



**Recommendation from the Japan-EU Conference on  
Tajikistan-Afghanistan Border Management and Cross-border  
Collaboration  
(March 4-5 2014, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)**

**1. Introduction**

(1) The Japan-EU Conference on Afghanistan-Tajikistan Border Management and Cross-border Collaboration was held on 4 and 5 March 2014 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Conference, co-organised with the assistance of EU-UNDP BOMCA and BOMNAF Programmes, was designed also as a follow up activity to the last Japan-EU summit in Tokyo in November 2013, where Japan and the European Union welcomed their on-going commitment to pursue cooperation on security, reintegration, and development assistance in the region and thereby to promote a secure, stable and prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan. The objectives of the Conference were to discuss ideas and proposals for (A) the enhancement of local capacity, particularly of customs' and borders' officers working on the Afghan-Tajik border, (B) the improvement of border management practice and procedures and (C) the exploration of ways to collaborate further between the Governments of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the fields of border management strategy development, (D) cross-border operations and counternarcotics, (E) cross-border services, transparency and accountability, and (F) training and trade.

(2) The Conference is the fourth event of the kind organised by Japan and the EU since 2008 and has been held every two years since then. We noticed with great satisfaction the increasing number of participants, who had the privilege to attend the conference, reflecting growing interests by both governments (Tajikistan and Afghanistan)

(3) The Conference brought together about 50 senior border commanders, government officials and technical experts from Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Officials and representatives of the EU, Japan, OSCE, UNDP, and UNODC and ICMPD, also presented related international and local initiatives and shared their respective experience in the different areas of collaboration.

The following lessons were drawn after the two days' discussion.

## **2. Lessons learned**

### **(1) Collaboration in the implementation of the Tajikistan Border Management Strategy, within the framework of the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014.**

The conference recognized that the withdrawal of combat forces will be a challenge for the region. Lots of willingness was seen to provide infrastructure and training by different international organizations. The importance that this should be well targeted and coordinated was emphasized.

### **(2) Collaboration in cross-border operations (security, drug and illicit products trafficking control etc.).**

The presentations reconfirmed the clear desire for greater cooperation between the border agencies of the two countries. Good presentations from several donor agencies and countries indicated that much excellent work has already been done. We were reminded of the isolation and remoteness of the Tajik-Afghan border and the problems faced in the area for the provision of basic utilities such as electricity, drinking water, and health care. In particular, the Afghan delegation spoke of the physical difficulties for Afghan border management agencies to access to some of the border areas and the need to use Tajik infrastructure. They acknowledged the current bilateral cooperation, which they hoped to see develop further, mutually and not only unilaterally. They also drew attention to the challenge of intercepting the flow of precursors into Afghanistan.

The conference received a very detailed and comprehensive presentation on Japanese anti-drug operations including investigations and intelligence gathering. In talking about border management, the authorities should not overlook the need for support and assistance for refugees in the region.

### **(3) Collaboration in cross-border services and transparency and accountability.**

Both sides (Tajikistan and Afghanistan) acknowledged the continuing link between drug trafficking and terrorism, one financing the other. The conference noted that the perception of border management services is important as it directly affects trade, tourism, and neighbourly relations. There is a growing recognition by governments internationally of the need to work on governance issues in border management. A strategic approach would be needed, supported by strong political will to improve border management as a public service. The conference addressed the need for improved professional integrity of border management agencies with a clear chain of accountability from the

leadership down.

#### **(4) Collaboration in border management training.**

Both sides acknowledged the benefit of continuing border management training particularly through joint initiatives. There were good examples given of previous training courses carried out for the two sides. The Afghan delegation also proposed the increase of the training for their officers connected to the provision of modern equipment. The conference noted the uncertain consequences of the withdrawal of coalition forces for cooperation on the border and in the meantime understood that cooperation was continuing to improve, for example with the training of the Afghan officers in Dushanbe at the OSCE border staff college.

#### **(5) Collaboration in cross-border trade facilitation.**

Delegates acknowledged the clear link between more efficient trade facilitation and a stronger local and national economy which in turn would benefit human security. In this context, the important role of the border markets was widely recognized and could be expanded. A point was raised about problems with cross border documentation and procedures, the lack of dispute resolution mechanisms and the need for regional agreements to facilitate trade.

### **3. Way forward**

- (1) These findings and recommendations will be reported to the next Japan-EU Senior Officials' Meeting and the next Japan-EU Summit meeting;
- (2) Japan and the EU as global partners will continue to address relevant issues in other international fora such as the Senior Officials Meeting of the Istanbul Process and, Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and in view of the political importance of security and stability in the Region, encourage all concerned countries to do so as well;
- (3) Building on Japan's existing programme related to border control in Central Asia, in several cases jointly with relevant international organizations such as UNODC and IOM, border control would be discussed at the 5<sup>th</sup> Foreign Ministers Meeting of "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue to be held within this year. Japan intends to play a role as a catalyst under the "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue in order to stimulate regional cooperation in this field.
- (4) The European Union will continue its on-going process of engagement in support of regional cooperation, notably building on its successful and complementary border management and drug action programmes in Central Asia and Afghanistan (Border Management in Central Asia – BOMCA, the

Border Management for Northern Afghanistan – BOMNAF, the Central Asia Drug Action Programme – CADAP, and the Heroin Routes Programme) and focusing on the institutional development of Border Agencies in relation to European counterparts, trade facilitation and management of migration flows.

(5) Recognising the ever-growing importance of enhanced border collaboration in Central Asia amongst the relevant parties especially after the withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan, Japan and the EU could envisage holding another conference of this kind within the coming years.