities undertaken in the region by civil society organisations. Speakers during the third session focused on the roles that governments and inter-governmental agencies, including the OSCE, might play in addressing both potential and actual conflict in the Central Asia region. Following the three plenary sessions, participants spent about an hour addressing specific issues related to Central Asian security in smaller working groups, in order to develop recommendations for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on policies, strategies, and initiatives to consider during its tenure as chair of the OSCE.

The one-day conference on March 8 included speeches on a variety of issues related to conflict issues in Central Asia, the presentation of a video documentary from Internews Central Asia, discussions in small groups, and a panel discussion.

To some extent, the discussions and recommendations were guided by the structure of the OSCE, with its divisions along the lines of politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. However, in the course of the discussions, it was evident that in many cases, lines dividing these issues are not so distinct.

This is a report on the issues raised and the themes that emerged during the Roundtable and the seminars held the following day. It is not, then, per se, a report on the proceedings, but rather a discussion of the primary observations,



insights, and recommendations offered by the participants, in which an attempt has been made to distil, organise, and analyse a great quantity of information presented at the conference (as well as additional information made available to the participants in background briefings and supporting papers) into a document that brings some clarity to the complex of issues that were discussed. The guidelines and priorities for the OSCE that were formulated and discussed are also included.

We are very grateful to the Task Force OSCE Chairmanship of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular Daphne Bergsma, for their cooperation in organising the meetings and their financial support that also made this report possible. Furthermore we would like to thank Vicken Creterian, Aaron Rhodes, Anara Tabyshalieva for their useful comments to the draft text of the guidelines and priorities. We thank free lance journalist Jim Wake for the writing of the report. We are grateful for the constructive involvement of Catherine Barnes in the development of the programme, the charring and input to the main findings. We thank the staff of the ECCP, in particular Renske Martijnse, for their support in the organising of the event.



Paul van Tongeren, executive director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, presents the first copy of 'Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia' to minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Jozias van Aartsen

Today more than ever better understanding and analysis of the crisis zones in the OSCE and in particular the Central Asian republics is needed as well as what the potential and difficulties are for peacebuilding endeavours. We do hope that the meetings, this report and the guidelines will contribute to this.

Paul van Tongeren, executive director ECCP

Juliette Verhoeven, co-ordinator of the ECCP's program Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia

Speech by Jozias van Aartsen

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: a very warm welcome to you all. I particularly welcome the participants from Central Asia as well as Mr Rui Aleixo, the representative of the Portuguese Chairman-in-Office.

Historical background

Perhaps not since the nineteenth century has the region of Central Asia generated so much attention from the international community. In those days, the region was subject to what was known as ‘The Great Game’: the struggle for political ascendancy between the dominant powers of the period, Russia and Great Britain. It was a time when the importance of the region was high on the geopolitical agenda of the most powerful players on the world diplomatic scene.

Since those days, the region has witnessed numerous conflicts. In the second half of the twentieth century, Central Asia was one of the regions that bore the brunt of the impact of the Cold War. Since then, the countries of Central Asia have returned to the world stage as sovereign states with the ambition to become stable and reliable members of the international community. In the words of Peter Hopkirk, the great chronicler of The Great Game of the nineteenth century: “the end of the Cold War has tossed Central Asia back into the melting pot of history”.

Importance of Central Asia today

Central Asia still carries the geopolitical importance it carried centuries ago. But the world has changed significantly. It has become increasingly interdependent and conflicts can hardly be confined to state borders. War in one country can easily affect stability in the rest of the region and beyond. For Central Asia, that crucial bridge between two continents, it means that stability is high on the agenda. The countries of that region play a very important role in preventing future conflict. The dramatic events of 11 September last year and their aftermath have added to their importance.

Purpose of this conference

Today’s conference will focus on the OSCE’s growing interest in Central Asia and on how best to apply the available OSCE instruments. At the same time, it should serve to increase our knowledge of the region, especially of the states participating in the OSCE: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.



In the front: minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Jozias van Aartsen

This conference is one of the ways the Netherlands is preparing to take on the OSCE Chairmanship next year. This year, the Netherlands is part of the OSCE troika, together with Portugal and Romania. It is our intention to build on what has already been achieved by the Portuguese Chairmanship and bring added energy to the OSCE's conflict prevention activities, especially in Central Asia.

That is no small task, but I am convinced that the OSCE can make a significant contribution. Let me briefly list a few of the challenges that confront the Central Asian countries that I mentioned. I shall indicate how the OSCE could play a role in addressing them.

The challenges in Central Asia

One word of caution: we should bear in mind that even though Central Asian countries are part of a single region, there are marked differences between them. Awareness of those differences (cultural, political, economic etc.) can only help to solve the problems at hand.

Many Central Asian countries face the huge challenge of nation building and the transition to a market economy. Their internal stability is threatened by growing economic and environmental problems and related social risks. Some countries also face inter-ethnic tensions or lack properly marked borders. Other challenges originate from outside the OSCE area: such as terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking and organised crime. These external threats have become more prominent since the recent developments in Afghanistan.

As serious as all these challenges may be, they do not necessarily have to result in conflict, let alone violent conflict. This is where the OSCE comes into play. One of its core tasks is conflict prevention, so it has a range of instruments to offer the region. The starting point should be its co-operative approach to problem solving. Few problems can be confined within national borders which means that cross-border co-operation can only benefit all states involved.

True OSCE partnership

Such international co-operation, however, requires true partnership and open dialogue. A dialogue involves two-way traffic: it is not a matter of lecturing Central Asian states about how the OSCE would like to see them solve their problems. Quite the contrary. The OSCE should listen to what Central Asian states have to say. That is exactly why I am glad to see so many representatives from the region here today. We want to hear your views about what the OSCE's priorities should be.

In my view, our discussions should highlight the OSCE's broad and comprehensive approach to security issues. The protection and promotion of human rights, along with economic and environmental progress, are just as relevant to peace and stability as political and military aspects.

The importance of the economic and environmental dimension was underscored many times by the Central Asian countries over the last years. Their call was heard: at Bucharest, the ministerial meeting confirmed that the economic dimension should be strengthened. Economic development is essential to security and stability in central Asia.

While the OSCE cannot provide direct economic support, it can help in creating a climate that is conducive to economic cooperation and foreign investment. That means strengthening the rule of law in democratic societies. The OSCE can also act as a catalyst for the efforts of other international organisations by drawing attention to economic and environmental problems that threaten regional security and stability.

Another inextricable element of the OSCE is the human dimension. I am aware of the high sensitivity of this subject for our Central Asian partners. Continuous dialogue on all aspects of the human dimension, and human rights in particular, remains a balancing act. We have to remain aware of the specific problems inherent to the very difficult transition processes while safeguarding OSCE standards.

Finally, the OSCE has a role to play when it comes to what we call the new risks and challenges to our security: such as terrorism, organised crime and trafficking in drugs, small arms and human beings. The Netherlands intends to give specific attention to these issues during its chairmanship next year. The Central Asian countries have rightly expressed their concern about these threats. They require action on all levels: regional, national and international. The OSCE should continue to organise the regional meetings started two years ago, such as the Tashkent conference (on drugs, organised crime and terrorism) and the Bishkek conference (on terrorism).

Conclusion

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the agenda of the Dutch OSCE chairmanship will be a heavy one. We can use all the input we can get. Your

contributions today should help us guide our thoughts and policies for the next year. The OSCE has an opportunity to contribute to lasting peace and stability in Central Asia. We cannot afford to waste it.

Speech by Ambassador Marc Gilbert

Head of the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan

Last year the five republics of Central Asia celebrated the 10th anniversary of their foundation. They became members of the OSCE on 30 and 31 of January 1992 when, in Prague, the council of CSCE welcomed them as they “adopted the Helsinki Final Act, the charter of Paris for a new Europe and all other documents of the conference on security and cooperation in Europe”.

On that occasion the five countries declared their commitment to the provisions of the Vienna document on confidence and security building measures as well as to those established by the Treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe.

In this way the international community acknowledged the importance of the republics of Central Asia, that cover nearly four million square kilometres with a population of some 54 million inhabitants.



During the last ten years the organisation has significantly modified its orientation. From the confidence- and security-building that reflected the dialectic of the Cold War, it has turned to the platform for cooperative security adopted in 1999 at the Istanbul Summit, the goal of which is “to strengthen the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between these organisations and institutions concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area.”

The Central Asian republics are on the edge of that area, forming a bridge with the People’s Republic of China, Afghanistan and with the Islamic Republic of Iran - countries that for the time being are not meeting the provisions defined in the aforementioned platform for cooperative security. That is why the OSCE has a very special and important

Ambassador Marc Gilbert

role to play in a region where the potential sources of conflict and destabilisation remain significant.

1. Let us now consider the potential threats to stability in the area, according to their origin.

First they stem from **history**. The five countries emerged after the downfall of the Soviet Union. They were given their present form by Stalin in accordance with his policy of nationalities, and have lived some 74 years under the principles of democratic centralism, proletarian internationalism, the supremacy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and other concepts which have become obsolete.

Inside their borders, each of the five republics now has to fill the void generated by the disappearance of that ideology. At the same time, they have to reinforce and separate the legislative, judiciary, and executive powers, as well as respecting the freedom of the media which, in the soviet era, was, by definition, non-existent.

The absence of democratic traditions complicates the task, as does the disappearance of the cohesion provided by the soviet system. Citizenship, freedom of movement, education, health, economy and the management of the scarce national resources were regulated - with varying degrees of success - by the central Party in Moscow, which attracted all the ability and talent.

At the same time as that force for cohesion vanished, the rules of the Soviet economic system also disappeared and the new republics were confronted with globalisation. The universe was no longer divided but became smaller. The fixed-price system underwent a revolution along with basic concepts of rentability, productivity, property, and profit..

In a world where daily financial flows exceed one billion dollars, the Central Asian republics had to build a banking system from scratch.

Similarly, the academic system lost its previous monopoly and was forced to integrate into the global intellectual community - without the guidance of the CPSU.

The principles of proletarian internationalism also disappeared, and the young republics had to rapidly define a new philosophy - a task in which they have received the support of a number of international institutions including the UN, OSCE, IMF, and World Bank - but which, in some aspects, still remains to be completed. For example, in many institutions in these countries there remains a powerful department of ideology.

The five republics were also confronted with the problem of national identity and **nation building**.

The multi-ethnic model vanished and was replaced by its opposite: in the hope of filling the gaps left by the soviet policy of nationalities and in reaction to the previously dominant Russian influence, the decision makers developed a nationalistic approach to citizenship.

I recall that the Soviet legacy provided the citizen with a double link - citizenship and nationality. A soviet subject was by nationality Russian, Kyrgyz, Uzbek - a situation he decided for himself among some 160 nationalities. Nowadays the concept has survived in spite of the disappearance of Soviet citizenship, and one may be a Tajik Uzbek, or an Uzbek Tajik - which is quite different. So too, the issue of national minorities, some of which are very important numerically, as well as the situation of the Russian speaking population, has still to be satisfactorily addressed.

It should be noted that, in the years immediately following independence, significant movements of populations were observed. These affected mainly the Russian speakers as well as the German and the Jewish communities, and generated a massive brain drain which still continues.

In the field of economy, the foundation of the independent states induced the appearance of national economies as well as of borders, and customs and taxes, that are still, too often, soviet in character and which oppose the trend towards free trade increasingly prevalent in the European Union, Nafta and the Mercosul. The decision-makers are moving ever further from the free circulation of goods and persons, and the market economy. These national economies are still at different stages of the process of capital building, a situation that together, with the weakness of the powers previously reported, generates significant social tensions. This situation also reinforces the corruption and nepotism that contributed to the fall of Soviet Union.

Let us now talk about **geography**.

Isolation is a primary characteristic of the geography of the republics. The nearest points of access to the open sea are Riga, Karachi and Novorossiysk - thousands of kilometres away over deserts and mountain ridges. Travel through the territory of the southern neighbors - China, Afghanistan and Iran is difficult and sometimes impossible. Train and plane remain the fragile links to the outer world and are too often utilised as a means of pressure rather than as links for cooperation. And at this point, after the BBC reported on February the 15th, that for Tajik citizens transit through the Kazakh and Uzbek territories is so dangerous - even when it is permitted - that popular resentment is slowly growing against both the populations and the governments of the two neighbouring countries as well as against the inability of the Tajik authorities to ensure the protection of their nationals.

The proximity to Afghanistan, whose stability is still uncertain, might become a new source of more or less open conflicts.

Before the intervention of the anti-terrorist coalition, attitudes towards the Taliban regime differed with each Central Asian republic, however, the Taliban regime was regarded as a common threat in terms of narcotraffic, terrorist action - for example by the ally of the Taliban the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan - and for its intention to overthrow the existing states to create a Khalifat of Turkistan.

Nowadays, as a new balance of power is appearing in Afghanistan, the neighbouring countries continue to believe that they have legitimate - and contradictory - interests to defend in that country, while the threat generated by the narcobusiness is not fully taken into account in the climate of collaboration.

Demography is a preoccupation while the rate of natural growth of the population remains high.

This means growing demand for education and labour at a time when the educational systems inherited from the soviet era face severe difficulties, and when the national economies are also facing structural challenges, which the exploitation of the national raw material resources may temporarily mask in some cases.

At the same time the brain drain continues; the people with a special talent or an academic background - that is not always acknowledged abroad because of the significant collapse of the educational system - leave the country for the north and the west.

The five republics are, at different but always very significant levels, confronted with difficulties that have no national solutions, and that are already generating tensions between the governments as well as between the populations.

Water is the first source of conflict, the seriousness of which is increased by the drought that, UN experts say, will become structural in the very near future. Each government has its views. These seem rather short-sighted insofar as there is as yet no sense of a common interest, while all available evidence suggests there is no national solution to this problem. The energy problem is the converse of the water problem, as the countries that have water have neither gas nor oil - and vice versa.

Transportation is another source of conflict along with the free circulation of persons (the visa regime), and of goods (the customs regime) that, in practice,

too often, lead to discrimination and to breaches of basic human rights. In the field of security tensions already exist.

Firstly, security tensions arise because the delimitation of the borders has yet to be settled. During the soviet era, today's borders were simply administrative divisions.

The issue is complicated by the fact that in two cases these borders are being mined - causing casualties among the local population without hampering "the bandits, terrorists and narcotraffickers" that the minefields are allegedly intended to stop, and who prefer to bribe the law enforcement bodies.

