

## 4.3 Mission Notes

# Central Asia

The 2008–2009 economic and financial crises hit Central Asia hard. Although the negative effect on national GDPs was less than expected, the crises – when combined with rising food and energy prices – exacerbated strains on livelihoods, increased inequalities and contributed to regional insecurity. In early April 2010, the Kyrgyz government was overthrown in the bloodiest unrest the region has seen in the past five years. The continuation of violence in Kyrgyzstan, even after the installment of an interim government, has raised fears of possible spillover into the broader region. Meanwhile, regional security is jeopardized by the precarious situation in neighboring Afghanistan.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) was established at the initiative of the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to address regional security threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and environmental degradation.<sup>1</sup> The UN was not the first organization to set up a political mission in the region. The OSCE has maintained a network of offices in regional capitals, in some cases for more than a decade, and there is an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia (*see box*).

Inaugurated on 10 December 2007 at its headquarters in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan, UNRCCA's mandate includes liaising with the governments of the region and, with their concurrence, with other parties concerned on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy; maintaining relationships with regional organizations and encouraging their



Ethnic Uzbeks fleeing violence in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, wait in the border village of Suratash, hoping to enter Uzbekistan, 15 June 2010.

UN Photo

peacemaking efforts and initiatives; providing a political framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the UN country teams and resident coordinators across the region; and maintaining close contact with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In order to put its broad mandate to best use, UNRCCA together with its member states has identified three top priorities for the region. These are cross-border threats from illicit activities: terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking; environmental degradation and management



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of common resources such as water and energy; and the implications from the precarious situation of Afghanistan.

UNRCCA has had some successes in its work. The SRSF has emerged as a credible partner by gaining the confidence of the senior political leadership of the respective Central Asian states. This alone is significant, given the degree of disparate interests in the region. In practice, the mission is utilized as a conduit for dialogue between the governments that do not have a long history of bilateral discussions on common issues. As such, UNRCCA continues to serve as a facilitator assisting its member states in the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism strategy.

In regard to the member states' second priority on water and energy resources, UNRCCA was able to draw on the expertise of the UN Department of Political Affairs' (DPA) Mediation Support Unit, which deployed an expert on water sharing to support the SRSF. UNRCCA also helped assist

the regional governments in technical discussions and developing initiatives with, for example, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

In order to handle its third priority – addressing implications from the precarious situation of Afghanistan – UNRCCA hosts a UNAMA liaison officer at its headquarters and regularly exchanges information with UNAMA. The two UN missions are considering a joint initiative to facilitate the positive contribution of Central Asia in the stabilization and economic recovery of Afghanistan. However, as of August 2010, this initiative had not yet been made operational.

In April 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon used his visit to UNRCCA and its member states to encourage increased efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions to shared problems in the region. He delivered a very firm human rights message as well, linking reforms in this area with ensuring conditions for economic growth.

Later the same month, civil unrest in Kyrgyzstan was violently suppressed by police forces

and precipitated the fall of President Bakiyev and the appointment of an interim administration. Although this stabilized the country temporarily, in June 2010, southern Kyrgyzstan saw the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence, which resulted in several hundred fatalities, mass displacement as well as widespread destruction and threatened to spillover into neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

UNRCCA was not involved in mediation efforts prior to the crisis, reflecting its focus on regional and trans-boundary challenges. However, in the aftermath of the crisis, UNRCCA has been active in efforts to stabilize the country to prevent further conflict by coordinating the UN response, working with regional organizations and supporting efforts by the Kyrgyz authorities, such as the conduct of parliamentary elections on 10 October 2010. Also in response to the crisis, the OSCE agreed to deploying a small police mission to Kyrgyzstan.

Despite UNRCCA's modest successes, the challenges facing the Centre as a political mission, with a mandate of conflict prevention are significant. Its mandate to liaise with the governments of the region and seek political consensus on the political issues facing member states is a difficult task, given their rivalries and "zero sum" approach to most issues. This reality is further compounded by a lack of resources for the mission that has to fund its activities, such as convening meetings and the implementation of projects, by extra-budgetary means. Conducting such activities depends on the extent to which UNRCCA and the UN Secretariat carry out successful fundraising activities, somewhat limiting the Centre's ability to take the lead on initiatives.

