

EUCAM WATCH

EU-CENTRAL ASIA MONITORING

The Launch of EU Central Asia Monitoring

Following the launch of the EU Strategy for Central Asia in 2007, relations with the countries of the region have at last been acknowledged as a priority for Brussels and an integral part of the Union's eastern policies. Its adoption has been seen as the 'final piece' in the jigsaw of EU policies toward the former states of the Soviet Union: the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Black Sea Synergy, the Baku Initiative, the Eastern Partnership (currently under development) and now the Strategy for Central Asia. Together, this complex of policy initiatives marks a strong commitment to strengthening the role of the EU in Eurasia at a time of growing political and economic uncertainty and when the importance of the countries of the region is increasing, both for energy and security reasons.

The adoption of the EU Strategy for Central Asia is the first time that the EU has sought to develop an approach to the region that combines broad political aims with a targeted set of programmatic initiatives. The growing attention to Central Asia within the institutions of the European Union and on the part of some EU member states is matched by the interest of the European expert community and civil society organisations. With the aim of drawing upon and strengthening this interest, the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) have launched – with the assistance of the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the governments of the Netherlands, Spain, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom – the European Union Central Asian Monitoring Project (EUCAM) (see article on the next page).

Over the course of its operations, the EUCAM project will scrutinise the EU Strategy for Central Asia and its implementation and through such scrutiny help ensure that the emerging relationship is forged in accord with the Union's fundamental and strategic interests – inter alia progress in furthering democratic politics, strengthening the rule of law and protecting and enhancing human rights. Whereas the EU Strategy has focused on working with officials, EUCAM will seek to build cooperation and networks between the civil societies and expert communities of Europe and Central Asia.

While the recent set of initiatives promoted through and by Brussels has put Central Asia on the policy agenda of the EU, many of these initiatives have their deficiencies. In the first publication of the EUCAM project, *The EU Strategy for Central Asia @ One Year*, the co-chairs of the project (Jos Boonstra of FRIDE and myself) argue that if the EU is to have a significant impact in the region, it will be vital to engage where there is a genuine prospect of achieving positive and strategic cooperation. As is noted elsewhere in this, the first, newsletter of the EUCAM project, the Kazakhstani authorities have recently adopted a state programme entitled "The Path to Europe" following an initiative by President Nazarbaev. This together with Kazakhstan's forthcoming Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 offers a clear opening for Europe to engage with a political regime that has committed itself to European standards and values as a means to modernise the country.

The strong interest within the European Union as regards Central Asia was evident at the launch event for the EUCAM project at the European Parliament on 8 October 2008. The event highlighted the important steps forward in strengthening EU-Central Asia ties, while also pointing to the considerable challenges in the relationship. The meeting also highlighted the important role that the EU could play across a range of issues in Central Asia. The EUCAM project aims through a future series of events and publications to promote better informed analysis about the EU-Central Asia relationship as well as to propose practical steps to improve the relationship. This Newsletter will serve as a means to raise awareness of the policies of the European Union toward this important region. The Newsletter will be published six times a year and is designed to highlight significant developments and news concerning the EU's Central Asia policies. We hope that this initiative, along with the other activities to be held under the EUCAM umbrella, will serve as a useful resource for the wide community interested in this area and we look forward to hearing from our readers with ideas, suggestions and comments about how to enhance the work of the project.

*Editorial by Neil Melvin
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Newsletter

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RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES
Y EL DIÁLOGO EXTERIOR

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Progress Report by the Council and the European Commission on the Implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy

On 24 June 2008, one year after the launch of the Strategy, the Council and the European Commission released an official assessment of the achievements of the Strategy during its first 12 months in the form of a progress report. The report notes that "a new quality of cooperation" has evolved over the first year. Other successes are indicated, notably the increased number of visits of EU politicians and officials to Central Asia and vice versa, the human rights dialogues that were established with all five countries, the EU's commitment to border management (the BOMCA programme) and the efforts at combatting drug-trafficking in the region. Also the report notes the development of a joint education and a rule of law initiative and the conclusion of (for now non-public) bilateral priority papers with the five states.

[Extracts]

This joint Progress Report takes stock of the progress made towards implementation of the EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia, which was adopted by the European Council on 21–22 June 2007 in recognition of the increasing importance of Central Asia for EU interests in terms of security, stability, governance and energy diversification.

The Strategy provides an overall framework for EU relations with Central Asia and builds on the results in the implementation of various agreements, EU assistance programmes and other initiatives taken by the EU to engage with countries of Central Asia.

The Strategy defines EU priorities for its cooperation with the region as a whole, including in the fields of human rights, rule of law, good governance and democracy, education, economic development, trade and investment, energy and transport, environmental

policies, common threats and inter-cultural dialogue, but states that implementation of these should be tailored to the specific requirements and performance of each Central Asian country. The Strategy also calls for intensification of political dialogue with all five countries of Central Asia, including holding of regular meetings at Foreign Minister level and convening annual meetings of EU Heads of Mission in the region.

The European Council asked the Council and the Commission to regularly review progress in implementing this Strategy and to submit a first progress report to the European Council by the middle of 2008.

Overall Assessment

This progress report is not a routine exercise. It reflects an unprecedented approach. For the first time in the history of EU relations with Central Asia, an ambitious framework combining strategic political goals with a joint working programme is in place, transforming strategic aims into operational working tasks. Its sustainable and consistent implementation will be a key indicator for the EU's and Central Asia's political resolve to upgrade their relations. The EU is fully engaged in implementing the Strategy, building on a broad array of assistance programmes and other initiatives taken by the EU to engage with countries of Central Asia. The implementation of the Strategy is a long term endeavour that requires patience and sustained efforts by both the EU and Central Asian states.