Secondly, tensions are being generated by the existence of cross-border regional opposition movements. The Taliban regime was a threat to regional stability, as was their ally the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) — also identified as a terrorist organisation by the American administration. Both of them have apparently been neutralised, as was Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, a warlord who had found a refuge in Uzbekistan after three attempts to overthrow the Tajik regime. He has allegedly been killed and the threat has lost much of its actuality since none of his lieutenants is capable of succession. But as long as any of the five republics will provide, willy-nilly, an asylum for movements that are determined to use violence to overthrow the political regime in any of the neighbouring countries, there will exist a significant risk to stability.

Similarly, the existence of strongly organised criminal networks constitutes a threat to stability insofar as it undermines the authority of the central states (narcotrafic) as well as harms the relationship between different governments when not handled in an appropriate manner (exile of the Afghan refugees from Tajikistan, harassment of the Tajik travelers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan).

Seventy four years of the soviet regime have not succeeded in rooting out the influence of Islam. The sometimes authoritarian character of the present political regimes, the deterioration of living conditions, the social network and the educational system, the increasing openness of the borders and the emergence of new, powerful information technologies have contributed to giving the religious factor a new vigour, and to making Islam appear to be the only alternative to large parts of the disinherited population. The religiously-oriented political parties are sometimes accepted by the constitution; sometimes they are not. In all cases their activity as opposition parties is hampered. This helps provide the clandestine but still nonviolent organisation, Hizb-ut-tahrir, with a special prestige that makes it attractive to young people who are often looking for a job, for a better education and for a more equitable society.

Another issue that is still to be addressed is the legacy in the field of environment and of nature protection; not only does the water issue remain to be solved, but equally that of nuclear and atomic waste, and of industrial and agricultural pollution in general.

Experts believe that the forecast climatic changes will contribute to accelerating desertification, and the degradation of the soils, especially in the countries where energy is scarce and where the process of deforestation is already under way.

I do not claim to have drafted an exhaustive picture of the challenges currently facing Central Asia; neither would I like to discourage all those who want, with the OSCE, to prevent what can be prevented, and to heal the rest.

2. Let us then see what can be done.

At this stage I would like to make two prefatory remarks:

First I would like you to remember that the views I am going to express do not necessarily reflect the position of the Organisation.

Second there are five Central Asian republics, and each of them is facing problems of its own, with its own institutions, resources and goals - according to the World Bank in 2000 the GNI per capita ranged from USD 1,190 for Kazakhstan, to USD 170 for Tajikistan.

That is why actions can only be specific and adapted; the preventive action must be both compatible with the general orientations chosen by the ruling circles of these participating countries, and accepted by them. It is not sufficient to identify an issue, to find several possible solutions and to gather the means necessary to bring that issue before the public opinion. It still remains to convince the decision-makers that these solutions correspond to the long-term interest of all. That is why, in forwarding proposals and suggestions we should not forget that there are several levels of intervention, and that building up a civil society is a permanent methodological prerequisite.

The best way to prevent conflicts is first to turn the potential protagonists into partners and, in that perspective to build up the tools for consultation.

The first one is the Organisation itself, a unique instance of permanent dialogue and contact that should continue to maintain a climate of constructive confidence between the different actors. Experience has shown how useful the institution of the coordinator for Central Asia can be. That institution should be reinforced with a budget and staff, that should adapt to the specificities of the region, and be capable of reacting swiftly to any stimulus.

In line with the aforementioned platform for cooperative security, the Organisation might endeavour to coordinate its activities with the other international institutions active in the region - especially with the financial ones.

A further possible step might be to help improve the effectiveness of other, existing, regional institutions of consultation; and I think in particular of the Organisation for the Cooperation in Central Asia recently created on the basis of the Central Asian Economic Association.

And of course at each level, cooperation with the national authorities must be fostered, specially by the Centers or Missions as well as by the existing field offices the number of which should be increased - in an effort to support the edification of the emerging civil society.

As an element of response to the request formulated by several Central Asian participating countries that the Organisation should pay more attention to the economic/environmental issues, the resumption might be envisaged of the discussions of the issue of water in the light of the forecast climate change - maybe with the cooperation of other specialised bodies like UNECE. The possibility that initially some participating countries might not be ready to take part in these reflections should not be considered an obstacle. It would be the task of those who would be ready to discuss the issue to convince any dissenters of the usefulness of these consultations.

Other issues might equally be considered in a convergent approach. These are:

- Border delimitation; this point is at the core of the concerns of the Shanghai group, and the Organisation should avoid overlap with that very useful body. Nevertheless it could be envisaged that profit should be made from the expertise gained by several participating countries in that field.
- Transport and free circulation of persons and goods - maybe, again, with the support of specialised international institutions (Union Douaniere).
- Energy - probably the most difficult issue, as it is linked with, but embraces a broader range of concerns, than water.
- The interest paid by several Central Asian participating countries to the World Trade Organisation might justify these issues being handled in liaison with the WTO, that could provide the necessary incentives.

In each country the Organisation might usefully help fill the gap left after the downfall of communist ideology - as noted above, the reinforcement of the powers and their separation appears imperative to the creation of a civil society. This is a long-term task, as it requires changing mentalities, to take into account personal short term interests, and to overwhelm outdated ideological preconditioned assessments - that would mean:

For the legislature:

- Assessment in cooperation with the national authorities and with the OSCE authorities of the elective legislation in regard to the contracted engagements (Copenhagen 1990) in the letter, and in practice.
- Appropriate drafting and dissemination of modernised legislations.
- Assessment, in cooperation with the national authorities of the legislation and practice regarding the political parties; if and when possible, comparison with the contracted obligations - and formulation of appropriate conclusions.
- Idem for media legislation: very special attention should be paid to the issue of the freedom of religion, and the attention of the authorities should be drawn to the necessity of allowing - as it is already in some cases - political parties with a religious orientation to exist; the aim of that approach being of course to avoid the proliferation of clandestine organisations that might be tempted to resort to terrorist activities in order to get their voice heard.

For the judiciary:

This is probably the weakest of the three powers, as the structures have not significantly evolved since the soviet era. The three main components of that power should be supported:

- Barristers: creation of a national bar associations;
- Judges: selection process and training;
- Prosecutors: selection process and training.

For the executive:

- Training of civil servants, and of law enforcement officers (border guards, security, customs, tax controllers)

Maybe at an OSCE multinational academy for each body, open to nationals of the five republics.

In each country the executive should be assisted, as appropriate, initially in the modernisation of the legislation and of the institutions and, further, in improving the implementation of the decisions.

Economy:

The Organisation in general and its Centers or Missions have neither the budgetary means nor the expertise necessary to compete with such bodies as the IMF, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Islamic Development Bank.

These bodies, and the international financial institutions in general, are not ready to admit that their activity should be controlled or coordinated in any way.

The organisation is not in a position to exert any direct influence on the investors. The OSCE is not able to command Philips, General Electric or Siemens to modify their development strategy.

But the OSCE can help the authorities in establishing a general legal environment that would indulge domestic investors to keep their money at home and the foreign investors to take the risk to bring in their dollars and euros, and their jobs.

It can equally contribute by monitoring the implementation of reforms undertaken upon the advice of other bodies (IMF, WB etc) such as agrarian reform.

Environment:

The situation is comparable in the field of environment, where the organisation has no vocation to try to replace or compete with the international agency for atomic energy or with the specialised UN agencies.

There again the Organisation should lean on the civil society and try to convince and support the authorities in their effort with the support of the OSCE ODIHR, and of the specialised national or international agencies and then try to help in the process of selection and training of the relevant national bodies - in coordination with the bilateral national programs whenever it is possible.

The Aarhus Convention whether it has been ratified or not might provide a useful guideline.

As a conclusion I would first like to express my gratitude to you for your attention and for your patience. I would equally command that we should adopt an attitude of patience and humility, and that we should listen to our partners - for we can support them only if they accept that support, and if we succeed in convincing them to respect the obligations they have contracted in becoming, on the 30th of January 1992 in Prague, members of the CSCE. This is the price to pay for our common cooperative security.



Enhancing the Security of the Central Asian Region

Two days of discussion and debate on conflict prevention in Central Asia revealed that there is no lack of knowledge or understanding of the region, despite its relative isolation until the recent past. If there are still disagreements on how to tackle the problems facing the region, there is surprisingly little disagreement on what those problems are.

The following is a report on the issues raised and the themes that emerged during the Roundtable on March 7th and the seminars held the following day. It is not, then, per se, a report on the proceedings, but rather a discussion of the primary observations, insights, and recommendations offered by the participants, in which an attempt has been made to distil, organise, and analyse a great quantity of information presented at the conference (as well as additional information made available to the participants in background briefings and supporting papers) into a document that brings some clarity to the complex of issues that were discussed. In addition, several of the principals were interviewed privately. Excerpts from those interviews are presented verbatim in this document, and insights drawn from those interviews inform other sections as well. *By JIM WAKE*

1. New Threats in Central Asia: changing security context

The five former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have now been independent for ten years. All five have been members of the OSCE since January 1992. The five countries share, of course, their Soviet legacy, as well as a complex of cultural relationships dating back to many centuries prior to the Soviet era. It is convenient, and not altogether inappropriate, to lump them together with the regional label 'Central Asia', but nonetheless, as the OSCE Head of Mission in Tajikistan, Ambassador Marc Gilbert pointed out, there are vast differences among them as well, in culture, access to resources, and economic and political development.

Gilbert, who delivered the keynote speech to the Roundtable Plenary on March 7, provided a useful overview of the political and social climate as it has developed in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and outlined some of the particular characteristics that tend to contribute to instability. Gilbert was followed during the first plenary session by Vicken Cheterian, co-director of Cimera, a Swiss-based non-profit organisation active in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Balkans and in Switzerland; Raya Kadyrova, president of the Foundation for Tolerance International, based in Kyrgyzstan; Shirin Akiner, of the School of African and Oriental Studies at the University of London; David Hoffman, a democracy specialist based at USAID's Regional Mission for Central Asia in Kazakhstan, and Max Spoor, of the Institute for Social Studies in the Netherlands. The following discussion of sources of conflict and issues of concern related to potential conflict is based in particular on these presentations, and draws as well on additional presentations the following day.



Madina Najimova

Post-Soviet state-building

Ambassador Gilbert pointed out that despite whatever adverse effects might have accrued from Soviet rule, it did provide a unifying ideology for the constituent republics and an economic system in which the republics could participate. In the ideological void which has followed the end of Soviet rule, and in the absence of democratic traditions which have proven effective in building institutions in the West, it has been difficult to replace the institutions of Soviet society with new ones. The unravelling of Soviet authority has also resulted in fragmentation of the previously existing economic system, as the governments pursue their own interests, previously open borders are closed and traditional trading relationships disrupted. On a practical level, a variety of administrative responsibilities once regulated by the central authority in Moscow, such as health, education, management of the economy, and the exploitation of natural resources, were quite suddenly matters to be administered by the governments of the newly independent states.

It was noted that there were serious fears, when the Central Asian states first achieved independence, of political chaos. But there was no consensus among participants about how to view the ensuing ten years: to some, ten years of relative peace, with the significant exception of a brutal civil war in Tajikistan,

Arne Seifert

Centre for OSCE Research

On democracy in Central Asia

Democratisation will work and will be effective only under the condition that a sort of democracy develops on the ground which is coming in national colours. So what we have to do in the West is to think about the function of democracy. The function of democracy is to have such a set of mechanisms and instruments which allows for contradictions and conflicts existing in any society to be resolved peacefully. So we in the West have been developing our democracies under our specific social, political, cultural conditions. Those regions like Central Asia have to develop their own methods in accordance with their own social structures, and socio-cultural backgrounds. That they can benefit from our experience is true, but that is a different question. What would be best is that we sit down together and work out those instruments which fulfil the function of democracy under their particular national conditions, and this is what has been lost in the OSCE.

are reason to be cautiously optimistic. Others, citing the authoritarian nature of most regimes, the low-level conflict and potential for greater conflict, and the poor progress in building civil society or tackling poverty, are less optimistic. The metaphor of the 'half-empty / half-full glass' was alluded to, but it might be more accurate to say that the glass is so agitated that accurate measurements are not currently possible.

Inter-ethnic rivalries

Centralised Soviet rule had the effect of imposing – perhaps artificially – a sort of peaceful coexistence among the many ethnic groups throughout the Soviet Union. All of the Central Asian states include large populations of ethnic and religious minorities, and the creation of stable multi-ethnic societies remains a major challenge. Since independence, rivalries and competition among ethnic groups in Central Asia have begun to be an important factor in regional politics at both the intra-state level and inter-state level. In the densely populated Ferghana Valley, where Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan intersect, and which is populated by Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz (among others), the risks of conflict are especially high. Throughout the region, substantial emigration has occurred within the communities of non-indigenous minorities, such as Russians, Germans, and Jews.

Resources and environmental challenges

The five nations confront to various degrees shortages of natural resources. The most vital of these, and the one which has most often tended to cause heightened tension, is water, but energy shortages are also serious –

particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Again, the centralised Soviet administration previously imposed an order, and to some extent, effected redistribution of these resources. The Central Asian countries contend not only with shortages, but with quite serious problems of environmental degradation, including pollution to soil and water caused by nuclear, agricultural, and industrial wastes.

Repercussions of the September 11 terror attacks and the subsequent war in Afghanistan

Prior to the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, there was some spillover effect on the political situations in the Central Asian republics that could be attributed to instability in Afghanistan. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which had mounted an insurgency in Uzbekistan, had close links to the Taliban, and ethnic Tajiks in the Northern Alliance were supplied via Tajikistan. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the United States has sought to forge closer political and military relations with the neighbouring countries. The ruling elites, who are, to a large extent, the same people and factions that held power at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, can expect to receive economic and military support in exchange for their co-operation with the US and its allies engaged in the 'war on terrorism'. Vicken Cheterian pointed out that closer relations with the West tend to enhance the credibility and perceived legitimacy of the governments, regardless of their adherence to democratic values or their degree of compliance with internationally recognised standards with respect to human rights and the rule of law. To the extent that these regimes are unpopular and perceived to be corrupt, the West's credibility suffers in the eyes of those who see it as 'collaborating' with them.

It is also the case that the West 'needs' the co-operation of the Central Asian regimes more than it did prior to 9/11, and it therefore has less leverage for influencing human rights and the development of democratic institutions. Furthermore, noted Cheterian, the use of force in Afghanistan can be cited by Central Asian governments to justify their own activities against opposition elements, and gives them the leeway to label such opposition as a terrorist threat, whether or not such a terrorist threat really exists. Similarly, governments that fear that political Islam could threaten their power base may attempt to associate all expressions of Islam with the violent extremist strain of Al Qaeda, as a way of justifying repression against potential political opposition.