## REGIONAL MODEL

As a UN model, the regional framework offers a number of obvious benefits. Institutionally, the regional approach makes missions more palatable in environments where member states may be otherwise disinclined to accept a UN mission. In the case of UNRCCA, the work plan of the Centre is developed in partnership with the five member countries, reflecting the shared "ownership" of the mission. Moreover, the regional approach allows DPA to develop practical policies through a collaborative approach with the member states. Finally, as the mission is as much an collaboration with

### UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

<b>Authorization Date</b>	7 May 2007 (UNSC Letter S/2007/279)
<b>SRSG</b>	Miroslav Jenča (Slovakia)
<b>Deputy SRSG</b>	Fedor Klimtchouk (Russia)
<b>Budget</b>	\$3.3 million (1 January 2010-31 December 2010)
<b>Strength as of early 2010</b>	International Civilian: 7 Local Civilian: 13

*For detailed mission information see p. 216*

### OSCE Centre in Ashgabat

<b>Authorization Date</b>	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/244)
<b>Start Date</b>	January 1999
<b>Head of Mission</b>	Ambassador Arsim Zekolli (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
<b>Budget</b>	\$1.8 million (1 January 2010-31 December 2010)
<b>Strength as of 1 August 2010</b>	International Staff: 5 Local Staff: 18

*For detailed mission information see p. 242*

### OSCE Centre in Astana

<b>Authorization Date</b>	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/243)
<b>Start Date</b>	January 1999
<b>Head of Mission</b>	Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky (France)
<b>Budget</b>	\$2.8 million (1 January 2010-31 December 2010)
<b>Strength as of 1 August 2010</b>	International Staff: 6 Local Staff: 20

*For detailed mission information see p. 246*

the regional members, it allays common perceived tensions over issues of sovereignty and its SRSG has enjoyed a relative ease of access to the region's high-level officials.

Notwithstanding these benefits, organizationally the regional set-up also poses some challenges. Given that the mission is addressing issues through a regional lens, it must negotiate partnerships with five UN Country Team (UNCT)<sup>2</sup> structures, which are country specific and not as involved in regional issues. As the concept of integration, the guiding

## The OSCE and EU

The OSCE maintains Centres in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Astana (Kazakhstan), and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) as well as an office in Tajikistan and a project coordinator in Uzbekistan. The OSCE also runs an Academy in Bishkek that offers a Master's program in political science for students from Central Asia. In 2009 it opened a Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), although this is still in its start-up phase and there have been obstacles to training personnel from Afghanistan, a key goal.

Although some are relatively small, the OSCE's field presences have very broad mandates, ranging from environmental affairs to security projects. The latter include assistance on counter-terrorism issues, support to police reform and more practical issues such as helping secure ammunition from the Soviet era. In a region where human rights problems are common, the OSCE's field presences are largely confined to indirect efforts to promote rights norms. These include holding events with civil society and governments, and commenting on draft legislation. The OSCE presences in Central Asia do not monitor the administration of justice directly, unlike its missions in the Balkans and Caucasus.

The region's governments are typically skeptical about any greater OSCE intervention in their internal affairs. However, the organization's relevance to the region was brought to the fore in 2010 with the Kyrgyz crisis, in part because Kazakhstan held the OSCE's presidency (the first Central Asian state to do so). The Centre in Bishkek had been conscious of the threat of violence towards the Uzbek minority, having opened a field office in Osh – the epicenter of this year's violence – in 2000. The field office, with four international staff, had focused on improving cross-border contacts to reduce tensions.

When the initial Kyrgyz political crisis broke in April 2010, the Kazakh Chairman-in-Office's special envoy, Kanat Saudabayev, took a prominent role in mediating the transition to the new government. In June, the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek, urged the organization's Permanent Council to act on the rapidly increasing inter-ethnic violence in Osh and its region. In July, the Permanent Council agreed to deploy a Police Advisory Group (PAG) to reassure the public and "strengthen the capacities of the police and help in restoring public trust." The PAG – initially mandated to deploy 52 police personnel for a four-month period – was approved "within the mandate" of the Centre in Bishkek.

