

**AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA:
PRIORITIES FOR
RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT**

27 November 2001



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AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: PRIORITIES FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is widely recognised that Afghanistan cannot be left as a failed state that might again shelter terrorists and breed instability across the region. Rebuilding the country will require an immense commitment of resources and attention by the international community for some time to come. Terrorism triggered the intervention in Afghanistan but donor countries are going to have to tackle a much wider array of issues to bring long-term stability.

The immediate tasks are threefold – putting in place a new government that represents as wide a cross section of Afghans as possible; rebuilding an administration, capable in the first instance of handling increased levels of humanitarian aid; and ensuring security on the ground, probably provided by an international force made up mostly of soldiers from Islamic countries.

Substantial reconstruction efforts will not begin until these processes are advanced but planners need to begin considering how to stabilise and develop Afghanistan and the surrounding countries. Donors will have to find considerable sums of money if past programs of post-conflict redevelopment are considered. Current estimates of the costs of helping Afghanistan range from about U.S.\$5-6 billion over five years to U.S.\$25 billion over a decade. Making a significant difference to living standards and stability in the wider region would likely double the bill.

To win support for these efforts and to undercut the message of extremists, this money must benefit people and not end up in the pockets of Afghanistan's warlords. To this end communities

need to have a major stake in projects, donors need to fund more projects outside Kabul, women will need to have a key place in development efforts and fighters will have to be induced to do something other than fight.

Afghanistan has not had a strong central government for decades and one is not likely to emerge now. Recognising this, efforts must be made to build up existing local political structures and support those that can act peacefully and learn to resolve disputes without resorting to weapons. Identifying local powers such as shuras (local councils) and other possible partners for development work should be a key priority although this is a complex task given the changing security situation.

The challenges in Afghanistan include rebuilding shattered infrastructure and clearing the mines from homes, fields and irrigation systems. Even returning Afghanistan to its pre-war state will not be enough as the population has grown by 10 million people since 1978 – from around 15 to 25 million including refugees. Much of the country will need to be built from the ground up. Vastly improved health and education are essential to promote rapid improvements in the lives of Afghans.

To work together in broad-based government, all ethnic groups will need to feel more secure economically, politically and culturally, and so a focus on information and education is vital. The hard-line madrasas that educated the Taliban and promote Islamist extremism need to be put out of business, not through the sort of repressive

measures seen in Central Asia but by offering a better alternative to parents who wish to see their children educated.

Redeveloping this country will not ease all the problems in what has in reality been a regional conflict. Donors will have to focus more attention on Central Asia's failing economies and unresponsive governments if that region is not to become more unstable. Central Asia is already a combustible mix of corruption, ethnic divisions, poverty, authoritarianism and emerging Islamist extremism.

The two neighbouring powers – Pakistan and Iran – will have to be induced to play a more positive role in Afghanistan. This will require financial and political incentives but stability will only come if the security interests of these nations are tackled. Iran wants to see an end to drug production as well as protection and a political voice for Shia Muslims. This crisis may present an opportunity for the West to build a new constructive relationship with Tehran.

Pakistan will need to be reassured that a future government in Kabul will be friendly – most of Afghanistan's governments have not been. Both these countries need more assistance in tackling their drugs problems and Pakistan will need help rebuilding its tax and education systems and civic institutions.

The neighbouring countries all need to reduce their influence in Afghanistan and all will require efforts to stabilise their economies and societies. This presents serious problems for the West as all these countries are run by often unresponsive, authoritarian and unpopular governments. Blindly assisting these governments without pushing for deep changes in their political and economic situation will only store up problems for the future. Aid to the region must build momentum for reform.

To respond to the problems facing Afghanistan and its neighbours and to diminish the risks of extremism and conflict, donors will have to establish fast moving management structures for aid, apply concerted pressure on those nations that obstruct efforts and focus their energies on improving the lives of all people across the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT:

1. Donors should adopt a regional approach, tackling development, drugs and security problems not just in Afghanistan but in the neighbouring countries as well.
2. Donors should establish a coordinated set of trust funds that will allow rapid disbursement of money in these areas:
 - ❑ Regional development
 - ❑ Demining
 - ❑ Return of Afghan refugees
 - ❑ Education and media
 - ❑ Regional drugs program
3. The World Bank should coordinate management of the funds and the establishment of an Afghan Reconstruction Agency focussing on speed and flexibility of disbursement and implementation.
4. Donors should make long-term funding commitments that are likely to be in the area of U.S.\$25 billion over ten years for Afghanistan and a similar amount for the wider region.
5. Donors should ensure a smooth transition from humanitarian to reconstruction aid in the coming years by putting funding and planning mechanisms in place as soon as possible.

PRIORITIES FOR AFGHANISTAN

6. In the absence of a coherent central government in Kabul, the funds should adopt a decentralised approach, working with local powers ranging from regional commanders to village shuras.
7. To provide rapid benefits to Afghans and reduce tensions, aid should be targeted at:
 - ❑ Job creation in linked programs of infrastructure repair and demining.

- ❑ Education, beginning with provision of materials and efforts to get girls back to school.
- ❑ Healthcare, beginning with aid to hospitals and efforts to expand immunisation and TB treatment.
- ❑ Media and communications to expand awareness of political activities and spread information to the wide population.
- ❑ Human rights monitoring, education and gathering evidence for future accounting of abuses.
- ❑ Drug control through a coordinated regional plan of crop substitution, rural development and harm reduction with a strong focus on HIV.