Borders and border controls

One of the most serious threats to stability is the lack of clearly demarcated borders between the states. Raya Kadyrova, for example, noted that along the 1200 km border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, only 255 km have been clearly demarcated. Conflicts over resources are clearly exacerbated by lack of

clarity about borders; there is a serious risk of conflict where disputes arise regarding the precise placement of a border. With the lack of clarity about borders, jurisdiction over land transfers is also problematic.

Another serious problem with respect to the borders is the manner in which they are controlled by customs, immigration, and border control authorities. In Soviet times, the borders between the Soviet republics were little more than lines on a map, families, ethnic groups, and farms often straddled these rather arbitrary lines. People were previously free to cross the borders without visas, and goods could flow freely between the Soviet republics without being subject to customs duties. Since the Central Asian states achieved independence, however, the borders have served to divide peoples and to impede the flow of goods and people, with serious negative impacts on local economies. Because governments are deriving income from customs duties, they have in some cases sealed borders and closed traditional trade routes. Governments have also pointed to the threat of insurgency as a reason to strictly control the borders, and have, in several cases, mined borders that had traditionally been open – sometimes without consulting the authorities in the neighbouring states or the residents in border areas. Mine explosions in border areas have caused numerous deaths and serious injuries.

Religious extremism and ‘political’ Islam

Islam, which played an important role in society even in Soviet times, has gained significant influence since the fall of communism. Islamic expressions take many forms ranging from strictly spiritual to overtly political, and in some cases both at once. This has not been well understood in the West where ‘fundamentalism’ has been viewed as a threat to stability even when it does not have a ‘political’ character. In any case, where governments see the rise of Islamism as a threat to their own power bases, as in Uzbekistan, they have tended to respond with repression of ‘fundamentalist’ Islamism, or attempted to implement an ‘official’ Islamism as an alternative to grass roots religious movements. Such repression may actually backfire, leading to alienation and radicalisation of Islamist activists.

Shirin Akiner suggested that the Islamist movement should be understood as one response to what she described as a ‘crisis of modernity’. Traditionalists feel that modern society threatens the core values of Islamic society and wish to see a traditionalist order re-imposed.

Nonetheless, the threat to stability and security posed by radical Islamism should not be dismissed altogether. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had been mounting an armed struggle, aimed primarily against the regime of Uzbek president Islam Karimov, to establish an Islamic Republic in the Ferghana Valley. And while the IMU, which had close ties to the Taliban, may have been seriously weakened during the American led war

against the Taliban, it could be reconstituted or superseded by other groups with similar aims.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement, though avowedly non-violent, also has the potential to act as a de-stabilising element in the region. The movement seeks to restore the ancient caliphate throughout the region (that is, without regard for current borders and states). Hizb-ut-Tahrir's calls for an end to the corruption, decadence, and injustice of the modernist states and societies resonate with a relatively small core of loyal followers. But its appeal could grow if deteriorating economic and social conditions lead to greater civil discontent, and the non-violent character of the movement could either evolve, or be supplanted by groups espousing similar goals but embracing other tactics.

Poverty

The economies of the Central Asian states have declined precipitously since 1991, resulting in a growing gap between a very small elite (numbering perhaps one percent of the population) which has benefited from privatisation of portions of the economy and/or a privileged position in society, and the remainder of the population. The pace of economic reform in Central Asia has been, in general, slow. While Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have taken significant steps towards a market economy, the economies of the other states remain highly centralised. In all five states, poverty has been increasing dramatically.

Clearly, the increasing poverty, and the inability to improve living standards, poses one of the most serious threats to stability and security in the region. This view was expressed repeatedly during the Roundtable discussions and the conference on March 8. Especially where a small elite benefits from access to power and wealth while the majority endure hardship, resentment builds which can lead to civil unrest. Cynicism and a lack of trust in the authorities also leads to lawlessness and corruption.

Increased poverty has, furthermore, triggered high levels of emigration over the past ten years. Naturally, with such high levels of emigration, the nations are suffering from a 'brain drain', which further hinders economic development.

Governance

Failure to implement political reforms and to establish good governance is a matter of equal concern. Indeed, in the view of David Hoffman¹, Western observers make a serious error if they focus on 'external' threats, such as Al

¹ Hoffman prefaced his remarks by noting that the views he expressed did not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the government of the United States.



Esther Schaufelberger

Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

On economic disparity

Over the long term, I see the economic disparities in the region as the biggest challenge to stability. It's a very important issue which needs to be addressed. We have a situation where 80 to 90 percent of the population is much worse off than they were ten years ago and this small minority – 10 - 20 percent – which is actually better off. It cannot continue like that forever. It won't lead automatically to conflict, but it creates fertile ground in which it will be easy for conflict entrepreneurs to mobilise groups along whatever lines they choose. And this goes hand in hand with weak governance.

Qaeda, rather than the inherent problems associated with poor governance. The Central Asian governments, he suggested, try to play up these threats as a way to elicit military and economic assistance from the West, but in reality 'state weakness' poses the most serious long-term threat to security.

When the institutions of governance are not well-established, capable of commanding respect, and managing the affairs of state, the result tends to be inefficient and bloated bureaucracies and 'predatory elites'. Furthermore, said Hoffman, for self-serving reasons, those in power in weak states are 'explicitly interested in the absence of rule of law.' The snowball effects, he observed, include the stifling of development, and the tendency of 'conflicting parties – be they rival ethnic, political or economic groups... to pursue their interests via extra-legal' means rather than via the legally constituted mechanisms of the state.

All five Central Asian states are ruled by elements of the former communist elites of Soviet times, who were largely successful in retaining leadership roles after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Policies are all too often motivated by the desire to retain power rather than to build institutions of government or promote economic development. In fact, Ivan Sigal of Internews Network,

suggested that much conflict in Central Asia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union is motivated by cynical calculations of the political benefit that may accrue from such conflict. 'There is a clear history of conflict to promote political ends,' he said.

Hoffman and others pointed out that an additional problem related to the problem of effective governance in the Central Asian states concerns the problem of 'succession'. Where the state is weak and the legitimacy of the regime is questionable, the possibility of conflict around succession is considerable.

Hoffman urged Western governments to engage the Central Asian governments on a broad spectrum and to address not just security concerns



Azizulla Gaziev

*International Crisis Group,
Kyrgyzstan*

On governance

One of the most important challenges is the confrontation between regimes, the political ruling elite and people. There is a huge gap which is increasing, with the government perceived to be very corrupt, unable to bring any good to the people. Therefore they are looking for alternative leaders – for another way to improve their lives. There is a mistrust of the government. In this sense, with a decline in the socio-economic conditions, you can see the rise of extremism, terrorism, drug use, and drug addiction. These problems are internal within the countries, but you can also add the problems between

states. All the states have very poor relations with each other so there is a whole complex of problems. But the biggest problem is that government is not able to improve people's lives and so there is antagonism between the people and their governments. This is very dangerous because where there is no democratic opposition – for instance in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, people are looking towards radical groups which are ready to fight to achieve their goals. Their intentions could be noble but their methods are problematic. That poses a real challenge.

Ivan Sigal

Internews Network, Kazakhstan

On the mass media and independent journalists

I tend to focus on the idea that information— honest truthful information – is good, and more of it is better. I'm very interested in plurality of information sources, in pushing the OSCE to push its member states to live up to signed obligations to support freedom of speech and freedom expression. For the most part, they are not in compliance.

I shy away from the term independent journalists and focus on balance and lack of bias in news coverage, because independent has different meanings. Independence from state ownership is one thing, independence from state influence is another. Within private media, you frequently find that even privately owned media are owned either by people close to the government or even if they're not, there's an informal censorship mechanism whereby there's pressure from the security forces. The third thing is the market forces. Commercial media require advertising and they have to answer to the dictates of the market. If they don't then they have a funder, and then they're not independent, so every way you slice it, there is dependence: dependence on the market or dependence on the government. The goal that I always try to express is a long-term one – that transparency of information in a media market comes not out of ideals, but out of competition. If you have transparency in terms of who buys and who watches, and you have advertisers who use the media that's most popular, then it's always the case that viewers prefer truth. They want to know what's going on and in a competitive market, the news outlet that tells the best story is the one that will succeed.

but such issues as democratic governance, human rights, transparency, and religious freedom.

Human Rights, Civil Liberties, and the Rule of Law

Good governance implies adherence to international standards with respect to human rights and civil liberties. It is, nonetheless, worth taking specific notice of the negative impacts on security and stability – apart from the obvious impacts on the individual victims of human rights abuses – that follow from such abuses. Though the levels of repression and the opportunities for freedom of expression (including toleration of a free press), association, and religion have varied from country to country, all have engaged in abuses of human rights. In Turkmenistan, repression has been most severe, and Kyrgyzstan has had the best record on human rights and civil liberties, but even there, recent clampdowns on dissent are disturbing.

The most serious risk, particularly where repression is most severe, is that a volatile situation will develop, with the risk of a violent explosion with unpredictable consequences. An active debate on policy options and a

constructive discussion on the process of state-building, which is badly needed throughout the region, is also precluded in a climate of fear. And there can be little doubt that levels of foreign investment will be far lower, either because of the choices of potential investors, or pressure exerted to influence human rights policy through voluntary or mandatory sanctions, when repression is a serious issue.

Organised Crime, Trafficking, and Corruption

The disintegration of central authority has led to a breakdown in law and order throughout the Central Asian region. Criminal organisations have increased their activity, engaged in particular in the trafficking of arms, drugs, and people. One result is that arms are easily accessible throughout the region. Arms trafficking is a catalyst for other forms of crime, and also, of course, exacerbates conflict and facilitates terrorism both inside and outside the region. Indeed, not only does the free flow of arms make it easy for terrorist groups to acquire them in the Central Asian region, but it also provides an important source of income to these groups. Because arms trafficking is lucrative, it is particularly difficult to control in view of the difficult economic situation which prevails. Weak enforcement mechanisms and widespread corruption are also major factors in aggravating the problem.

The trafficking of drugs and people also has deleterious impacts which are felt not only at the source in the region but also at the destinations, including Europe and the United States. According to Anara Tabyshalieva of the Institute for Regional Studies in Kyrgyzstan, the drug trade probably is the most important source of national income in Tajikistan, and ranks close to the top in Kyrgyzstan. Porous borders and corrupt law enforcement and border control mechanisms facilitate trafficking activities, but it is also the case that trafficking has a corrupting influence on law enforcement and border control institutions. It is also the case that even when they



are fairly and effectively implemented, stricter border controls aimed at combating illegal trafficking activities disrupt traditional trade relationships, causing serious economic hardship. National governments claim that in addition to trafficking in small arms and light weapons, radical Islamic movements are also engaged in drug trafficking to fund their activities.

Another risk associated with organised crime is the possibility that territorial disputes between criminal gangs can lead to violent conflict, resulting in further disruptions in an already fragile economic and security environment.

As drug trafficking has become an ever more important part of the local economy, drug consumption has also increased. The problem is especially acute among young people with high levels of unemployment and poverty. Clearly, higher levels of drug use and addiction only aggravate the existing social and economic problems that prevail throughout the region. Corruption, of course, was common in Soviet times, but there's little doubt that it has increased significantly since independence. Corruption flourishes in an environment where difficult economic and social conditions prevail, where the structures of civil society are not firmly established, and enforcement of the rule of law appears arbitrary. In Central Asia, 'privatisation' of the transport system – that is, the demands of police, border control authorities, and criminal gangs, for bribes and protection money – has had a serious impact on trade and prices. Increasing poverty and growing inequality, of course, breed resentment, and may then lead to corruption. Corruption, in turn, stifles investment and development, and undermines respect for the institutions of government. In short, high levels of corruption in Central Asia are a major contributor to instability.

2. Strategies for conflict prevention – the role of civil society organisations

If the OSCE as an organisation or OSCE member nations on their own are to contribute to the establishment and consolidation of stable societies in Central Asia, they will, of course, need to work in close co-ordination with the governments in the region, and with civil society. The following observations summarise comments made during the second session of the March 7 Roundtable, focusing on the role of civil society organisations in conflict prevention activities, and draw on additional presentations on March 7 and March 8, private conversations, and background briefing materials. The principal speakers for the second session of the Roundtable were Alla Kuvatova, of Traditions and Modernity in Tajikistan; Anara Tabysheva, of the Institute for Regional Studies in Kyrgyzstan; and Randa Slim, of Slim & Associates in the United States.



Daan Everts

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign, Head of OSCE Chairmanship Task Force

On trafficking

We have to know what this phenomenon is about. We know it is terrible. And it's getting worse — and in terms of human beings, it's absolutely devastating. It's the scourge of this century and it's comparable to slavery in the 19th century. We better rise up to it. That requires that we align all the forces we can mobilise to tackle this problem, because the enemy here is highly organised. Organised crime is way ahead of us and is extremely powerful. So how do we deal with it?

Obviously, we have to bring individuals, groups, and institutions together. There has to be a war on trafficking. It's one of the reasons why the Dutch, in consultation with our Portuguese friends – the current chairmanship – are opting for trafficking to be an issue to highlight in the hope that we can co-ordinate some kind of international response.

Trafficking is not a one-dimensional thing. It has many facets and that requires that we have to go about this comprehensively. There's no way to just address one aspect of trafficking. When we confronted this issue in Kosovo, we quickly learned that we have to act on several levels. One is good legislation. You have to have good laws. Many laws right now are not helpful for effectively tackling trafficking. For example, trafficked women, instead of being victims, are seen as offenders. So we recognise legislation is in order in many countries, including Western European countries. In Kosovo we introduced into the law a provision that anyone who forcibly dispossesses people from passports commits a criminal offence.

Then you have to address the enforcement side. Enforcement has quite a few layers – police, judges, lawyers – and they have to be sensitised to this issue. So sensitisation and awareness programmes have to be started.

Of course, there need to be special programmes for the victims themselves in order to make them come forward without risk of retaliation – witness programmes, victim assistance, shelters, etc.

And then there is the receiving end of it – the markets here in Western Europe. The demand side has to be addressed as well.



Developments in civil society

Anara Tabyshalieva of the Institute for Regional Studies in Kyrgyzstan, spoke about the special role that NGOs can play in Central Asia. Even in the more repressive countries, the number of NGOs has increased considerably as time goes on. But in all countries, the governments are suspicious of NGOs and, generally speaking, they have no desire to co-operate with NGOs. Conversely, NGOs are also reluctant to co-operate with the government. To some degree, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, NGOs informally assume the role 'opposition'.

In all countries of Central Asia, there is a marked difference between the development of civil society in the capitals as compared to rural areas. This is reflective of a divide that is growing between life in the towns and life in the villages. Most NGOs, for example, are concentrated in the capital areas. Towns

and villages are becoming increasingly isolated from each other. This is an issue that merits attention.