The PAG has its own head - Markus Mueller, a Swiss diplomat who ran the Centre from 2003-2008. The mission's imminent arrival sparked protests from Kyrgyz groups concerned that it would foster Uzbek separatism. Efforts to agree a memorandum of understanding with the government on the PAG's remit were delayed through August. NGOs such as the International Crisis Group have called for a much larger international presence in Kyrgyzstan, although this remains unlikely at present.

In September, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) opened an election observation mission for the October parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan. The mission that was deployed following an invitation from the Kyrgyz government comprises 17 experts based in Bishkek and 22 long-term observers, who are deployed throughout the country. Immediately prior to election day the mission will be joined by 300 additional short-term observers.

The OSCE's diplomacy in Kyrgyzstan has been coordinated not only with the UN but also the EU, which has had an EUSR for Central Asia since 2005. The first holder of this office was Slovakia's Jan Kubis, who was replaced in 2006 by Pierre Morel, a French diplomat. The EUSR's mandate places a particular emphasis on energy security in the region. However, his leverage is limited by a very small support team – primarily based in Brussels – and the lack of a strong EU consensus on Central Asian affairs. Suggestions that the EU might deploy an operation to Kyrgyzstan this year did not get far. The post of EUSR for Central Asia is not one of those to be terminated in 2011, reflecting the strategic sensitivity and uncertainty of the region.

principle for the majority of political missions, does not apply to regional offices there is no automatic participation from the UN funds and programs in the Center's activities and the SRSG has no authority over the UNCT's activities. However, the SRSG

managed to forge close cooperation with the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan and developed effective relationships with the UN Resident Coordinators in the remaining countries.

As for the relations with the Organization for

Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its offices in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, whose mandates include elements similar to UNRCCA's conflict prevention role, the challenge for UNRCCA is to identify a division of labor that would maximize opportunities for cooperation. In the case of regional OSCE initiatives, concerning border issues and counter-terrorism, for example, UNRCCA has shown its added value in building links with other regional actors such as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), strengthening cooperation and promoting increased coordination amongst regional organizations.

## CONCLUSION

UNRCCA received a boost from the Secretary-General's visit in April 2010, increasing its overall profile and legitimacy in the region. The fall of the Kyrgyz government in the same month and the ensuing violence underline the potential for unrest and the value of a coordinated response by neighboring countries, regional organizations and the UN system. The relatively successful response to the humanitarian crisis following the outbreak of violence in June 2010 in Kyrgyzstan can be attributed, in part, to the high degree of dialogue and exchange among regional organizations and humanitarian actors, facilitated by UNRCCA. Such an example is especially important as the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, affecting regional development, particularly in the bordering countries of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

## NOTES

- 1 See Security Council Resolutions 279 (2007) and 280 (2007)
- 2 The UNCT consist of UN agencies, funds and programs.

### OSCE Centre in Bishkek

<b>Authorization Date</b>	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/245)
<b>Start Date</b>	January 1999
<b>Head of Mission</b>	Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere (United Kingdom)
<b>Budget</b>	\$7.2 million (1 January 2010-31 December 2010)
<b>Strength as of 1 August 2010</b>	International Staff: 17 Local Staff: 69

*For detailed mission information see p. 250*

### OSCE Office in Tajikistan

<b>Authorization Date</b>	19 June 2008 (PC.DEC/852)
<b>Start Date</b>	Renamed the OSCE Office in Tajikistan 1 July 2008
<b>Head of Mission</b>	Ambassador Ivar Vikki (Norway)
<b>Budget</b>	\$7.8 million (1 January 2010-31 December 2010)
<b>Strength as of 1 August 2010</b>	International Staff: 27 Local Staff: 121

*For detailed mission information see p. 269*

### EUSR for Central Asia

<b>Authorization Date</b>	13 June 2005 (2005/588/CFSP)
<b>Start Date</b>	July 2005
<b>Head of Mission</b>	Pierre Morel (France)
<b>Budget</b>	\$1.0 million (1 March 2010-31 August 2010)