Overall, progress on implementing the EU Central Asia Strategy has been encouraging. After the lapse of only a year, a new quality of cooperation has evolved between Central Asia and the EU. The EU-Central Asia new partnership for the 21st century is making a difference. On the side of the Central Asian countries there is a strongly increased interest in enhanced cooperation with the EU at all levels and in practically all areas. Concrete actions have been mutually agreed upon and are being implemented or are under preparation, both bilaterally with the five Central Asian republics, and with all on key regional issues as education, Rule of Law, water and environment. All Central Asian states have agreed to engage in or continue a structured Human Rights Dialogue with the EU. National Coordinators for the Strategy have been appointed by all Central Asian states, demonstrating that Central Asian partners assume ownership and fully engage in cooperation. High-level political dialogue has visibly intensified. All actors, especially the Commission, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, the German, Portuguese, Slovenian, and upcoming French Presidencies as well as Member States have contributed to keeping up the momentum of the EU Strategy. Among them, lead coordinators have been identified for the regional initiatives.

The EU remains committed to continue and strengthen its current efforts to implement visible and ambitious projects exercising a sustainable impact on key areas of cooperation.

Source: "Joint Progress Report by the Council and the European Commission to the European Council on the implementation of the EU-Central Asia Strategy" (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/central_asia/docs/progress_report_0608_en.pdf).

EUCAM News

European Parliament Hosts EUCAM Launch

On 8 October 2008, the EUCAM project was officially launched in the European Parliament. Over 100 politicians, diplomats, civil society leaders and journalists took part in the seminar that welcomed expert contributors from the EU Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and the EUCAM project. The event was hosted by the

Socialist Group, in cooperation with the Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance of the European Parliament. The seminar was preceded by a two-day expert working group meeting where EUCAM experts from Central

Asian and EU countries agreed on a work programme. Plans were made to produce, over the coming 18 months, a variety of publications devoted to critical issues in the EU-Central Asia relationship and to organise a series of public events focusing on aspects of the Union's Strategy for engagement in the region.

EU-Central Asia Forum in Paris

On 18 September 2008, the EU Central Asia Forum on Security Issues was convened in Paris. The aim of the Paris Security Forum was to reaffirm the EU's commitment to strengthening relations between the EU and Central Asia and to establish lasting cooperation between the two regions on security issues. The meeting was hosted by the French Presidency of the EU and was attended by many politicians and officials including the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the five Central Asian countries, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero Waldner, and the Council Secretary-General of the Council/High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana. Discussions focused on three main issues: terrorist threats, the fight against human and drug trafficking, and energy and environmental security.

[Extracts]

Driven by a shared commitment to developing and organising our long-term partnership on the basis of common objectives and undertakings to strengthen peace and stability in Central Asia, respect for human rights and the development of the rule of law and democracy, we met on the occasion of the First European Union-Central Asia Forum on Security Issues in Paris on 18 September 2008.

With the contribution of the international and regional organisations concerned, we have analysed security issues in Central Asia and defined concrete policy lines for our joint action in the following areas: combating illicit trafficking in arms, sensitive material, narcotics and human beings; combating terrorism and extremism; and cooperation in energy and the environment.

In line with the European Union's Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia and on the basis of documents on the bilateral priorities of cooperation and of the regional initiatives, we agreed on the following points:

1. Strengthening political dialogue in all its forms

Convinced that socio-economic development, human rights, stability, peace and security are inseparable and mutually reinforcing, we intend to examine together the principal factors of tension and their consequences in the world today. It is our responsibility to create, through our exchanges and our joint initiatives, the conditions required to develop the potential of Central Asian countries. Political dialogue helps to lay the foundations for future action and shared work with a view to ensuring the political and socio-economic security and stability of the countries in the region.

We underline the importance of the EU Rule of Law Initiative in Central Asia. We will continue the dialogue on human rights with the EU, as well as in the framework of bilateral relations and multilateral organisations such as the UN and the OSCE, of which Kazakhstan will hold the chairmanship in 2010.

2. Strengthening regional stability

Broadening cooperation among the region's countries, particularly on border security, is key to regional stability and security in Central Asia and to setting up cooperative management of regional risks and threats. Our joint efforts will help to combat new risks and threats more effectively. It is essential to reinforce regular exchanges of information and analyses to take into account possible risks of a political and military nature, especially through collaboration between analysis and research centres working on security, strategy and international relations issues in the Central Asian countries and in the EU.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery represents a particular threat to peace and international stability. We reaffirm our support for the multilateral treaties and agreements as well as international initiatives on non-proliferation, and we agree to step up our efforts with a view to their full implementation. The commitment of the Central Asian countries to non-proliferation and disarmament was confirmed by the signing of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia on 8 September 2006 in Semipalatinsk.

The creation of a nuclear weapon free zone will help to maintain and strengthen peace and stability internationally and regionally and promote non-proliferation in all its aspects. We intend to pool our experience and cooperate in establishing effective export control systems, including conventional arms exports, strengthening border controls and securing sensitive facilities and sources of nuclear, radioactive, biological and chemical material, in order to prevent any risk of proliferation and procurement by terrorist groups. We express our grave concern about growing nuclear proliferation crises and the risk of destabilisation to the non-proliferation regime, and we are in favour of compliance with international non-proliferation obligations, particularly the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and those issued by IAEA Board of Governors. We underline the importance of boosting the role of the IAEA in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

3. Stepping up the fight against terrorism

Combating terrorism in all its forms and expressions must be conducted within the framework of the international treaties and relevant United Nations Resolutions while respecting human rights, which guarantees its effectiveness. We agree to continuously fight the financing of terrorism, in accordance with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

We consider that enhanced cooperation at all levels among the countries concerned, in both Central Asia and Europe, is a condition necessary to the successful achievement of our objective.