On the other hand, there are vast differences in the development of civil society from one country to the next. Some 3000 NGOs are registered in Kyrgyzstan, while very few exist in Turkmenistan. And, it would not be possible, in either Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, to operate as an NGO if the goal of conflict resolution were explicitly stated. In such cases, women's organisations and environmental groups do occasionally attempt to assume conflict resolution roles.

Traditional structures, such as the *mahalla* in Tajikistan or the *aksakal* ("white beards", or elders' council) in Kyrgyzstan, have had some success in resolving local conflicts, but these bodies exclude women and young people. In Soviet times, women were able to play a rather active role in society, so with their exclusion from these traditional structures and with limited access to political power, they have redressed this marginalisation by becoming involved in NGOs.

A role for women

Focusing in particular on Tajikistan, Alla Kuvatova spoke about the ways that women have increased their participation in society, primarily as a result of their involvement in NGOs. In the period since Tajikistan became independent, and especially since 1997 when a peace agreement ended the civil war, the beginnings of a civil society have appeared with the establishment of NGOs, especially in the Dushanbe and Khujand regions. Among them are some addressing conflict resolution and conflict prevention.

One notable development has been that these NGOs have provided women with a mechanism for playing an active role in civil society. Where there were just three women's organisations in 1995, there are now 128 women's NGOs in Tajikistan. One reason that women have taken such an active part in these organisations, says Alla Kuvatova, is that the period since the end of Soviet rule has been particularly challenging for women.

Women NGOs have been involved in:

- promoting the formation of civil society by pushing to include women in the process of building a democratic society;
- promoting the involvement of the women's movement to building and maintain a stable peace;
- promoting equal opportunities for village women and working to guarantee their rights;
- promoting education in the legal profession for women and girls;
- organising training to stimulate the involvement of women in all spheres of socio-political and economic life;
- supporting the development of female-owned and operated businesses;
- working to increase the role of women in science, culture, creative and applied arts;
- studying the problems of violence against women and working for rehabilitation of victims of violence;
- working to guarantee reproductive rights and reproductive education.

As the organisations have developed and matured, they have expanded their activities from humanitarian assistance-focused activities during and after the war to more issue-oriented activities addressing civil and political rights, civil and legal education, and the role of women in society. There has also been an evolution of the structure and function of women's organisations, from a 'vertical' structure leading from donor via the NGO to a target group to a more complex, horizontal engagement with other NGOs and counterparts on a variety of projects, and the formation of coalitions to lobby for increased representation of women in appointed and elected government positions. These lobbying efforts have yielded results, with the Tajik president issuing a decree 'On Increasing the Role of Women in the Society'. Since the decree was issued, more women have been appointed to a variety of positions at all levels of government,

Anara Tabyshalieva

Institute for Regional Studies, Kyrgyzstan

Local engagement to address ethnic conflict

We founded the Institute for Regional Studies six years ago because we realised that we needed to have regional approach to the problems in Central Asia. We couldn't just have a Kyrgyzstan approach to the problems of conflict in the Ferghana Valley, or to social and ethnic tensions. We've implemented several projects on conflict prevention. We've trained a lot of people, we publish books, and at the same time, we try communicate and co-operate with our state officials. We supply some information to them and they share information with us. So we try to build good relationships with all sectors, with all institutions related to conflict prevention.

We conducted a study of inter-ethnic relationships in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley. We monitored the relationship between the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik communities and attitudes about refugees, and we openly published it and we hope that other researchers will continue our work as well.

and women have increased their representation in the lower house of parliament, though they still constitute only 13 percent of the members.

Kuvatova sees involvement in an NGO or community group as a more or less 'apolitical' way to be engaged, where the agenda is not adversarial, but rather collaborative in pursuit of specific interests. She notes, more generally, that NGOs of all sorts (not just women's groups) 'help to counter centralisation and the expansion of state power and to facilitate accountability and control. They can help to ensure the participation of people in the political process, creating informal channels in parallel with formal democratic institutions.'

A Helping Hand for the Media

In 'mature' democratic societies, the media is one of the pillars of civil society. In Central Asia, however, the tradition of a free and independent press has not yet become well established, state-controlled media are dominant, and both active and implicit restrictions on press freedom are facts of life. Ivan Sigal, Central Asian Regional Director of Internews Network, described how the organisation facilitates the development of a free press.

Internews is registered locally in all of the Central Asia countries except Turkmenistan, and also as an international NGO, so it is a sort of cross between a civil society organisation and an international NGO. Most Internews projects focus on broadcast journalism, though there is also a small print journalism programme. The organisation provides training for broadcast journalists on the reporting, technical, and management aspects of

broadcast journalism. It also has a legal advocacy project focusing on mass media regulation to develop laws to protect journalists and insure proper enforcement

Internews is also engaged in the production of local half-hour television programmes in each county, and produces a half-hour weekly programme called *Open Asia* which is distributed to forty local television stations throughout the region, reaching an audience estimated at fifteen million viewers. '*Open Asia* provides an opportunity for the people of the region to receive information through non-official sources,' says Sigal.

Essential elements of a peace strategy

Randa Slim's remarks specifically addressed conflict prevention activities. She stressed that a multilateral approach is essential; both 'official' and 'unofficial' efforts have a role to play, and conflict prevention activities need to be aimed at different levels of society. There is a belief, she noted, that, in the absence of commitment and involvement on the part of government to engage on conflict prevention and resolution activities, actors in civil society can 'do the work of government', but this is a misconception. Governments have instruments available to them that civil society does not have, and so they must be involved.

With these points in mind, Slim presented four activities that, in her view, are essential for a peace strategy. They are:

- 1 To establish critical mass of change agents who can work together to design strategies. Civil society, she stressed, is not just NGOs, and so any efforts to build 'critical mass' must go beyond the confines of the NGO community.
- 2 To create inclusive 'mediation spaces' where a variety of actors can come together for dialogue on issues of contention, where relationships can be 'rewoven' that have been destroyed, and new relationships can be established. Such mediation spaces provide a mechanism for promoting more effective participation in decision making processes. Slim noted that there is a need for more collaboration between government and the range of actors in civil society. In the absence of such collaboration, and indeed, contact, governments tend to perceive NGOs as a threat, because they siphon off funds from international donors that might otherwise be earmarked for government agencies and programmes.
- 3 To redevelop pride in traditional conflict resolution institutions. There has been a 'rush' to replace old ideologies with new ideologies. Even though, as mentioned above, traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution have proven successful, Slim felt that in general, there has been a failure to take best advantage of these traditions, and that those involved in conflict resolution activities should work to 'uncover and unearth this rich source of traditional conflict resolution'.

- 4 To approach conflict resolution with a long-term perspective and sustained engagement. 'It takes as much time to get out of conflict as it does to get in,' she remarked and argued for the development of an integrated long-term strategic plan for developing peaceful and stable societies, which takes into consideration the linkages and connections among the different sectors and players in society. Currently, there is a serious lack of co-ordination between NGOs and donors.

Jonathan Cohen, of UK-based Conciliation Resources, cautioned that, contrary to what donor organisations tend to believe, civil society is not necessarily the 'panacea for turning uncivil society into civil society'. Expectations about the effectiveness of efforts to address development and work to resolve conflict may be unreasonably high, in view of the fact that 'the amount of money going into the military is far greater than money invested in developing civil society.'



Raya Kadyrova

*Foundation for Tolerance
International, Kyrgyzstan*

On conflict resolution at the local level

We started working in one community of 11,000 people – 60 percent Kyrgyz and 40 percent of Tajiks. The conflict dated back about thirteen years. There were clashes between the Kyrgyz and the Tajiks over water resources. We tried to determine what kind of role we could play in negotiating an agreement. We tried the mosque, because we knew it was a very religious community. But the mosques usually are headed by the Uzbeks, and the Tajik people traditionally have problems with that. They did not agree that a person from outside could come and play a role in the negotiation process. We tried to

bring in the government, but we found that the government usually had one way to resolve or prevent conflict – to bring either policemen or soldiers.

Then we tried to find some other mechanism, and we found that the aksakal, which means 'white beards' – elders – from the Tajik side and the Kyrgyz side really could

communicate with each other. The elders council came together and made the decision that only those people who are older than forty can come to the place where they allocate the irrigation water. They selected these few people older than forty from Kyrgyz and Tajik side and they established a so-called 'non-violent short period'. So there was no violence for a time, but you cannot call it a peaceful period.

The people had stopped communicating with each other. Since 1994 they had even stopped attending each other's wedding parties and funerals, which really means there is huge conflict between them. So we had to work in a very tough situation. So first we brought the conflicting parties together and we determined that the problem had to have a technical resolution. We had to build a water pipeline in order to bring water to this region.

The first meeting was a total failure because people were not prepared to negotiate. Then we had very deep discussions with our donors, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, to analyse our mistakes and we found that if we were working in this field, we needed more knowledge and experience in negotiation and mediation. So our staff received training in negotiation and mediation skills. It wasn't a pure western approach. It was based in part on the Muslim traditional experience, so we combined western knowledge with our traditional approaches.

We established a network of local mediators. And then they started the discussion process. We discovered that the issue was not only bringing water, but deciding how to share it.

We found that women never participated at the meetings, but women were victims during this conflict. So we started special activities for women to raise their self-esteem and increase their involvement in the discussion process. We also discussed contributions from the local villages because that addresses the issue of ownership of this program. We did not want to create dependency, on us as an NGO, or on the government structures. So there was a contribution from the local side – in kind and in cash, even – and then during all these processes there were non-stop activities for trust-building and confidence-building through joint educational, cultural, and sport activities to create a non-threatening environment between these communities, and there were non-stop information dissemination activities where we communicated regularly what's happening, what is the participation now, who is giving money, how much money they give, and so on.

The people had to work together, which is the main thing. If you really want to bring peace, you need to bring people together and make them do something together. Then they can't say it is 'yours' or 'ours'.

3. Strategies for conflict prevention: the role of governments and intergovernmental organisations

One of the challenges facing the Dutch government, as it prepares to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE, is to determine how to most effectively influence the application of a wide range of instruments that are available for conflict prevention and resolution in Central Asia. As Tony van der Togt, who heads the Dutch Foreign Ministry's Eastern Europe/Central Asia Division noted, there is reasonable clarity and consensus with respect to an analysis of the challenges facing Central Asia. But there is considerably less agreement and clarity on strategies for addressing them. An important element of the programmes on March 7 and 8 was to gather information from as wide a range of voices as possible to help inform the Dutch on the choices. Agendas must still be set regarding the particular roles that governments and international organisations can and should play, said Van der Togt, adding that in the wake of September 11, it would be unfortunate if Western countries conveyed the impression 'that we are only interested in Central Asia because of the situation in Afghanistan.'

The Netherlands, said Van der Togt, wants to strike a balance between involvement via OSCE and other organisations (such as UNDP). Where the agendas of various organisations overlap, it is important to take note and to try to develop strategies so that various organisations can reinforce each other rather.

The Dutch also want to encourage regional co-operation, both within the narrowly defined Central Asia region, and more broadly, with other states in the more broadly defined region, such as Russia, Turkey and Iran and other international organisations, such as the Shanghai Co-operation Association and the Islamic Conference Organisation.

Two particular issues that Van der Togt considers priority issues are growing poverty, and the crushing burden of debt, totalling up to 70 or 80 per cent of GDP in some of the Central Asian countries. Accordingly, meaningful policies for development must include initiatives on debt relief.

In addition to Tony van der Togt, speakers at the March 7 Roundtable whose presentations specifically focused on the role of governments and inter-governmental organisations included Walter Kemp, of the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and Vladimir Goryayev, of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. Remarks below draw on their presentations, as well as the workshop sessions on both March 7 and March 8, a panel discussion on March 8, private discussions with participants, and background briefing materials.



Max van der Stoel

An instrument for addressing ethnic conflict

In view of the fact that ethnic conflict has been, and continues to be a serious threat to stability in the region, the presentation of Walter Kemp, senior advisor in the OSCE Office of the Higher Commissioner on National Minorities, was particularly relevant. The OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities has, since the office was created, played an important role in addressing, and often helping to resolve, conflicts related to national minorities. Kemp noted that the High Commissioner has considerable independence, and also 'a high degree of legitimate intrusiveness' – that is, to intervene where he considers his involvement is required.

The approach is quiet and confidential but firm. As Kemp pointed out, the High Commissioner's mandate is based on international standards to which the member states of the OSCE have agreed. He often acts as a trouble-shooter during real and potential crisis situations, attempting to discover the specific root causes of a problem and to identify the specific remedies that may be applied to bring relief, and working with the states concerned to apply those remedies.

An important point, said Kemp, was to intervene at an early stage – before a crisis develops, if possible – following the adage, often repeated by Max van

Marc Gilbert

Head of OSCE Mission, Tajikistan

On preventive action

The best way to prevent conflicts is first to turn the potential protagonists into partners and, with that perspective, to build up the tools for consultation. The first [of these] is the Organisation itself, a unique instance of permanent dialogue and contact that should continue to maintain a climate of constructive confidence between the different actors.

The Organisation in general, and its centres and missions, have neither the budgetary means nor the expertise necessary to compete with bodies such as the IMF, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, ADB or Islamic Development Bank. But the OSCE can help the authorities to establish a general legal environment that would [encourage] domestic investors to keep their money at home and foreign investors to take the risk to bring their dollars, euros, and their jobs. The OSCE can equally contribute by monitoring the implementation of reforms undertaken upon the advice of other bodies.

der Stoel, the first High Commissioner on National Minorities, that ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.’ The High Commissioner has increasingly worked in close co-operation with other organisations.

In inter-ethnic conflict, said Kemp, a frequent problem is a lack of dialogue, so the facilitation of dialogue is of vital importance. ‘Minorities feel that they have to take extreme positions because people won’t listen to their moderate positions,’ he noted.

In contacts between the High Commissioner and governments, ‘the key is using international standards and having them applied. The High Commissioner looks at the norms and then tries to work with the government to apply them in specific cases. In that way, the general international standards will be ‘domesticated’ – applied in particular situations – so the chance of improving relations between groups and having a safety net guaranteeing a minimum level of minority rights is in place.”

Kemp made the point that the integration of ethnic minorities into the fabric of society enhances security and stability because ‘the more minorities feel integrated into the life of the state, the more the state represents their interests. If a community is living in isolation, there will be very few lines to bind the communities together.’ Society is strengthened when minorities are involved in activities across the spectrum of society, ranging from government to law enforcement to education.

