



## DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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**Talking points by Ambassador Aurélia Bouchez, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Kazakhstan and EU Ambassador to Turkmenistan: "EU and Central Asia: facing the post 2014 challenges"**

**Made at the Regional conference "Eurasian Security Community and the Role of OSCE"  
Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies**

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Excellences, dear colleagues, participants,

I would like to start by thanking the OSCE Centre in Astana, the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the Embassies of Ukraine and Switzerland for organising this event and inviting me to share the European Union perspective on the regional context of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

As officially announced on a number of occasions the European Union has a long-term commitment towards Afghanistan, which we believe is particularly important during the current transitional period for this country. Every year the EU and its Member States provide Afghanistan with assistance equal to 1 billion euro, focusing on good governance and rule of law, health, rural development.

The EU also supports regional cooperation, such as the Istanbul process, also known as Heart of Asia, because we firmly believe that the neighbours of Afghanistan including Central Asia can contribute to bringing this long conflict situation to an end. Afterwards once the stability conditions are in place, Central Asia could benefit from the big transit potential of Afghanistan, which if successfully realised will also bring significant income to the budget of the country. The EU is confident that the adopted Confidence Building Measure (CBMs) can contribute to achieving stability and improvement of the overall regional security situation, as the CBMs will bring results in the areas of counter narcotics, disaster management (CBM co-chaired by Kazakhstan), trade and investments. At the same time we realise that the CBMs cannot by themselves create a political process, if the commitment from Afghanistan's neighbours is not there, thus we encourage and support the Central Asian countries to actively participate at the Heart of Asia process.

The EU in its turn continues providing support and assistance in addressing the regional security challenges, including the fight against terrorism. I would like to refer to the increasing focus on security of the EU-Strategy for Central Asia. A good example of EU support in that area was the assistance that has led to the adoption of the Joint Plan of Action for implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. The Joint Plan was adopted by all five countries, which made Central Asia become the first region in the world having agreed on such future steps. EU also provides assistance in the border management through the programs BOMCA (Border management Assistance to Central Asia), CADAP (Central Asia Drug Action Program), the new EU-Central Asia action plan on Drugs, as well as the Heroine route programs.

This work makes continuous progress – today is the second day of the meeting of CABS (Central Asia Border Security Initiative), which takes place in Ashgabat and to which Afghanistan is invited at MFA and Border services levels.

In the area of disaster preparedness – for several years the European Union runs the DIPECHO program covering all five Central Asia countries.

All these initiatives require close consultations and exchanges between Central Asia and Afghanistan, and programmatic synergies.

I would like to point out to the establishment of an EU-Central Asia High Level Security dialogue since June 2013, to which Afghanistan official would be associated in 2014. This process is timely and particularly important in view of the upcoming withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014. I believe we all share similar concerns regarding what might follow the completion of this process, with consequences reaching beyond the borders of Afghanistan, and which Central Asia should be prepared to face and deal with. I already touched upon some of these transnational threats: drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, extremism, radicalisation and terrorism, illegal migration, trafficking of small arms and light weapons, potential illegal trafficking through the region of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials. Addressing all these threats requires strengthening of the border and customs control, improving the capacity for migration crisis management, significantly improving the coordination between the law enforcement agencies, including through the Eurasian Security Community. The EU, the OSCE, their Member States, other international organisations and countries provide regular assistance to Central Asia in the areas of concern mentioned above.

On the economic level I would like to note the increasing bilateral cooperation between the Central Asia states and Afghanistan (electricity provision, transport, rail, humanitarian support). I would like to encourage further interactions between capitals, not least in order to balance the security links between Central Asia and Afghanistan with commercial opportunities, regional integration, transport, trade, energy (CASA 1000 and TAPI projects).

In concluding I would like to underline that OSCE is well placed to promote cooperation between Central Asia and Afghanistan, and that its field presences in the region are key for that purpose. I express my confidence that with the determination shown also during today's conference we all will succeed in stabilising the region and significantly improving the security situation.

Thank you for your attention.