We believe it important to adopt measures to prevent the action of terrorist organisations that are engaged in illicit activities and that are banned by Central Asian and EU countries.

4. Developing cooperation between Central Asia and the European Union in rebuilding Afghanistan and stabilising its situation

We are mindful of the stabilisation and development of Afghanistan, factors which contribute to consolidating regional and global security. In referring to the conclusions of the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan held in Paris on 12 June, we reaffirm our determination to actively contributing to their implementation, particularly by reinforcing our political exchanges and economic cooperation with this country, as well as our cooperation with the relevant international organisations, especially the United Nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

5. Joining forces to fight illicit trafficking in arms, sensitive materials, narcotics and human beings

The EU will increase cooperation with Central Asian countries to strengthen and implement legal measures to more effectively combat all forms of illicit trafficking: arms, sensitive materials, narcotics, psychotropic substances and their precursors, and human beings. The adoption of national strategies on integrated border management could be an effective means of ensuring internal stability in Central Asia. The Dushanbe Conference on 21 and 22 October 2008 will review the mechanisms for enhancing international coordination.

Concerned by persistently high drug production levels in Afghanistan and by the development of opium-to-heroin conversion activities, we welcome the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1817 on the fight against the trade in precursors. We are committed to implementing its provisions, particularly those aimed at increasing international control of precursors. We undertake to enhance cooperation within the framework of the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and the Paris Pact Initiative. A meeting of experts based on an enlarged troika format is planned on 1 October 2008 in Brussels and will help to strengthen the control of these products at a regional level. On this occasion, discussion focusing on updating the drug action plan will begin.

We believe that it is essential to develop and implement projects/programmes to improve, in their fight against narcotics trafficking, the law enforcement capacities of the countries bordering Afghanistan which are most at risk from the trafficking in narcotics originating from Afghanistan.

We are thoroughly convinced that the development of cooperation among Central Asian countries, with the participation of international organisations and donor countries, will ensure the adoption of effective measures to fight this common scourge. In this connection, we welcome the creation of the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) for the fight against narcotics trafficking.

6. Strengthening cooperation in energy, the use of natural resources and the environment

We will reinforce our cooperation in energy without prejudice to current cooperation. We consider that the harmonisation of the interests of energy consumers and suppliers, transit states and transnational companies is a guarantee of international energy stability. Energy security in Central Asia and the EU presupposes common rules and a reasoned choice of new transport options involving all the countries concerned. We reaffirm the importance of active cooperation in the development of different hydrocarbon transport corridors that aim to ensure a guaranteed and reliable supply for European markets and other international markets.

In light of the conclusions of the energy ministers' conference in Baku in November 2004, our cooperation will focus on the development of regional energy markets and strengthening the financing capacities for new infrastructure; implementation of open, forward-looking and proactive energy policies; setting up an investor-friendly environment by according an appropriate role to market mechanisms; and lastly improving energy efficiency in the various uses of primary energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lessen the cost to economic growth and free up additional capacity.

We also note the necessity of enhancing our cooperation in renewable and alternative energies as well as in reliable, sustainable, low-carbon technologies. We will achieve this by comparing energy scenarios and ensuring cooperation among energy industries, particularly upstream and downstream of the hydrocarbons industry.

We are in favour of developing cooperation to jointly exploit hydro-energy resources, taking the interests of all the region's countries into consideration.

The European Union will provide support to the development of hydraulic energy in Central Asia that will also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without prejudice to the region's environmental security.

Conscious of the security implications of climate change, we are

in favour of adopting longterm strategies to prevent the climate effects of human activities and in favour of the accession to multilateral instruments related thereto. We suggest that a dialogue be launched on how to address the threats posed by climate change in Central Asia in order to strengthen EU and Central Asian cooperation on this issue.

The European Union will pay particular attention to regional cooperation in Central Asia on the rational, efficient and sustainable use of hydraulic, hydro-energy and fuel resources and the environment.

The EU is ready to use its study and cooperation capabilities to facilitate the implementation of best practices, availability of drinking water and sanitation, as well as fighting climate change, inter alia, by increasing energy and hydraulic efficiency while safeguarding the ecological balance in the region. We support the European Union's Water Initiative (EUWI).

7. Helping to prepare a comprehensive approach to security in Central Asia

In a world marked by recurrent instability, we will strengthen our partnership and encourage the efforts of countries and regional organisations that can help to create a genuine area of cooperative security in Central Asia.

In this respect, we welcome the creation of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

Source: Joint Declaration of the Participants in the EU Central Asia Forum on Security Issues in Paris, 18 September 2008 (http://www.ue2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/0918_Forum_UE_Asie_centrale/Joint%20Declaration%20EN.pdf).

Kazakhstan's Path to Europe

Commentary by Nargis Kassenova and Neil Melvin

In August 2008, Kazakhstan published "The Path to Europe 2009-2011", drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the commitment to develop such a programme made by President Nazarbaev in his annual national address in February. The ostensible aim of the state programme is to "promote economic cooperation, the attraction of technologies and managerial experience, the improvement of our laws, and the development of our own agenda and strategic priorities for the OSCE chairmanship". The Programme is a concise document listing the aims, main areas of cooperation, and the expected results. According to the Kazakhstani authorities, the development of "The Path to Europe" was triggered by the need to strengthen cooperation with Europe in a number of spheres and to benefit from the experience of European integration and reforms in order to solve "pressing issues of the country's internal development".