Arne Seifert

Centre for OSCE Research

On 'balance' in the OSCE

I believe that it would be good for the OSCE and for security and co-operation in Europe if the co-operative element of the organisation would be reinforced again. It was founded as an instrument of the East and the West – NATO and Warsaw Pact – to talk to each other about subjects which were really dividing them. They were talking to each other against the backdrop of antagonism so after the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact and the disappearance of this antagonism, the West came out the winner, and this idea of the OSCE as an organisation in which each side had equal weight has been lost. If you look at some concrete measures when it comes to strategies for Central Asia, at the heart of the OSCE strategy was the idea of stabilisation through democratisation in accordance with the value system which was the value system of the West. So the basic criterion – what was democratic and what was not democratic – was through Western eyes. And there are actually certain instruments telling those who do not stick to those norms or who do not wish to obey that they will be punished.

One ambassador from a Central Asia state just said in our working group 'our relationship towards the OSCE can be described as one of happiness, frustration, and hope.' The fact that we have frustration among certain member states is the result, in my opinion, of the situation where this idea of complete and full equality and real participatory democracy has been losing momentum. I believe that if we want to resolve the problems and discrepancies which still exist between the OSCE in its western conception and the OSCE as other regions perceive it, then we have to reinforce this basic philosophy that the OSCE was born as a common triad of the East and the West. Otherwise, Europe consists only of closed clubs. All other political organisations, except for the European Council, are closed clubs, with admittance only in accordance with the rules of the founders of the club. The only organisation which was born as an open organisation was the OSCE. We should try to avoid transforming the OSCE into semi-closed club like the others.

International collaboration, regional co-operation

Vladimir Goryayev stressed that, because of the complexity of conflict prevention activities, it is of vital importance that they be carried out in a co-ordinated matter so that with added participation, there is 'added value'. Similarly, efforts should be made to co-ordinate the messages that various external actors communicate, so as to 'amplify' them.

The most important actor remains the national government – without co-operation from national government, neither outside governments nor international organisations are likely to have any appreciable impact. Unfortunately, local governments are not always willing to co-operate.



David Hoffman

USAID

Working around the margins

The work that we do is operational, in the field, it's trying to make differences around the margins. That's one approach – to work around the margins and to try and build up constituencies for change through small projects. When people associate with one another and bind together for a common goal – even if those goals are apolitical – the idea is that they can have long term political effects. If you have a health NGO such as an association of family practitioners and that NGO then gets a grant and uses that grant to develop constituency to delve deeply into a community where it works and, if you have lots of those types of NGOs, then what you're doing

is service provision, obviously, but the second thing is that you are also forming a constituency, both in terms of the NGOs and the in terms of the people you serve. Down the line, if you have 100 of those NGOs and the government steps in and tries to intrude, as these governments tend to do by imposing ungrounded regulations or new taxation on some aspect of health care or something like that, you actually have a lobby that can resist and speak out, and say 'Hey wait a second, we've carved out this little space and now you're trying to step in.'

Goryayev pointed in particular to the unique success that was achieved in moving from civil war to reconciliation and rehabilitation in Tajikistan. In this case, a range of participants, including international organisations (the OSCE among them), local NGOs, high-ranking government officials, representatives of local administrations, and others met to address a number of highly charged issues related to the re-establishment of 'normal' society such as political pluralism, political openness, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and corruption. 'It was a tremendous success,' said Goryayev. 'In the Central Asian political terrain where political pluralism and respect for human rights is very much wishful thinking, this idea may be worth replicating in other countries where we have similar problems.' He noted that, because the OSCE has a presence in all five Central Asian countries, it is well-placed to play a constructive role. He further noted that at times, the OSCE's role may

The difference between ‘mercenary organisations’ (NGOs) that are just sort of out there on a grant-to-grant basis and artificial versus a natural ‘civil society’ actor is that the civil society actor is tangibly filling up a space between state and society, working in the community that it serves on the one hand, and resisting the state or lobbying the state or cajoling the state on the other hand to protect its interests. That’s giving life to the definition of civil society, in my view.

On the OSCE

I think the OSCE actually has more weight than it gives itself credit for in these countries. But ironically, its refusal to exercise this influence sometimes ends up undermining that very same political weight. In the early and mid nineties, post-Soviet Central Asian governments were very afraid of mis-stepping - even in terms of democratic elections. All of them rushed to hold elections early on in the search for post-Soviet legitimacy. They were quite afraid that Europe would sour on them if they mis-stepped. Ten years later and 100 stolen elections later, however, they’ve learned not to fear a harsh reaction from Europe or the West. ‘We can go out there, steal elections, torture political dissidents, put parliamentarians in jail, do whatever we want, close down the media, and it doesn’t seem to have a big effect.’ So I might suggest to the OSCE - an organization which, after all, is its member nations - that if you’re going to have membership criteria, you might as well enforce them, or at least remind people of them. Otherwise it doesn’t make sense having membership criteria at all - you might as well have North Korea in the OSCE, and Mongolia, and Chile under Pinochet. Now it doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to go criticise governments very harshly because that’s not in the spirit of the OSCE, but at the same time, there’s nothing to prevent the OSCE from reminding its member nations of their obligations. Secondly, it should speak out when there are gross violations of the principles of the OSCE. Finally on the plus side, the OSCE should make an effort to look at the trends in the region. If things are getting worse, then people ought to say that things are getting worse, rather than soft-balling the issue by saying that things are merely ‘not improving’.

not be fully appreciated, but that does not mean that it should eschew involvement. ‘The OSCE is by definition an “irritant” but that is to be expected,’ commented Goryayev. As in treating an illness, he observed, the medicine may have a bitter taste, but applying the remedy is preferable to ignoring the symptoms.

Several participants also addressed the need to encourage intra-regional co-operation. Aaron Rhodes, of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, spoke of the advisability of establishing some mechanism to allow civil society organisations from throughout the region to meet, exchange ideas and views, and engage in constructive dialogue. ‘Because the governments in Central Asia tend to be not experienced in dealing with each other in a peaceful way, the civil society organisations could provide a very good

Esther Schaufelberger

Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

On the limitations of the OSCE

In my opinion, the OSCE should work in partnership with other organisations. The OSCE is very special in the way it is set up as a membership organisation, with a changing chairmanship every year. That is a very short term for conflict prevention. We work in a five year or ten year program approach. The OSCE can play a role, but it should work in very close partnership with other organisations, be it the UN, banks, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, or international and local NGOs. We need to act more and more as an international community. We have to have the view of this range of instruments and try to find for each instrument the most appropriate place to use it, and not try to use one particular instrument for a whole range of issues. There are hundreds of issues that should be addressed, but we have to think how the OSCE, with its structures, its way of functioning, and its relationship with hosting governments, can contribute to conflict prevention in Central Asia.

The OSCE has a weak management structure. I think the OSCE has to search for clarification of its role. It is not a good implementing agency. The UNDP and international NGOs are much better, so the OSCE can do some projects, but that's not where their strength is. It's a dialogue forum. It's particularity is the composition of its membership.

symbolic example of regional co-operation,' said Rhodes. He added that the Helsinki Federation had prior experience helping to encourage dialogue among civil society organisations in the Balkans and elsewhere, and would be interested in working with others to promote such an initiative in Central Asia.

Linkages: poverty, crime, governance

It was noted, particularly by several speakers during the March 8 Conference, that the OSCE is not particularly well equipped to directly address poverty. While it is perhaps too limiting to describe the OSCE as only a 'talk shop', it does not have the resources or expertise of international development organisations, governmental development agencies, or NGOs. What the OSCE can do with respect to poverty is to address the *political* issues that contribute to poverty or impede efforts to alleviate poverty. Thus, as Marcel van der Heijen of the Dutch-based development organisation Hivos observed, the OSCE has a role to play in addressing the complex of border issues that have been discussed in this document, of helping to resolve water conflicts; assisting in the development of land policies including privatisation programmes; and addressing organised crime, illegal trafficking in drugs, arms, and people, and combating corruption. As noted earlier, Daan Everts,

who heads the Dutch Foreign Ministry's Task Force on the OSCE Chairmanship, indicated that he saw trafficking as a priority issue to be highlighted during the Dutch chairmanship

With respect to issues of governance and the adherence to international standards, it has already been noted that David Hoffman of USAID expressed the belief that western governments should address the issues of democratic governance, human rights, transparency, and religious freedom. Aaron Rhodes observed that the human rights community is united in advocating that international financial institutions condition funding on progress in addressing those social and political problems which not only constitute violations of human rights and civil liberties, but also impede progress on the development front. Those in the human rights community, he said, are very frustrated by the process by which international financial institutions continue to assist these countries. 'I think this represents an opportunity for the OSCE and for the Netherlands chairmanship to create some kind of platform by which international financial institutions would be encouraged to consider social and political problems more than they do in making decisions about long-term grants and to bring information into this process which doesn't appear to be there.'

Beyond the discussions related to specific issues of concern in Central Asia, and specific activities that the OSCE can undertake to enhance security, further economic development, and insure the existence of a fertile environment for human development, participants at the March roundtable and conference offered a number of suggestions relating more generally to the OSCE role in the region. These observations addressed, for instance, the roles for which OSCE is best suited, given its unique structure, membership, and constituency; strategies for enhancing its effectiveness; and the relationships that exist between the three dimensions of the organisation.

- I John Schoeberlein of the Forum for Central Asia Studies at Harvard University suggested, for example, that the OSCE, as an outside actor, has an important and constructive role to play in working to build good governance and promoting political and social participation. The OSCE can be viewed as an 'honest broker' and is therefore well-placed to facilitate dialogue at the intra-state and inter-state level, and regional co-operation on a wide range of issues including economic development and the sharing of resources. It also has a role to play in facilitating the effective involvement of international players – to insure that the right resources are channelled to the right agencies without duplication of effort, for example – and of promoting understanding and open discussion in the international community and the region with regard to issues of vital concern.

Aaron Rhodes

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

A complicated institution

In Central Asia and elsewhere, most people don't understand the OSCE. It's a complicated institution and it's important that the right kinds of expectations be created about what the OSCE can and cannot do. In fact I think that some international human rights organisations don't understand it. They consider the OSCE to be some kind of human rights organisation that can make comments with a single voice and they don't understand the very difficult political makeup of this organisation, which is the both the source of its potential, but also what keeps it from doing some kinds of things. What is the OSCE, after all? It is its members. It is a thing, but it is also a *process*. This being said, in most of the regions where there are missions, there are a lot of inconsistencies in the way the missions deal with violations of the standards of the OSCE. It's surprising that even though the organisation devotes a lot of attention to this problem – there are meetings organised and the question is very much present – still there are many problems with the way that these different missions address problems in different countries. For example, right now, in some of the countries in Central Asia, there is no conflict prevention activity because the missions aren't doing anything. I'm talking about Kyrgyzstan – I don't mind mentioning names. The mission is completely silent about very serious crimes and human rights violations that are going on, and growing civil unrest and tension. So when the populations of these countries see these missions doing nothing, how can they have confidence? Because we're speaking about confidence building here – this is what it's all about.

It doesn't take much to turn the human rights community in some cases into a xenophobic community or a nationalistic community and one of the things that can happen and that has a very negative effect is failed expectations. I'm afraid with the passage of time and the wave of money that has flowed from Europe toward the former Soviet Union, the problem of disappointment is a very dangerous problem, because these civil society actors can turn against the west and they can become the vehicle for a nationalistic tendency that could create a worse situation than what we are in now.

- 2 The effectiveness of the OSCE is, in part, a function of its visibility and credibility. It is therefore desirable for the OSCE to increase its visibility in the region and to clearly articulate the constructive role it plays in resolving conflict and fostering development. To that end, the OSCE should continue to build, maintain and enhance its lines of communication to all sectors of society in Central Asia (governments, NGOs, other civil society organisations, etc.) and pro-actively pursue two-way communication via these channels.



- 3 It was suggested that the OSCE should stimulate more balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE. It should be noted that a number of Central Asian participants indicated that they believed that the OSCE has a particularly valuable role to play in the human dimension area, and encouraged increased attention in this area. It is not the case, however, that increased attention to the human dimension is necessarily in conflict with the desire for balance; that is dependent on the current levels of involvement and future adjustments in activities with respect to all three dimensions.
- 4 The effectiveness of the OSCE in the region would be enhanced by increased institutional support to the OSCE missions and centres and better co-ordination and co-operation among the various OSCE institutions (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, etc.).

Conclusion

Two days of discussion and debate on conflict prevention in Central Asia revealed that there is no lack of knowledge or understanding of the region, despite its relative isolation until the recent past. If there are still disagreements on how to tackle the problems facing the region, there is surprisingly little disagreement on what those problems are. The two most serious, quite clearly, are poverty and governance. A third

problem which relates to the first two is the disintegration, with the end of the Soviet Union, of the economic and political community that, for all its flaws, provided for a modicum of predictability, stability, and continuity. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the simple fact is that the Soviet republics were ill-prepared to assume nationhood. It will likely take many years to achieve stability and prosperity.

It will also take investments, a point made in his concluding remarks by Enno Hommes, Chairman of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. Improvements in technology, industrialisation, the development of educational and legal systems, and so forth – they all cost money. And despite much concern and many creative ideas on how to enhance the security of the Central Asia region, Hommes noted that there was practically no discussion during the course of the two days of how the necessary funding could be secured. ‘When we had a donor discussion about the situation in Afghanistan, \$4.5 billion was made available for the reconstruction process.’ He added, ironically, that the U.S. was increasing its military budget by \$45 billion, begging the question – should we assume then that military spending is the best way to enhance security? And if not, why was it that, as he pointed out, ‘Nobody here suggested that because of the problems in Central Asia, we should increase the budget of OSCE?’ That nobody did, he observed, means that beyond the problems in Central Asia, there exists a political problem that must be addressed in the West.

‘Early action should follow early warning,’ he said, quoting the former High Commissioner on Minority Rights Max van der Stoep. ‘But that is not clear from the discussion we’ve had – how to translate knowledge about risks into early action.’ Meeting the challenge, he said, will require politicians to take action.

Summary of the Main Findings

This is the summary of the output from debates and working groups at the roundtable seminar on March 7th and from the conference on March 8th. In addition, these guidelines and priorities reflect information included in the background reader prepared for the roundtable seminar.

Preamble

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade ago, observers within Central Asia and abroad predicted that numerous conflicts would break out in the region between irreconcilable forces that had been held in check under Soviet rule. Instability arising from ethnic tensions, Islamist militancy or social upheaval has proven not to be as inevitable as many supposed. Apart from a devastating but relatively short civil war in Tajikistan, a decade of independence in the region has largely been characterised by peace. However, many signs now point to rising tensions both within and between states. Stagnation of the reform process initiated following independence has also contributed to growing tension. New policies are needed in the region to meet current and future challenges and to address a variety of factors that are contributing to heightened tension.

Overarching issues

- 1. Promoting comprehensive security in the post-11 September geopolitical climate.** Participants observed that many of the potential sources of violent conflict were endemic in Central Asian societies prior to 11 September 2001. Since that time, the highly militarised approach to security since that time is accelerating these tendencies and escalating pressure that could trigger some of these situations to explode into violence. Most agreed that internal weaknesses make Central Asian societies vulnerable to external threats; yet most Central Asian governments and some other governments have developed strategies on the assumption that they should eliminate the 'external threats' rather than focusing on internal conflict generating factors. The growing emphasis on military approaches to security could have the paradoxical effect of undermining the other pillars, particularly by:
(a) diverting resources from much needed economic and social development; (b) a crack-down on what are currently peaceful movements and thus creating pressure that could stimulate an armed insurgency; and (c) increasing tensions between states in the region and beyond, particularly through the closure of borders and shifting of geopolitical alliances.
- 2. Addressing tensions over borders and promoting regional cooperation.** Seminar participants identified current practices of managing state borders as a key underlying factor contributing to tension between states and as a

structural barrier to addressing many of the socio-economic factors that generate conflict by generating human and economic insecurity. The issue of borders represents one of the areas where many different factors interact with each other and combine to create potential ‘flash points’ that could trigger the emergence of violent conflict. Some of the potential conflict issues generating tensions between states are the marking of territorial boundaries and how the borders should be guarded. There is a growing tendency to militarise the borders (e.g., through the use of landmines) and to close the borders when security appears threatened. This has been shown to undermine the comprehensive approach to security and threaten lives and livelihoods. Many civilians have been killed and thousands stranded and unable to return home (e.g., when Kazakhstan closed the rail line to Tajikistan). The restriction on the movement of goods and people has impeded economic development by constricting markets, thus contributing to the growing impoverishment of the majority - particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the region. It has intensified opportunities and incentives for corruption and created a climate conducive for illegal trafficking. It has also impeded co-operative management of natural resources such as water and energy and the development of regional infrastructure to underpin sustainable development. A new generation of Central Asians is emerging who have few opportunities to meet each other and - increasingly - no common language in which to communicate, thus undermining the long-term capacity for a social infrastructure to promote cooperation and mutual understanding throughout the region.

Guidelines and priorities

- **Generating political will.** Facilitate political dialogue between Central Asian states on a regional basis to develop joint strategies for addressing the overall challenge and specific issues. The OSCE could use its good offices to facilitate bilateral dialogue between specific member states on sensitive issues that might be a barrier to co-operation on addressing border issues.
- **Encouraging regional integration.** Arrange a forum for all OSCE member states to exchange their experiences of developing regional common economic areas and co-operative security arrangements. Depending on needs identified, consider providing technical, financial and other resources to develop regional institutions.
- **Addressing militarised borders,** promoting co-operative security arrangements and confidence and security building measures. Central Asian states should be encouraged to adhere to international standards on landmines and to promote best practice related to co-operative security

arrangements. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office could initiate this as an agenda item in the Permanent Council and the resources of the Conflict Prevention Centre could be deployed to provide technical support for implementing agreed strategies.

- **Border controls.** Special attention is needed to promote the capacity for the free movement of people and goods throughout Central Asia and beyond. It was recognised that existing border control regimes have not been effective in preventing the illicit movement of either illegal traffic or insurgency movements yet has caused considerable hardships for those engaging in legal activities, particularly small-scale traders and those who need access to markets for their goods and services. In addition to addressing the political motivations for the current arrangements, the OSCE could facilitate assistance for training for border and customs control officials and support for addressing the problems of corruption so that movement of people and goods across territories occurs in line with the best international practice. Particular attention is needed to the situation experienced by people living in the ‘enclave’ territories in the Ferghana Valley who have been strongly effected by these arrangements.
- **Trafficking.** The three principle dimensions of this problem concern trafficking in human beings (with women as particularly vulnerable), illegal drugs, and small arms and light weapons. The OSCE could take a lead in facilitating the development joint strategies to address the escalating problems related to human trafficking and helping to ensure that Central Asians are involved in international initiatives to address it at a global level. It could provide technical assistance in developing mechanisms for information sharing and for strengthening law enforcement capacities to address the problem. In the case of human trafficking, greater attention is needed for victim assistance programmes and addressing the root causes of vulnerability.
- **Joint agreements on management of natural resources.** Under the framework of promoting co-operative approaches to economic and environmental security, the OSCE could help to generate the political will to address these issues, possibly through facilitating a multi-party / multi-issue negotiation process to reach a framework agreement. It could help to provide technical resource people with experience in developing integrative solutions to these problems and to advise on the development of infrastructure (both structural and managerial). The OSCE could also support conflict resolution training programmes to increase the capacity of local communities to effectively manage disputes over water resources - many of which currently have a cross-border and inter-communal character.

- **Social integration and exchange.** Recognising that the exchange of ideas and development of mutual understanding amongst the peoples of the Central Asian region is one of the crucial elements in developing long-term harmonious relations between states, efforts could be devoted to promoting the development of a ‘unified communication space’ within the region through enabling regional exchanges between members of Central Asian countries (e.g., students and scholars, civil society representatives, business people, youth, journalists and so on).
- **Analysing the issues.** Facilitate continuous analysis of the various dimensions. Organise a fact-finding mission to identify and better understand the various dimensions of this issue and solicit ideas for addressing specific problems.

I. Politico-Military Dimension

Issues

Insurgencies, international and regional radical movements

The threat of insurgency and violence directed at governing institutions by a number of radical movements is intimately linked to a range of other issues discussed in subsequent sections of this report. These include economic issues such as growing poverty and the widening gap between a relatively prosperous minority and a majority which has endured growing levels of poverty; radicalism growing out of ideological, ethnic, and religious-based conflict; and perceptions of shortcomings in effective and/or responsive governance. To date, actual insurgency has not been widespread (the Tajik war had more the character of a civil conflict between parties competing for control of the government than a grass roots insurgency).

The most notable exception has been in Uzbekistan, where various radical Islamist groups have coalesced into the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has publicly declared that its aim is to overthrow the government of president Islam Karimov and establish an Islamic republic. Violent incidents either blamed on the IMU or for which the IMU claimed responsibility were most common during 1999 and 2000, and have occurred less frequently since 2001. It is likely that the IMU’s effectiveness as an insurgent movement has been seriously weakened as a result of its active support of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

One additional radical movement which exerts influence in the region, and particularly in Uzbekistan, is Hizb-ut Tahrir, which seeks to establish a borderless caliphate in the region. Hizb-ut Tahrir espouses a policy of non-violence, but its calls for an end to corruption and injustice resonate with a

small core of loyal followers. It has the potential to wield considerable influence throughout the region if deteriorating economic and social conditions result in greater civil discontent.

It should be noted that not only do the motivations for insurgency and radicalism derive from economic and social issues, but the consequences also impact the social and economic situation in the region: heightened security measures impede commerce and lead to limitations on civil liberties; damage to infrastructure as a result of civil conflict causes serious economic disruption, etc.

Small arms

The collapse of the Soviet Union has been a contributing factor in the flow of arms in the Central Asian region, with significant numbers of arms easily accessible throughout the region. Arms trafficking fuels crime, exacerbates conflict and facilitates terrorism both within and outside the OSCE area. Indeed, not only does the free flow of arms make it easy for terrorist groups to acquire them in the Central Asian region, but it also provides an important source of income to these groups. Because arms trafficking is lucrative, it is particularly difficult to control in view of the difficult economic situation which prevails. Weak enforcement mechanisms and widespread corruption are also major factors in aggravating the problem.

Borders

In Soviet times, the borders between the Soviet republics were little more than lines on a map, particularly in areas of Central Asia where they had been arbitrarily drawn in the twenties and thirties, and where families, ethnic groups, and farms straddled the official borders. People were free to cross the borders without visas, and goods could flow freely between the Soviet republics without being subject to customs duties. Since the Central Asian states achieved independence, however, the borders have served to divide peoples and to impede the flow of goods and people. In many areas, the demarcation of these borders was never effectively undertaken, and there is a serious risk of conflict where disputes arise regarding the precise placement of a border. Because governments are deriving income from customs duties, they have in some cases sealed borders and closed traditional trade routes. Governments have also pointed to the threat of insurgency as a reason to strictly control the borders, and have, in several cases, mined borders that had traditionally been open - sometimes without consulting the authorities in the neighbouring states or the residents in border areas. Mine explosions in border areas have caused numerous deaths and serious injuries.

Guidelines and priorities

Addressing potential conflict related to ethnic minorities and religion

The OSCE should work with governments to promote acceptance of international standards on dealing with religious groups, encourage rule of law and freedom of religion. It should also facilitate dialogue between government and ethnic minorities, as well as dialogue among various ethnic groups and encourage governments to allow for active participation from all sectors of society.

Numerous speakers at the March roundtable observed that religious fundamentalism is not, in and of itself, a threat to the established order, but that the repression of religion can lead to radical religious fundamentalism which targets political institutions and does indeed threaten peace and stability. Similarly, a lack of dialogue to address real or perceived grievances of ethnic minorities, and/or their exclusion from the political process, will tend to radicalise elements in their communities. The more that members of society are involved, the more interest they have in the stability of state organisations.

Follow up on initiatives of the OSCE with regard to small arms issues

In November 2000, the OSCE agreed on a document to control the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The document urges the adoption and implementation of national controls on various aspects of small arms, including manufacture, proper marking and accurate sustained record keeping, effective export control, border and customs mechanisms, and enhanced co-operation and information exchange among law enforcement and customs agencies at international, regional and national levels. It calls on States to address the excessive and destabilising accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms, and to ensure that small arms are produced, transferred and held only in accordance with legitimate defence and security needs. The document also urges the establishment and implementation of effective criteria governing the export of small arms, and addresses management of stockpiles, including the reduction and/or destruction of surpluses. OSCE missions were given the capacity to undertake work on small arms collection, but it is up to the missions themselves to decide whether or not to take any particular initiatives. The OSCE itself has observed that it is well placed to conduct practical initiatives such as weapons collection, and public awareness programmes because it has field missions in states, including Central Asia, where trafficking in weapons is a serious problem.

Because arms trafficking is by its very nature a regional issue, effective measures to combat arms trafficking require regional co-operation. Outside parties are well-placed to facilitate such a process of regional co-operation.

De-mining

To help reduce both human tragedy and potential for conflict in border area, the OSCE should promote de-mining programmes, assist in implementation of confidence / security building measures, assist in the demarcation of borders, provide training of border police.

At both the bilateral level and the level of international organisations such as the OSCE, it is possible to assist the Central Asian nations in the removal of mines on their borders. In addition, outside parties can act as mediators in both the demarcation process and the resolution of disputes that may arise over border areas. The OSCE, in particular, is well placed to work with the Central Asian nations to implement confidence-building measures that may reduce tensions arising from border disputes and conflicts.

More efficient control of borders may be facilitated by improving training for border guards and customs officials; here also, the OSCE has past experience which may be applicable in Central Asia. It was also noted during the March roundtable that “internationalisation” - basically, co-operation between border control authorities on both sides of an international boundary, including joint patrols and monitoring - could help to reduce tension.

II. Economic and Environmental Dimension

Issues

Deepening poverty and growing inequality

Throughout Central Asia, living standards have declined precipitously since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and poverty is endemic. The gap between rich and poor has widened, with an elite of significantly less than 20 percent of the population prospering while most of the population endures deepening poverty. As this gap widens, resentment grows with all the threats to security that follow, including insurgency as discussed above, but also crime (including trafficking in arms, drugs, and people), corruption, and alienation.

Disputes regarding water resources.

In Soviet times, water management was primarily the responsibility of “Moscow”, but now, a wide variety of competing interests at both the local and state level assert their claims for water. The upstream states (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) are relatively poor compared to the downstream states, particularly in energy resources, but the upstream diversion of water for the generation of energy has serious consequences for downstream agriculture. Even within the same states, disputes are not uncommon between communities that once accepted the rules as dictated by central planning authorities. The situation is exacerbated by the deterioration of infrastructure

and the inability of most of the Central Asian states to devote sufficient resources to investments in maintenance and development. There are few mechanisms in the region for resolving disputes at all levels.

Borders / illegal trafficking

As noted above, conditions of increasing poverty create fertile ground for trafficking in drugs, arms and people. The impacts are felt not only at the source in the region but also at the destinations, including Europe and the United States. Porous borders and corrupt law enforcement and border control mechanisms facilitate trafficking activities, but it is also the case that trafficking has a corrupting influence on law enforcement and border control institutions. It is also the case, as noted above, that even when they are fairly and effectively implemented, stricter border controls aimed at combating illegal trafficking activities will also disrupt traditional trade relationships, causing serious economic hardship. National governments claim that drug trafficking provides a source of funds for radical Islamic movements operating in the Ferghana Valley. It is suspected that traffickers have been responsible for at least one political assassination, and it is quite possible that trafficking will lead to violent conflict among traffickers, resulting in further disruptions in an already fragile economic environment.

Corruption

Again, corruption flourishes in an environment where difficult economic and social conditions prevail, and where the structures of civil society are not firmly established. Increasing poverty and growing inequality, of course, breed resentment, and, in turn, may lead to corruption. Other factors that are associated with high levels of corruption include uneven implementation of the rule of law and the legacy of Soviet rule.

Guidelines and priorities

The OSCE has a limited but important role to play in encouraging economic development

1 Facilitating donor contact / co-ordination

Several participants at the March roundtable observed that OSCE functions better as a *co-ordinating* body than as an *implementing* agency. It is therefore incumbent upon OSCE to work in close partnership with other international organisations such as the UN and international financial institutions, as well as NGOs working at the international and local level.

One area where the OSCE can play a constructive role is in the co-ordination of development activities. In the past, development programmes in Central Asia have not been well co-ordinated, and it is desirable to improve contacts and facilitate co-ordination among the various donors active in the region. Furthermore, the OSCE is well placed to identify and

document problems and to discuss these problems (and possible strategies for their resolution) with governments.

2 Focus on mid- and long-term solutions

It was observed that the one-year term of the chairmanship of OSCE is also a factor in limiting the OSCE role; problems associated with development and security require long-term approaches. To the extent that the OSCE is involved in the development of programmes to reduce poverty, these should be conceived as sustainable longer term activities that will extend beyond the term of the chairmanship of any particular member state.

3 UNDP Ferghana Valley Programme

The UNDP has a comprehensive programme in place focusing on long-term development in the Ferghana Valley. In particular, the programme addresses economic issues, culture and education, the environment, and border issues. The programme draws on the knowledge and expertise of local populations, and significantly, it takes a regional approach, addressing those issues which cannot effectively be addressed exclusively within the framework of a single nation. Support and co-ordination with the UNDP Ferghana Valley Programme should, accordingly, be continued and where possible or appropriate, extended.