Read at face value, the document suggests Soviet-style affection for technocratic grand planning for rather distant and ambiguous aims, but the Programme is more significant than such a reading might suggest. The Path to Europe has been developed at the highest level in Kazakhstan following the President's initiative – civil society was not engaged in the preparation process and there were no public discussions or consultations at any stage. As such, the Programme is a political document as much as a bureaucratic one. Indeed, it is likely that many of the initiatives outlined in the Programme are unlikely to ever see the light of day, but read as a statement of political ambition, and perhaps even commitment, it represents a significant development in Kazakhstan's domestic and international evolution.

For some years the Kazakhstani leadership has been seeking

to strengthen its European credentials – starting with the shift of the national football team to play in the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), through to the campaign to gain the OSCE Chairmanship and to attain observer status at the Council of Europe. The Programme is, thus, not a bolt from the blue but rather a further consolidation of the European element of Kazakhstan's Eurasian identity. Most significantly, the Programme makes clear that closer integration with Europe and the adoption of European standards in a range of areas are viewed in Astana as vital elements for achieving the future modernisation of the country, which the President has backed as a central element of his administration.

The Programme identifies the following areas for intensified cooperation: technology transfer, energy, transport, technical control and metrology, trade, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, quality of life and the humanitarian dimension.

Cooperation in the area of technology transfer will involve inviting European specialists to train local personnel (managers and engineers) to work in Kazakhstani technology parks, transport hubs and the agricultural sector.

Energy cooperation will have three aspects. Firstly, Kazakhstan will continue to acquire energy infrastructure (ports, terminals, refineries and other assets in neighbouring countries and in Europe) in order to provide for its long-term presence in the European energy market. Secondly, it will aim to absorb European experience in regulating the energy market. Thirdly, Kazakhstan wants to cooperate in the spheres of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

The transport section of the Programme envisions building Eurasian transcontinental transport corridors. It also contains plans for special training to introduce European standards in civil aviation, the exchange of experience in the area of seafaring safety provision and expert meetings on harmonisation of the international civil liability insurance system of motor transport owners.

Cooperation in the area of technical regulation and metrology aims at approximation to European standards and joining international standardisation and accreditation agencies, including the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), the International Accreditation Forum and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). This move is designed to create a fast track for Kazakhstan's export promotion. To improve trade, the government also wants to set up a trade delegation network in Europe, with branches in a number of European countries. The goal is to diversify Kazakhstan's exports to Europe.

The quality of life section is the most comprehensive. It includes environmental protection, public healthcare, education and social welfare. Environmental cooperation, apart from biodiversity, pollution and other transboundary issues, includes the reform of national environmental legislation to approximate European standards.

The education section envisions cooperation for the improvement of all levels – from primary to higher education. European experts will be invited to educational institutions in Kazakhstan to teach, train and help with the development of programmes. Interestingly, military training is also on the agenda. Cooperation in the sphere of social welfare includes studying the experience of European states in dealing with the challenges of unemployment, labour migration, support of low-income and disabled citizens and provision of social services.

Since the programme is a way for Kazakhstan to prepare for the

OSCE chairmanship, the 'humanitarian basket' of the organisation has not been ignored. It features the development of partnerships between civil society actors from Kazakhstan and European countries, sharing experience in the area of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional harmony, and the promotion of enhanced gender policies.

Another area that intersects with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments concerns institutional and legal reforms. Cooperation with European states is seen as important for the improvement of legislation regulating elections, political parties and mass media, and also for carrying out reforms of the civil service, judiciary and other public sectors.

The introduction of the programme points to a number of conclusions about Kazakhstan's approach to future cooperation with the EU. Firstly, the very fact of the adoption of such a programme highlights the growing importance of Europe for Kazakhstan, and testifies that this Eurasian country is increasingly looking westwards for a variety of reasons.

Secondly, it shows that the attitude to Europe is special. It is seen as a source of inspiration and know-how. There is no other document of its kind, no comparable "Path to Asia", although the Singaporean experience is being examined closely. European models are seen as advanced and attractive, and therefore worth emulating. In this regard, the quality of life section of the programme is revealing. The Kazakhstan government seeks to attain European standards of environmental protection, healthcare and social welfare provision.

Clearly, the adoption of the Programme has a number of purposes. In part the document is designed to head off European criticism of Kazakhstan's poor record in fulfilling its OSCE human dimension commitments. It is also designed to strengthen the western dimension of Astana's fluid 'multivector' foreign policy. But this does not detract from the clear ambition to build stronger relations with Europe and to take the EU Strategy for Central Asia seriously as a vehicle for achieving this aim.

Both the EU and Kazakhstan are interested in the intensification of political dialogue (one of the aims of the programme is to organise at least five official visits per year at the level of European heads of state and governments), building transport corridors, energy cooperation and expanded trade. Kazakhstan wants to learn from Europe and improve its education and healthcare, environmental legislation and market regulation.