Addressing environmental issues and resource allocation

The OSCE should encourage a regional integrative approach to dealing with resource based conflicts, and follow up on ongoing OSCE initiatives. With respect to water issues, short-term approaches are required to address immediate needs and to resolve current disputes, but only long-term approaches will assure that recurring shortages and/or disputes do not lead to greater regional tensions. Where resource-based disputes are localised, the OSCE is well-positioned to stimulate community level conflict resolution and/or to assist in developing conflict resolution training programmes.

Trafficking

In late 2000, the OSCE and UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) held a conference in Tashkent entitled “Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: An Integrated Approach to Counter Drugs, Organised Crime and Terrorism”. At the end of the conference, the five nations of Central Asia endorsed a document that would considerably strengthen co-ordinated efforts to combat drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism in the region. The OSCE can use this document as a framework for ongoing efforts to combat illegal trafficking of drugs, arms, and humans. At the March roundtable, specific suggestions with respect to the OSCE role in combating trafficking focused on:

1 Legislation

OSCE can assist in developing effective legislation. It was noted that in the case of human trafficking, women victims are viewed as offenders rather than victims, and that legislation is required not only in Central Asia, but also in “destination” countries.

2 Enforcement (police and judiciary)

The OSCE can assist in training of law enforcement officials and the strengthening of judicial institutions.

3 Victim assistance and protection

Victims of human trafficking are often traumatised and vulnerable to further victimisation. The OSCE can play a constructive role in assisting these individuals.

4 Borders

As stated earlier in this document, the OSCE has past experience in the training of border guards. Such training can have an impact not only on security, but also on controlling illegal trafficking. Another proposal mentioned above, the “internationalisation” of border controls, would likely contribute to increased co-operation in efforts to combat illegal trafficking of drugs, arms, and humans.

5 Awareness campaigns

Public education programmes at all levels can be an important tool in combating trafficking and reducing drug use. Such programmes should not be restricted to the Central Asian states. It is essential to recognise that demand must be addressed, and awareness in Europe and America of the problems associated with trafficking should be increased.

6 Addressing economic factors

Strengthening the economies of Central Asia should be viewed as an integral part of efforts to combat illegal trafficking. Alternative sources of income need to be developed for participants all along the trafficking chain.

Corruption

Efforts at reducing corruption in the administrative and security state structures must be strengthened. They should include the drafting and/or enforcement of laws imposing strict legal sanctions on those officials who accept bribes, providing for the election rather than appointment of local officials, transparent hiring practices to ensure that ethnic minorities are not discriminated against, and better pay for public employees. However, the most effective mechanisms for combating corruption have as much to do with addressing economic issues, strengthening civil society organisations and the rule of law, and improving governance as they do with confronting corruption head on.

III. Human Dimension: democracy, human rights and rule of law

Issues

Governance

Each of the Central Asian countries has followed a somewhat different path of development since independence. However, the common underlying problem that needs to be addressed in the region is economic disparity and governance. So far the emphasis has been on stability at the expense of reform policy. Without developed democratic institutions, the needs and interests of the wider population cannot be well addressed. This leads to increased tensions. Some participants at the March roundtable observed that it is neither necessary nor desirable to embrace explicitly Western-style democratic institutions. Local variants may be appropriate; what is important, it is suggested, is that mechanisms be put in place to allow for economic and social development and the resolution of conflicts without violence.

Impacts of September 11 on “human dimension” issues

One of the results of the September 11 events is that the regimes in Central Asia receive more financial and military support from the international community. The increased interest from the West in the region represents both challenges and opportunities. There is reason to hope that there will be a commitment that is required to build stronger economies and democratic systems. Yet, there is also the risk that Western engagement will be perceived by the population as endorsement of or support for states that may not be adhering to all of their commitments as expressed in the OSCE principles (which could in turn result in polarisation and radicalisation among certain sectors in society), and that states may justify actions which compromise commitments to respect human rights and uphold the rule of law with the rationale that they are taking such measures to fight terrorism.

Political succession

There is a general concern that there are few developed institutional mechanisms to manage political succession in the mid term. There is a risk of political and economic instability, confusion, or violence because of the lack of clarity on the succession issue. A fundamental feature of democracy is a clear and effective system of succession.

Human rights and civil liberties

There is a general concern about violations of human rights, restrictions on civil liberties, and restricted access to the political process which impedes the development of genuinely pluralistic political institutions.

Media

With respect to civil liberties, state control of public media and constraints on independent media are an issue of particular concern.

Civil society

In Soviet times, civil society scarcely existed, and since independence, the development of civil society has been relatively slow and quite uneven. In view of the fact that the successor states to the Soviet Union have had difficulties meeting social needs previously met by the Soviet state, it is especially important that civil society organisations develop and come forward to meet these needs and to build public constituencies which can act on behalf of various interests in society. The development of civil society organisations may serve to limit extra-legal interventions of state institutions in the social sphere.

Social and economic fragmentation at the regional level

The emergence of five states on the “common space” once under the jurisdiction of a single state has led to social and economic fragmentation. Where Russian was once a common language, numerous languages now compete for pre-eminence. The centralised economic structures of Soviet times have been replaced by the dispersed and uncoordinated structures now in place. The free flow of goods, services, and people has been disrupted by borders, visa requirements, and customs fees.

Managing pluralism and minorities

A certain uniformity was imposed on the Central Asian region in Soviet times which belied its actual diversity. In post-Soviet times, the fractures appear not only at the borders, but also within the states. As one observer puts it, society has been ‘atomised’. Very sizeable ethnic and religious minorities exist in all the states of Central Asia. The creation of stable multi-ethnic societies, where all groups are afforded fair and equitable access to power and resources, remains a major challenge. That most of the dominant ethnic groups in the region are distributed across the boundaries of the states is a complicating factor. There is a risk of cross-border intervention, including violent conflict, if a group in one state has a grievance (real or imagined) against that state or another group within the state.

Role of women

The status of women in the Central Asian societies has, in general, declined since the end of Soviet rule. This is especially true in rural areas. As traditional, male-dominated social structures have emerged to replace the institutions of the Soviet Union, women have often been marginalised. Poverty, too, has been a factor. With men unable to support a family, women have often been forced into menial jobs, and in some cases, unmarried women have been forced into prostitution or crime. On the other hand, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of organisations addressing women’s issues.

Guidelines and priorities

Legal reform and rule of law

Laws governing political parties, the NGO sector, and the media should be brought into conformity with OSCE standards. Criminal codes should be reformed to guarantee civil rights, due process, and the rights of the accused, as well as humane treatment of convicted criminals. Strengthening the rule of law should include provisions to protect citizens against state violence, illegal detention, police brutality, and torture. The OSCE has a track record of assisting in the development of democratic institutions through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Adherence to OSCE norms can be encouraged via the good offices of the OSCE missions in place in Central Asia, but also, when necessary, by conditioning OSCE assistance in the economic development arena on compliance with OSCE norms with regard to human rights and the rule of law.

Conflict prevention and resolution

In the Ferghana Valley, where a complex of disputes threatens stability, the OSCE is well-positioned to play a role in assisting in the establishment of a multi-issue, multi-party, multi-level negotiation process to simultaneously address such issues as borders, water, and energy. The OSCE should also endeavour to broaden mechanisms to engage local governments.

The OSCE, because of its presence throughout the region, can play a role in creating “mediation spaces” where all sectors of society can engage in dialogue on issues of concern.

Training programmes in conflict management techniques should be established at all levels - extending to regional and local officials, community leaders, and civil society organisations. Such programmes should focus on fostering skills in conflict analysis and collaborative problem-solving behaviour.

The OSCE should also encourage joint projects at the community level that address issues of mutual concern to a range of constituencies, where the issues themselves are unrelated to conflict or disputed claims. Such projects have an important role to play in forging ties and building trust between those constituencies.

Where appropriate, the OSCE should be supportive of traditional conflict resolution institutions (including, for example, conflict resolution promoted through religious institutions), and look to them as an important instrument for preventing and/or resolving conflicts at the local level.

Institution building and the strengthening of civil society organisations

The OSCE should stimulate the creation of a regional NGO platform where NGOs can meet to exchange views on current and future needs, common problems and challenges, and which will allow for the possibility for better co-ordination and less competition among NGOs. Such a platform will provide international financial institutions with a space where they can get an overview of regional needs and activities, so as to better co-ordinate their own support for development initiatives.

It should also support capacity-building among non-governmental actors and encourage greater dialogue between government and civil society (including NGOs).

Problems related to governance and the confidence of the local population in government institutions are among the most serious problems facing the region, and the OSCE is well positioned to support programmes on improving governance and promoting transparency, including extending support to initiatives undertaken by NGOs and human rights groups.

Ethnic minorities

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has played an extremely constructive role in working quietly but effectively to promote the rights of ethnic minorities and defuse potentially dangerous situations related to minority issues. The OSCE should build on the past successes and the good will accruing from past work as it continues to intervene to assure that political and social rights of all citizens are respected, and that members of ethnic groups are afforded equal opportunities to participate in public life, as laid out in the 'Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life' finalised in 1999.

The OSCE can also play a constructive role in promoting initiatives to assure equal access to education for all citizens regardless of ethnicity, in accordance with 'The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities' (1996), and to assist in the development of policies and laws to contribute to the language rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as urged in 'The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities' (1998). It can assist in the drafting of legislation on minority issues, and assert its influence in urging states to create conditions of equality before the law for all citizens regardless of ethnicity. The OSCE also can effectively work to make certain that each state lives up to its commitments, as outlined in the Copenhagen Document of 1990, 'to protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on [its] territory and for the promotion of that identity,' and assure that states make efforts to promote tolerance, mutual acceptance, and non-discrimination in society.

The OSCE is, furthermore, well-placed to address minority issues before violence breaks out, to encourage dialogue at local, national, and regional levels, and to work for the creation of the political will to deal with conflicts deriving from minority issues. It is also in a position to provide training to officials and non-officials on international law, legislation and tolerance, to monitor potentially dangerous situations, and to provide early warning and engage in preventive diplomacy when such situations threaten to erupt into violence.

Freedom of expression

The OSCE should assist Central Asian states to live up to signed obligations to support freedom of speech and expression and independent media. In particular, through its Representative on Freedom of the Media, the OSCE can effectively work to advance press freedom. The OSCE Representative has the responsibility to observe relevant media, to provide early warning of violations of freedom of expression, and to assist participating States by advocating and promoting full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and free media. In Central Asia, the Representative has convened three conferences on media since 1999. Such activities undertaken to insure the freedom of expression for all citizens should continue. The Representative on Freedom of the Media has also established a Media Fund which provides small project assistance grants for supplies, equipment, training, etc. Such support should be continued.

Trafficking

Trafficking is not just an economic issue, but clearly an activity with a serious impact on the lives of individuals. As stated above, the OSCE can play a positive role in providing assistance and protection to the victims of human trafficking, as well as to raise awareness with regard to human trafficking.

Women

OSCE missions have been actively involved in support for women's activities throughout the Central Asia region by organising meetings, providing funding, and offering training, among other activities. Such efforts should continue, and where possible and appropriate, be expanded.

IV. General observations on the role of OSCE in the region

Beyond the discussions related to specific issues of concern in Central Asia, and specific activities that the OSCE can undertake to enhance security, further economic development, and insure the existence of a fertile environment for human development, participants at the March roundtable and conference offered a number of suggestions relating more generally to the OSCE role in the region. These observations addressed, for instance, the roles

for which OSCE is best suited, given its unique structure, membership, and constituency; strategies for enhancing its effectiveness; and the relationships that exist between the three dimensions of the organisation.

- 1 It was observed that the OSCE, as an outside actor, has an important and constructive role to play in working to build good governance and promoting political and social participation. The OSCE can be viewed as an “honest broker” and is therefore well-placed to facilitate dialogue at the intra-state and inter-state level, and regional co-operation on a wide range of issues including economic development and the sharing of resources. It also has a role to play in facilitating the effective involvement of international players - that the right resources are channelled to the right agencies without duplication of effort, for example - and of promoting understanding and open discussion in the international community and the region with regard to issues of vital concern.
- 2 The effectiveness of the OSCE is, in part, a function of its visibility and credibility. It is therefore desirable for the OSCE to increase its visibility in the region and to clearly articulate the constructive role it plays in resolving conflict and fostering development. To that end, the OSCE should continue to build, maintain and enhance its lines of communication to all sectors of society in Central Asia (governments, NGOs, other civil society organisations, etc.) and pro-actively pursue two-way communication via these channels.
- 3 It has been suggested that the OSCE should stimulate more balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE. It should also be noted that a number of Central Asian participants indicated that they believed that the OSCE has a particularly valuable role to play in the human dimension area, and encouraged increased attention in this area. It is not the case, however, that increased attention to the human dimension is necessarily in conflict with the desire for balance; that is dependent on the current levels of involvement and future adjustments in activities with respect to all three dimensions.
- 4 The effectiveness of the OSCE in the region would be enhanced by increased institutional support to the OSCE missions and centres and better co-ordination and co-operation among the various OSCE institutions (ODHIR, OHCNM etc).

Annex 1

Resources on Conflict Prevention in Central Asia

Selected Internet Sites

www.cacianalyst.org (Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, an independent research and policy institution affiliated to Johns Hopkins University)

www.iwpr.net (Institute for War and Peace Reporting. A collaboration of international and local journalists provide weekly in-depth analyses of events and issues on Central Asia)

www.crisisweb.org (International Crisis Group provides regularly policy reports and briefings about Central Asia)

www.osce.org (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe with links to the home-pages of the OSCE mission and centres in Central Asia)

www.reliefweb.int (Relief Web is a project of the UNDHA and provides reports from UN, governmental and non governmental organisations as well as news agencies regarding Central Asia)

www.times.kg (The Times of Central Asia offers daily news from the region)

www.eurasianet.org (Central Eurasia Project of the Open Society Institute focuses on the latest news and analyses of current affairs and political and social developments in the region)

www.fewer.org (Forum on Early Warning and Early Response with comprehensive early warning reports on Central Asia)

www.incore.ulst.ac.uk (website of the Initiative on Conflict Resolution & Ethnicity contains country guides for Tajikistan and Afghanistan)

www.fas.harvard.edu/~centasia (website of the Harvard Forum for Central Asian Studies is perhaps most concentrated source of information on Central Asian studies worldwide)

www.internews.org (Internews provides independent news service in all Central Asian republics)

www.cimera.org (Cimera focuses on media development in Central Asia and publishes monthly online 'Media Insight Central Asia')

www.ferghana.elcat.kg (United Nations Ferghana Valley Development Programme)

www.ferghana-valley.net (Ferghana Valley water management project to promote peace and stability supported by CIDA)

www.cango.net (Central Asia NGO Network with a comprehensive overview of organisations in the region, supported by Counterpart International)

www.conflict-prevention.net (Website of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation with profiles of NGO organisations in Central Asia and internationally as well as surveys of conflict prevention activities in the region)

www.preventconflict.org (Harvard University program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict research with an comprehensive Internet portal on Central Asia)

Publications

Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia, by Sam Nunn, Nancy Lubin, and Barnett Rubin. New York, The Century Foundation Press, 1999.

Islam and Central Asia: An Enduring Legacy or an Evolving Threat? Edited by Susan Eisenhower and Roald Sagdeev. Washington, DC, The Center for Political and Strategic Studies. June 2000.

The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations, by Olivier Roy. New York, New York University Press, 1999.

The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism? By Ahmad Rashid. Karachi, Oxford University Press, May 1999.

A Public Peace Process, by Harold H. Saunders, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999

Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign policy, and Regional Security, by Martha Brill Olcott, Washington, DC, United States Institute for Peace, October 1997

Civil Society in Central Asia, edited by M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel Waugh. Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1999

Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation? By Shirir Akiner, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001

The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan, by Muriel Atkin. Philadelphia, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1989.

The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy, by Lena Jonson, London, Royal Institute of

International Affairs, 1998.

Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia, by Ahmed Rashid, New Haven and London: Yale University Press/World Policy Institute, 2002

Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities. Edited by Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen and Juliette Verhoeven. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002

Reports

Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process, edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catherine Barnes, Accord, issue 10, Conciliation Resources, 2001

The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications, United States Institute of Peace, by Oliver Roy, December 1993

The Challenges of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: Preventing Ethnic Conflict in the Fergana Valley, by Anara Tabysheva. United States Institute of Peace, 1999

Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict, International Crisis Group, Asia Report No 25, November 2001

Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace, International Crisis Group, Asia Report No 30, December 2001

The IMU and the Hizb-ut Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign, International Crisis Group, Central Asia Briefing, January 2002

Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential, International Crisis Asia Report No 33, April 2002

The Islamic Factor and the OSCE Stabilization Strategy in Its Euro-Asian Region, Arne Seifert. Centre for OSCE Research, Working Paper 4, 2001

Narcotics Interdiction in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Challenges for International Assistance, by Nancy Lubin. A report to the Open Society Institute. 2002.

Annex 2

Programme

Roundtable discussion

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Room: 'Van Kleffenszaal'

The Hague, March 7, 2002

Chair: *Catherine Barnes, Programme Associate Conciliation Resources, UK*

First Session

Welcome by Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by Paul van Tongeren, executive director European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Netherlands

Introduction

Keynote speaker: Ambassador Marc Gilbert, Head of OSCE Mission in Tajikistan

New threats in Central Asia: changing security context

Initial comments by:

Vicken Cheterian, CIMERA, Switzerland

Raya Kadyrova, Foundation for Tolerance International, Kyrgyzstan

Shirin Akiner, School of Oriental and African Affairs, UK

David Hoffman, USAID, Regional Mission for Central Asia, Kazakhstan

Max Spoor, Institute for Social Studies, Netherlands

Second Session

Strategies for conflict prevention - the role of civil society organizations

Initial comments by:

Anara Tabyshalieva, Institute for Regional Studies, Kyrgyzstan

Alla Kuvatova Traditions and Modernity, Tajikistan

Randa Slim, Slim & Associates, USA

Third Session

Strategies for conflict prevention - the role of governments and inter-governmental organizations

Initial comments by:

Tony van der Togt, Head Eastern European Department, MFA of the Netherlands

Walter Kemp, Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Netherlands

Vladimir Goryayev, Department for Political Affairs, United Nations, USA

Michael Lund, Senior Associate Management Systems International, USA

Fourth Session

Break up in small working groups to discuss conclusions and recommendations

A. Human Dimensions

Group 1: Focus on governance, democratic institutions, political pluralism & effective participation

Group 2: focus on inter-group relations (within & between countries)

Group 3: focus on human rights, civil liberties, and media

B. The Economic and Environmental Dimension

Group 4: focus on water and energy resources (localised and inter-governmental)

Group 5: focus on social development and poverty

Group 6: focus on economic policies and privatisation programmes

C. The Politico-Military Dimension

Group 7: focus on insurgencies and international / regional militant movements

Group 8: focus on militarisation, small arms, CSBMs, and multiple security frameworks

Group 9: focus on the effects of the rapidly changing global geo-political context on regional and domestic security

**'Van Kleffens Zaal' at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs
The Hague, March 8, 2002**

Chair: *Professor Enno Hommes, Chair of the Board of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention*

10:00 **Opening and welcome by Mr Jozias van Aartsen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Mr Paul van Tongeren, Executive Director European Centre for Conflict Prevention.**

Launch of the publication 'Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia - An overview of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities'

10:30 **Address by Mr Max van der Stoel, former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

10:45 **Documentary film 'Open Asia' of Internews Network.** Introduction by Mr Ivan Sigal, Regional Director of Central Asia, Internews Network

11:45 **Sources of conflict in Central Asia, by Mr John Schoeberlein, Director of the Forum for Central Asian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge**

12:05 **Internal dimensions of the conflicts in the Ferghana Valley, by Ms Raya Kadyrova, President of the Foundation for Tolerance International, Kyrgyzstan**

14:00 **Working groups on:**

1. The role of the OSCE in Central Asia

Presentations from:

- Rui Aleixo, OSCE Chairmanship, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Portugal (chair)
- Annette Legutke, OSCE Centre in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Janna van de Velde, Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Netherlands

2. The role of civil society actors in Central Asia

Presentations from:

- Aaron Rhodes, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Austria (chair)
- Elena Sadvskaya, Center for Conflict management, Kazakhstan
- Madina Najimova, Association of Uzbekistan for Sustainable Water Resources Development - Suvchi, Uzbekistan

3. External influences and the role of religion in the Ferghana Valley

Presentations from:

- Arne Seifert, Centre for OSCE Research in Hamburg, Germany (chair)
- Shirin Akiner, School of Oriental and African Studies, UK
- Elena Sadovskaya, Center for Conflict Management, Kazakhstan

4. Drugs, small arms and conflict in Central Asia

- Azizulla Gaziev, International Crisis Group, Kyrgyzstan (chair)
- Nancy Lubin, JNA Associates Inc. USA
- Mary Honor Kloeg, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

5. Prospects for lasting peace in Tajikistan

- Kamoludin Abdullaev, Center for Citizenship Education, Tajikistan
- Alla Kuvatova, Traditions & Modernity, Tajikistan
- Randa Slim, Slim & Associates, USA
- Catherine Barnes, Conciliation Resources (chair)

16:00 Panel discussion on how different actors can play a role in conflict prevention in Central Asia

- Daan Everts, Head Task Force OSCE, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ambassador Marc Gilbert, Head of the OSCE mission in Dushanbe, Tajikistan
- Marcel van der Heijden, Hivos, The Netherlands
- Neil Melvin, Senior Advisor to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities for Russia and Eurasia
- Esther Schaufelberger, Conflict Prevention and Transformation Section, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland
- Elena Sadovskaya, President of the Center for Conflict Management, Kazakhstan

17:00 Closing remarks and reception

Annex 3

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Annex 4

Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia

An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities

edited by Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven

“For the first time a comprehensive and comparative overview is given on peacebuilding endeavours, their potential, and their difficulties in all major crisis zones in the OSCE region.... a ‘must’ for all practitioners in the field.”-

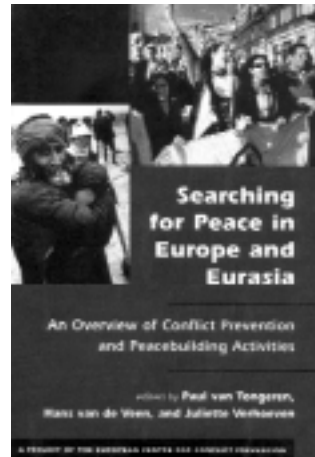
Dr. Norbert Ropers, Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies, Sri Lanka

Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia offers much-needed insight into the possibilities for effective conflict prevention and peace building throughout the region. Presenting surveys of the violent conflicts in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, the contributors offer a unique combination of background information, detailed descriptions of ongoing activities, and assessments of future prospects for conflict resolution and peace building. A major focus of their work is the efforts of regional organisations and NGOs to make civil society part of any peace process, and the activities of grassroots groups are thoroughly covered. A directory of more than four hundred organisations working in the field of conflict prevention and peace building in the region is also included. More than forty experts and organisations in Europe and Eurasia have collaborated in the compilation of this work, which includes a foreword by Max van der Stoel (former OSCE high commissioner on national minorities) and contributions by prominent scholars and practitioners as Mari Fitzduff, Michael S. Lund, Anna Matveeva, Raymond Detrez, Kevin Clements, John Schoeberlein, and Anara Tabysheva.

This is a project of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention in collaboration with the Center for Conflict Management (Almaty), Center for Nonviolent Action (Sarajevo) and the International Center on Conflict Negotiation (Tbilisi)

For order information please contact the European Centre for Conflict Prevention or www.riennner.com

ISBN 1-58826-079-8 (pb EUR 28, excluding mailing costs). 832 pages



Annex 5

The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation/ The European Centre for Conflict Prevention



The *European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation* is a network of more than 150 key European organisations working in the field of the prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the international arena. Its mission is to facilitate the exchange of information and experience among participating organisations, as well as to stimulate co-operation and synergy.

The *European Centre for Conflict Prevention* is an independent non-governmental organisation based in the Netherlands. Its mission is to contribute to prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the world, like in Kosovo and Rwanda. The Centre acts as the secretariat of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention & Transformation and initiates, co-ordinates and implements the activities of the Platform.

The main objectives and activities are:

Networking and information exchange

- **European Platform meetings** are organised annually. The last meeting took place in Sweden, May 2001, and was organised in co-operation with the Swedish Peace Team. The conference, called 'Gripsholm- II' addressed issues such as: priorities for the European Union to enhance the EU's conflict prevention capacities; lessons learned from conflict interventions; national infrastructures for conflict prevention; and establishing Civilian Peace Services.
- The European Platform aims to include participant organisations from all European countries. Optimally, these should be **national platforms or networks**, such have already been established in e.g. Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. In countries where no such focal point exists, the Platform aims to support the creation of one.
- The **Conflict Prevention Newsletter** is one of the few general newsletters on conflict prevention and resolution in the world. It has a circulation of 2,500 world-wide. Regular contributions to the Newsletter from prominent organisations such as International Alert, Saferworld and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) greatly enhance its international focus as well as its quality of information. In 2001 thematic specials focussing on the Swedish Presidency of the EU and on Lessons Learned were included. For 2002 specials will pay attention to Central Asia, Media & Peacebuilding, and Women and Peacebuilding.

Clearinghouse

- The **Platform's web-site** www.conflict-prevention.net is the successor of the successful website www.euconflict.org, which recorded an average of 100.000 hits per month. The new website is one of the most comprehensive sources of information in the field of conflict prevention, and Background information is presented on conflicts and peacebuilding activities, combined with other service information like contact persons, addresses of organisations, web sites and databases, all kind of networks in the field, new literature, conferences and other events in the world.
- Since the publication of the **International Directory** in 1998, which provided an overview of 475 organisations active in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, the overview has grown to about **1300 organisations worldwide**.
- The **Information Centre** maintains a large collection of material produced by organisations around the world involved in conflict prevention. Its focus is upon unpublished and unpublicised 'grey literature' produced by NGOs.
- The objective of the project on **Lessons Learned in Peace Building** is to collect experiences of people working in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Through seminars and conferences these lessons, both positive and negative, and evaluation practices, undertaken by field staff as well as academics, are collected and shared. The aim is to formulate future challenges and possibilities to improve the work. This process will lead to a more coherent and integrative body of knowledge in this field.

Searching for Peace programme

Searching for Peace is a regional programme aimed at recording, describing and analysing prevention and peacebuilding efforts in the main violent conflicts in the world. Surveys of conflicts are produced that combines background information, detailed descriptions of ongoing activities to transform the conflicts, and assessments of future prospects for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Furthermore directories are produced of local and international organisations working in this field. The results are published in a series of books as well as on the European Platform's web site. The Searching for Peace series is the result of a process involving research and regional seminars as well as collaboration with local partners, practitioners and prominent international scholars. In 1999 *Searching for Peace in Africa - An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Management Activities (October 1999)* was published and in March 2002 *Searching for Peace Europe & Eurasia* will be published in collaboration with Lynne Rienner Publishers. The programme is ongoing and in 2002 *Searching for Peace in Asia* will be available.

Lobby and advocacy

- The Platform is one of the initiators of the **European Peacebuilding Liaison Office**. This Liaison Office is based in Brussels and aims to enhance information exchange between its members and the EU institutions dealing with conflict prevention.

- **Lobby documents:** aiming at the Swedish and Belgian EU presidencies in 2001, the European Platform, International Alert and Saferworld produced the lobby document *Preventing Violent Conflict - Opportunities for the Swedish and Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2001*
- **People Building Peace** is a project aimed at collecting and publishing inspiring stories of peacebuilding, with special attention to examples of successful peacebuilding by different actors, such as women groups, churches, media, the corporate sector, etc. The first publication was issued in May 1999: *People Building Peace; 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*. The project is on-going.
- In the Netherlands the European Centre established a **Special Chair of Conflict Prevention and Management** at Utrecht University. The first courses started in September 2000.
- **Media & Peacebuilding** is a project aimed at developing an operational framework for peacebuilding activities of media. It will be implemented by the Platform in close collaboration with IMPACS (Canadian NGO) and the European Centre for Common Ground (Brussels based NGO).

Conflict Prevention in Central Asia

The Role of the OSCE

Since September 11 the world has been paying more attention to Central Asia. The countries of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan now seem closer as the international community becomes more aware of the region's particular cultures and social and political context - but also of its problems. What are the sources of possible instability in Central Asia? What are the effects of the increased international involvement in this region? What are possible conflict prevention strategies for the OSCE?



This is the report of a conference organised by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 7 and 8, 2002 in The Hague, The Netherlands. The conference brought together a broad group of experts from and on Central Asia, and specifically the fields of development co-operation, conflict prevention and resolution, and related topics, to discuss the possible contribution of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the prevention of violent conflicts in Central Asia.

Ministerie van
Buitenlandse Zaken