Differences arise between the Programme and the EU Strategy with regard to the weight allocated to human rights, rule of law and democratisation. In the EU Strategy these issues are identified as priorities, whereas in the "Path to Europe", human rights are not directly mentioned, and the 'humanitarian basket' is rather light – it doesn't go much beyond Kazakhstan's favourite slogans of achieving inter-ethnic and inter-confessional accord. The counterpoint to the rule of law in the EU Strategy is reform of the judiciary, implying the improvement of its efficiency rather than building a genuinely independent judiciary. Nevertheless, there is sufficient scope within the Programme and willingness for dialogue amongst the Kazakhstani leadership for the EU to challenge Astana to live up to the bold commitments outlined in the Path to Europe.

EU Lifts the Sanctions against Uzbekistan

Relations with Uzbekistan have become the centrepiece of the European Union's efforts to upgrade its relations with Central Asia. Against this background, the push to remove the EU sanctions placed on Uzbekistan following the Andizhan massacre in 2005 and led by Germany, has been presented as vital to make the broader Strategy a success. The utility of a political dialogue with Uzbekistan and the significance of good relations with Tashkent in terms of building an EU engagement in the region have been contested by a coalition of civil society organisations and regional experts, together with some EU member states.

After a prolonged struggle, the travel ban imposed on Uzbek officials as part of the sanctions was lifted in October 2008 following the assessment by the EU that there had been "progress achieved in the last year with respect to rule of law and protection of human rights" by Uzbekistan. Many NGOs greeted this assessment with incredulity, especially since many of them had recently participated in an EU-sponsored seminar on media freedom in Uzbekistan and had seen little evidence of any progress in this area.

Civil society organisations grew even further concerned when Berlin welcomed Uzbekistan's security chief on a visit days after sanctions were lifted. Previously, Rustam Inoyatov had been banned from travelling to the EU as a result of his leading role in the Andizhan events. Below are the extracts from the Press Release of the Council of the European Union:

[Extracts]

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. The Council recalls its Conclusions of 29 April 2008 and welcomes the progress achieved in Uzbekistan in the last year with regard to respect for the rule of law and protection of human rights. In particular, it hails the release of a number of defenders of human rights, notably that of Mrs Mukhtabar Tojibaeva. The Council welcomes the fact that she was also allowed to travel abroad for medical treatment, but hopes that she will be granted complete freedom of movement. It takes note with satisfaction of the holding of the second series of consultations on human rights on 5 June 2008 and the holding of a seminar on media freedom in Tashkent on 2 and 3 October. It also welcomes the implementation of a number of legislative and judicial reforms, in particular the abolition of the death penalty, the introduction of habeas corpus and the ratification of a series of conventions combating child labour. The Council is pleased that visits by the ICRC to prisons have resumed, and trusts that they will continue.
2. The Council nevertheless remains seriously concerned about the situation of human rights in some domains in Uzbekistan and urges the authorities to implement their international obligations fully in that regard. It calls on the Uzbek authorities to release all imprisoned human rights defenders and to cease harassment of human rights defenders; to accept the accreditation of the new Country Director of Human Rights Watch and to allow the unhindered operation of that organisation; to cooperate fully and effectively with the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and on freedom of expression; and to revoke restrictions on the registration and operation of NGOs in Uzbekistan. The judicial reforms and reforms relating to observance of the law must be continued and effectively enforced.
3. The Council encourages Uzbekistan to continue progress in the direction of human rights, democratisation and the rule of law, and it is prepared to assist Uzbekistan in its reforming efforts towards that goal. The Council welcomes Uzbekistan's commitment to work with the EU on a range of questions relating

to human rights, by means including an effective dialogue on human rights directed towards achieving practical results.

4. In this context, the Council has decided not to renew the travel restrictions applying to certain individuals referred to in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP, which had been suspended in accordance with the Council's conclusions of 15-16 October 2007 and 29 April 2008. The Council has however decided to renew, for a period of 12 months, the arms embargo imposed in Common Position 2007/734/CFSP.

5. The Council will continue, on the basis of regular reports from the Heads of Mission, to monitor and assess the human rights situation in Uzbekistan in the light of the conditions set out above and of any other action that demonstrates the readiness of the Uzbek authorities to adhere to the principles of respect for human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.»

Source: Press Release of the 2897th meeting of the Council, General Affairs and External Relations, Luxembourg, 13 October 2008 (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/103371.pdf).

Conference on Media Freedom

On 2-3 October 2008, the Uzbek government and the EU hosted an event in Tashkent entitled "Liberalisation of Mass Media - An Important Component of the Democratisation of the Society". Participants in the seminar from European media and civil society organisations welcomed the opportunity to discuss media issues in Tashkent, but did not see the seminar "as an indicator of change of attitude by the Uzbek authorities". Below are the extracts from a joint statement of the leading international human rights organisations to the October media freedom event in Tashkent.

[Extracts]

The EU must not close its eyes to the harsh realities that journalists face in Uzbekistan. Our organisations, which took part in the seminar, can attest first-hand that nothing new was heard from the representatives of the government and the state-controlled media who were present. There was no hint of acknowledgement from the Uzbek side that the country's media are neither free nor independent, that journalists and others are regularly imprisoned for expressing their opinions, that access to critical external internet sites is blocked, and that foreign journalists are not allowed accreditation to cover the country from within.

Indeed, foreign journalists and independent Uzbek journalists were not allowed to cover last week's seminar, while journalists from the state-controlled electronic and print media were present in the meeting room.

[...]

[T]here have been no positive changes in the area of media freedom in Uzbekistan and [...] the authorities [must] demonstrate a real commitment to freedom of expression through concrete actions. Therefore, the EU should call on the Uzbek government to:

- In line with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Uzbekistan is party, guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression:
 - end state censorship of all forms of protected expression;
 - cease harassment and intimidation of independent journalists working in the country;
 - lift reporting restrictions on all domestic and international media outlets;

- promptly and unconditionally release journalists wrongfully detained for their professional activities and others detained for exercising their freedom of expression;
- allow international media outlets, including those that have been forced to stop working in Uzbekistan, to register their bureaus and grant accreditation to international journalists;
- Require public trials in line with Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, by allowing Uzbek and foreign journalists and other independent monitors to cover criminal proceedings from inside the courtrooms;
- Issue an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders.

[...]

[A]ny form of open discussion and dialogue, are certainly to be welcomed if they lead to genuine change. However, the EU must be absolutely clear that a willingness to talk is not the same thing as a commitment to embark on substantive improvements in policy and practice. The Uzbek government's past record of engagement with the EU and other international institutions clearly demonstrates that discussions of possible reforms have consistently been used as a substitute for real and measurable progress.

Source: "Uzbekistan: Media Freedom Needs Action as well as Dialogue" Brussels, 6 October 2008 (<http://www.article19.org/pdfs/press/uzbekistan-media-freedom-needs-action-as-well-as-dialogue.pdf>).

EUCAM on Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan

On 12 December 2008, FRIDE and CEPS will host an EUCAM roundtable in Madrid on Defending Human Rights and Promoting Democracy: Euro-Atlantic Approaches Towards Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This meeting will gather representatives of the EU, OSCE and NATO; activists and journalists from Turkmenistan and

Uzbekistan; and civil society representatives and officials from Spain to examine the current situation regarding democracy and human rights in these two Central Asian countries. As background for this event, provided below is information on the human rights situation in these countries.

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are among the most repressive authoritarian states in the world. Since their independence, democracy has not been allowed to take root and human rights violations have become the rule instead of the exception. Meanwhile, both states are attracting increased attention from outside actors due to their energy wealth: both Turkmenistan and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan have substantial gas reserves. Regional and global powers such as Russia (which has strong historic, economic and security ties with both states), China, the United States and the European Union have energy interests in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but at the same time, remain concerned about the internal stability of the two states.

Turkmenistan saw a swift change of leadership when Gurbanguly Berdimukhamadov took over from absolute ruler Saparmurat Niazov, who died at the end of 2006. Whereas some progress was made initially in terms of legislative reform and opening up the country to the outside world, hopes for an overhaul of the administration and engagement with political reform have now become faint. What can we expect from Turkmenistan in the short term? Will the country sustain its slow pace of reform, especially in the education sector? Where does the limit to reforms acceptable to the ruling powers lie?

Uzbekistan is ruled by Islam Karimov, who has actively resisted democratic reform and has failed to improve the poor human rights record he gained in May 2005, when Uzbek security forces killed at least 200 protesters in the city of Andijon. When Uzbek authorities proved unwilling to allow international organisations to investigate the tragic events, the EU and US imposed sanctions. As a result, Uzbekistan increasingly turned to Russia, which avoided criticising Tashkent's actions, and moved away from engaging with Western countries. This scenario is currently changing as the United States

EUCAM Research Visit to Uzbekistan

Nafisa Hasanova, EUCAM Coordinator based in Brussels, travelled to Uzbekistan in the second half of October 2008. A series of successful meetings with European diplomats, researchers and civil society activists revealed great interest in the EU Central Asia Monitoring Project. She had the opportunity to meet the coordinator of the Europa House in Tashkent, diplomats in the British, German and French embassies and the Dutch Consulate. Nafisa was fortunate to meet with some of the few remaining independent NGOs in Uzbekistan, including the Director of the human rights organisation "Ezgulik", researchers of the newly established Uzbek think tank "Rapid Response Group" (RRG) and the local UNDP specialist on gender issues.

In Uzbekistan there is a deep interest in the EU, and its policy towards Central Asia, but at the same time the EU seems very remote from Tashkent. Two particular areas of concern emerged from the conversations with Tashkent-based European diplomats and Uzbekistani experts: sanctions and cotton. Although largely symbolic, and, some argue, ineffective, the sanctions were taken as a 'slap in a face' by the Uzbek government. Given that sanctions were the biggest impediment to negotiations and cooperation between

the EU and Uzbekistan, EU officials are optimistic about a new stage of cooperation now that the sanctions are dropped. One of the most interesting observations was that European diplomats in Uzbekistan not only had difficulties working with the Uzbek authorities but also in working with their peers in Brussels, who often have only a vague picture of realities in Central Asia. The message in Tashkent is to be more realistic about the EU Strategy for Central Asia, and to accept that not all the aspirations of the strategy are fully implementable in the near future.

The representatives of the civil society in Uzbekistan who were interviewed during this visit did not have much information about EU policy towards Central Asia, and less so about the strategy paper of 2007. The general sentiment amongst this limited number of organizations was that the EU should engage with Uzbekistan. It was also felt to be of vital importance to spur regional cooperation especially in relations to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan which to a large extent depend on (energy) relations with their neighbour.

Cotton is another sensitive issue in the country. The report in 2007 by a BBC reporter on child labour in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan has had a significant impact.

Subsequently, and following a campaign by several international NGOs, several leading European and American retailers have announced boycotts of Uzbek cotton citing the use of child labour as the reason for their actions. The government of Uzbekistan has sought to counter criticism by acceding to international human rights and labour agreements, but the effectiveness of these initiatives has been challenged by the International Labour Rights Forum (see link to the report below). The experts of the RRG in their monitoring report argue that recent developments have led to a further deterioration in the conditions under which the population and children of Uzbekistan work in the cotton fields. Furthermore, the report makes clear that the state is unable to harvest the cotton without exploiting its population including children.

Cotton Related Documents:

RRG Report on Child Labour, October 2008: (<http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/Cotton%202008%20-%20Monitoring%20report%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf>).

Report on Child Labour, International Labour Rights Forum: (<http://www.laborrights.org/files/UzbekCottonNov08.pdf>).

and the EU, headed by German initiatives, seek to repair ties with Tashkent. What is the logic behind the renewed relations if Uzbekistan's human rights record has not undergone significant improvement? Is it better to try and exclude Uzbekistan through sanctions? Or is a policy of engagement and socialisation more productive?

In June 2007, the European Union presented a Strategy for Central Asia. Since that date, the Union has been following a regional approach to the area, focusing especially on bilateral ties with Central Asian republics. Brussels concluded 'bilateral priority agreements' with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but also established human rights dialogues with Ashgabat and Tashkent. Human rights, the rule of law, good governance and democratisation constitute the first priority outlined in the Strategy for Central Asia, though the EU has to balance this interest with an engagement on security and energy issues that might be at odds with it. What can be accomplished by the EU in seeking to influence the democracy and human rights portfolios in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan? Are Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan key countries that the EU should focus on through its Strategy (even at the expense of attention focused elsewhere)? How can the EU improve its role in practical democracy promotion and forwarding human rights?

NATO has a longstanding relationship with Central Asia through its Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme that binds all non-NATO members in the Euro-Atlantic area, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Alliance was established to defend democracy, but nowadays it also plays an important role in promoting democracy in general and democratic defence reform in specific PfP countries that seek closer ties with the Alliance. NATO rarely uses sanctions and normally opts to keep lines of communication open with human rights wrongdoers through PfP. It did, however, cancel most activities with Uzbekistan after the Andijon events. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – which is excluded from most regional international forums – are probably the least active PfP countries. Does NATO play a role in assisting these countries in democratic defence reform? And is NATO ready to hold these countries to account on human rights offences? To what extent does the ISAF Afghanistan mission play a role in NATO's ties with Turkmenistan and, above all, Uzbekistan?

The OSCE is present in both countries through an OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and a Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (downgraded from a full Centre following the OSCE's criticism of the actions of the Uzbek authorities in respect to the Andizhan massacre), and both states are members of this troubled organisation. The members are divided over the purpose and tasks of the OSCE. A small group of Eastern members, led by Russia, wants the OSCE to be further institutionalised with the main focus of the Organisation to be on narrow notions of security. This group wants to retain consensus decision-making on most, if not all issues.

The second group, which is led by the US, wants the OSCE institutions to function relatively independently while focusing on the human dimension of democracy and human rights. The majority of participating States lie between these two polar perspectives. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan belong to the 'Russia group'. The OSCE still has the advantage of including a broad range of members and of its local presence in Central Asia. How can the Organisation capitalise on these advantages in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan? How can the OSCE move both countries in a positive direction towards fulfilling the requirements of the OSCE's politically-binding regime of democracy and human rights agreements? Are both inactive Central Asian members likely to gain enthusiasm under the upcoming Kazakhstan 2010 Chairmanship?

Border Management in Dushanbe

The Ministerial Conference on Border Management and Drug Control, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 21-22 October 2008

The conference was hosted by the government of Tajikistan and co-organised by the European Union/European Commission, Finland, the French Presidency of the European Union, Germany, the OSCE, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Experts and senior officials from Austria, China, the Czech Republic, India, Iran, Japan, Poland, the Russian Federation and Turkey, as well as representatives from the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the EuroAsian Economic Community (EURASEC) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) also took part. The Central Asian countries and participating international delegations presented their national and regional priorities, and the conference concluded with an official Partnership Declaration.

[Extracts]

United in their desire to fight illicit trafficking in narcotics, psychotropic substances, chemical precursors, weapons, hazardous materials, human beings, and trans-border crime and international terrorism, whilst promoting the legal movement of goods and people across borders in Central Asia, and upholding international human rights agreements, Ministers, high level officials and representatives of relevant agencies of Central Asian States and of the international community met in Dushanbe on 21- 22 October 2008 to discuss issues related to border management and drug control in the region.

Recognizing that the successful fight against these threats is dependent upon the enhancement of border security and management, we, the participants of this Conference:

Reaffirm our commitment to reinforce regional and international cooperation to provide better border management and drug control, forge closer collaboration between regional and international organizations, and support focused assistance on on-going and future efforts in this field;

Encourage and support all international, regional and bilateral initiatives to strengthen border security and drug control in Central Asia building on international partnerships, such as, inter alia, the EU Strategy on Central Asia, UNODC's Regional Strategy on Securing Central Asia's Borders with Afghanistan, as well as activities within the framework of the OSCE, CSTO, CIS, and the SCO;

Encourage the international community to continue its support, assistance and cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its resolve to fight against narcotics and the illegal inflow of precursors for their production;

Encourage and support cross border cooperation between Central Asian states and their border agencies to provide more effective border security in the region;

Recognize our responsibility to uphold relevant international commitments and employ best practices in the fields of border security and management and counter-narcotics;

Call on donors to strengthen coordination of assistance in the field of border management and drug control with a view to creating synergies and avoiding duplications of activities including at the national and regional levels, thus enabling donor cooperation in the early planning stage;

Recognize that there is a requirement for developing and

implementing national border management and national drug strategies that incorporate objectives, priorities and action plans, as well as mechanisms for cross border cooperation, and express readiness to work with one another and with the international community to this end;

Agree on the establishment of, whenever necessary a national coordination structure and the nomination of a national coordinator in the fields of border management and drug control for interaction with national and regional structures and international organizations;

Recognize the importance of the establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information Coordination Centre (CARICC) for the fight against the illegal transport of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors welcome the ratification of the agreement on the establishment of the CARICC by two parties and call on the remaining parties to follow their example;

Welcome the planned establishment of the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe;

Note the interest of the Republic of Tajikistan to establish in Dushanbe a specialized training centre for the preparation and professional development of law enforcement officers of Tajikistan and Afghanistan involved in the fight against illegal drug trafficking, as well as a national canine training centre;

Consider it necessary to share and disseminate information on border management strategies and best practices through existing coordination and cooperation mechanisms such as, inter alia, the EU BOMCA/CADAP programmes, the OSCE, the Mini Dublin Group and UNODC programmes (Paris Pact Initiative and ADAM), and welcome the extension of the Central Asian Border Systems Initiative (CABSI) as a coordination platform for all stakeholders;

Thank the President, Government and people of the Republic of Tajikistan for extending their hospitality to host this Conference.

Source: "Partnership Declaration of the Ministerial Conference on Border Management and Drug Control in Central Asia" (http://www.osce.org/documents/cpc/2008/10/34547_en.pdf)

New Publications

The EU Strategy for Central Asia @ One Year, Neil Melvin and Jos Boonstra, EUCAM Policy Brief No.1 (October 2008) available at: <http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/1730.pdf>

The Food-Energy-Water Nexus in Central Asia: Regional implications of and the International Response to the Crisis in Tajikistan, Matteo Fumagalli, EUCAM Policy Brief No.2 (October 2008), available at: <http://www.eucentralasia.eu/files/1731.pdf>

Engaging Central Asia: The European Union's New Strategy in the Heart of Eurasia, Neil Melvin (ed.), CEPS Paperback, (May 2008), available at: http://shop.ceps.eu/BookDetail.php?item_id=1662

Russia and Central Asia. From Disinterest to Eager Leadership, Jos Boonstra, EU Russia Centre Review, No.8 (October 2008), available at: <http://www.fride.org/publicacion/519/rusia-y-asia-central-del-desinteres-al-liderazgo-ambicioso>

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Meet our EUCAM Experts



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About EUCAM

The Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), Spain, in co-operation with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium, has launched a joint project entitled "EU Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM)". The (EUCAM) initiative is an 18-month research and awareness-raising exercise supported by several EU member states and civil society organisations which aims:

- to raise the profile of the EU-Central Asia Strategy;
- to strengthen debate about the EU-Central Asia relationship and the role of the Strategy in that relationship;
- to enhance accountability through the provision of high quality information and analysis;
- to promote mutual understanding by deepening the knowledge within European and Central Asian societies about EU policy in the region; and
- to develop 'critical' capacity within the EU and Central Asia through the establishment of a network that links communities concerned with the role of the EU in Central Asia.

EUCAM focuses on four priority areas in order to find a mix between the broad political ambitions of the Strategy and the narrower practical priorities of EU institutions and member state assistance programmes:

- Democracy and Human Rights
- Security and Stability
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Education and Social Relations

EUCAM will produce the following series of publications:

- A bi-monthly newsletter on EU-Central Asia relations will be produced and distributed broadly by means of an email list server using the CEPS and FRIDE networks. The newsletter contains the latest documents on EU-Central Asia relations, up-to-date information on the EU's progress in implementing the Strategy and developments in Central Asian countries.

- Policy briefs will be written by permanent and ad hoc Working Group members. The majority of the papers examine issues related to the four core themes identified above, with other papers commissioned in response to emerging areas beyond the main themes.

- Commentaries on the evolving partnership between the EU and the states of Central Asia will be commissioned reflecting specific developments in the EU-Central Asian relationship.

- A final monitoring report of the EUCAM Expert Working Group will be produced by the project rapporteurs.

This monitoring exercise is implemented by an Expert Working Group, established by FRIDE and CEPS. The group consists of experts from the Central Asian states and the members countries of the EU. In addition to expert meetings, several public seminars will be organised for a broad audience including EU representatives, national officials and legislators, the local civil society community, media and other stakeholders.

EUCAM is sponsored by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project is also supported by the Czech Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

About FRIDE

FRIDE is a think tank based in Madrid that aims to provide original and innovative thinking on Europe's role in the international arena. It strives to break new ground in its core research interests – peace and security, human rights, democracy promotion and development and humanitarian aid – and mould debate in governmental and nongovernmental bodies through rigorous analysis, rooted in the values of justice, equality and democracy.

As a prominent European think tank, FRIDE benefits from political independence, diversity of views and the intellectual background of its international staff. Since its establishment in 1999, FRIDE has organised or participated in the creation and development of various projects that reinforce not only FRIDE's commitment to debate and analysis, but also to progressive action and thinking.

About CEPS

Founded in Brussels in 1983, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) is among the most experienced and authoritative think tanks operating in the European Union today. CEPS serves as a leading forum for debate on EU affairs, and its most distinguishing feature lies in its strong in-house research capacity, complemented by an extensive network of partner institutes throughout the world.

CEPS aims to carry out state-of-the-art policy research leading to solutions to the challenges facing Europe today and to achieve high standards of academic excellence and maintain unqualified independence. CEPS also provides a forum for discussion among all stakeholders in the European policy process and builds collaborative networks of researchers, policy-makers and business representatives across the whole of Europe.



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