PRIORITIES FOR CENTRAL ASIA

8. Donors should directly address the failures of reform and the worsening human rights situation in Central Asia, applying concerted pressure for economic and political change while offering increased long-term support for reforms
9. Donors should end the bias towards channelling aid to capitals and target resources at the most vulnerable and tense areas, including:
 - ❑ Ferghana Valley
 - ❑ Karakalpakstan
 - ❑ Surkhan-Darya
 - ❑ Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
10. Donors should expand assistance significantly beyond its present levels across Central Asia in the areas of:

- ❑ Poverty alleviation
- ❑ Legal reform and development
- ❑ Access to media and information
- ❑ Education
- ❑ Health and environmental projects

11. Donors should develop projects that promote regional cooperation and trade in Central Asia by:

- ❑ Improving transport and communications, particularly local radio and Internet links.
- ❑ Promoting open but secure borders.
- ❑ Promoting joint emergency and environmental planning and action.
- ❑ Promoting regional initiatives on energy, water and the environment.

PRIORITIES FOR PAKISTAN

12. Donors should work to overhaul Pakistan's taxation system so that the system can underpin currently weak institutions.
13. Donors should fund efforts to develop the education and health systems to reduce the influence of extremist madrasas and improve living standards.

PRIORITIES FOR IRAN

14. Western countries, particularly the United States, should take the opportunity to build better relations with Iran by following up on proposals for dialogue.
15. Donors should provide Iran with assistance to deal with refugees and drugs.

Osh/Brussels, 27 November 2001

AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: PRIORITIES FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

As the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaida has made rapid advances, international attention has turned to the need for a comprehensive approach to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. This task involves immediate humanitarian aid, rebuilding a political structure with the widest possible membership, reconstructing an administration for the country and establishing security.

Political Reconstruction. The United Nations has been leading efforts to bring Afghans together in a multi-ethnic government. The U.N. would like to convene a provisional council, composed of a large and representative group of Afghans chaired by an individual recognised as a symbol of national unity, preferably the king. This council would then propose a transitional administration and program of action for the period of political transition, to last no more than two years, as well as security arrangements.

An emergency Loya Jirga would then be convened to approve the proposals and to authorise the transitional administration to prepare a constitution. The transitional phase would result in the convening of second Loya Jirga, which would approve the constitution and create the Government of Afghanistan. There is some pressure to streamline this process but patience will be required in forming a new government.

Administration. Beyond putting in place a central government there will be a need to rebuild such institutions as a central bank, a taxation department and a body to coordinate foreign aid

and investment. The World Bank has already outlined steps that need to be taken to develop some of these institutions and to tackle some of the problems that currently exist in aid coordination. Much of the focus is on ensuring that Afghans have the fullest possible role in making development decisions and on creating institutions that do not turn into cumbersome, corrupt bureaucracies.¹

Security. Major questions about how to handle security in Kabul and other cities now and in the future have yet to be resolved. Initial thinking is to have coalition military forces serving as a Multinational Force “welcomed” and endorsed by the Security Council. The force will likely be made up mostly of troops from Moslem countries outside the immediate vicinity of Afghanistan, acting under the broad auspices of the United Nations (without being a U.N. “blue helmets” operation). Most planners seem to be leaning toward a small force rather than a larger one. However, the force present must be sufficiently robust that it does not provide an attractive target for terrorists, splinter militia factions or disenfranchised civilians. In the longer term, security efforts will have to move towards disarmament and the creation of Afghan security structures.

Aid. The immediate priority for Afghanistan is to provide humanitarian assistance for up to seven million people at risk of famine. Efforts are already underway to get emergency food and medical supplies to vulnerable people. Almost all international funding and attention is rightly

¹ World Bank. Afghanistan World Bank Approach Paper 7 November 2001. Available at: <http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/Countries/Afghanistan/7AA687A0D8FE299985256AFB00742B6D?OpenDocument>.

focussed on relief efforts at the moment but it is essential that immediate consideration also be given to issues of longer term reconstruction and development so that the transition from humanitarian action to rebuilding is as seamless as possible.

It is important to note that war in Afghanistan did not begin with the Taliban and it will not necessarily end with their removal. The political actors in this war have changed numerous times over the past 20 years, but some things have remained constant. The war in Afghanistan has a disastrous impact on the surrounding countries and on the security of nations around the world. Combat itself has often been sustained because of the intervention of neighbouring states and global powers that, for a variety of strategic considerations, have poured money and weapons into Afghanistan. Recent events have made clear the high cost of such a strategy and resolving the conflicts in Central Asia is a vital security concern for Afghanistan, its neighbours, Russia, China, India, the United States and the European Union.

Afghanistan is far from an isolated conflict, but instead part of a regional web of problems. As such, both diplomatic and reconstruction efforts must be built around a regional approach. There will be no peace in Afghanistan without tackling problems in Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian nations, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Equally important, the international community will need to both cooperate with neighbouring states while effectively using its assistance and diplomatic leverage to help also move toward long overdue economic and political reforms in their own societies.

While terrorism provided the trigger for Western military action in Afghanistan, securing long-term stability in the region will require tackling a broader and more difficult array of challenges including the treatment of ethnic minorities, refugee returns, the growth of Islamist movements, the narcotics trade, border disputes, the influence of numerous authoritarian governments, economic restructuring building the basic structures of active civil societies.

From Pakistan through Central Asia, countries share many of the same disturbing warning signs: declining foreign investment, rising poverty,

systematic corruption, large debt burdens, bubbling Islamist extremism, periodic outbreaks of violence and governments more interested in preserving personal power than instituting democratic or market reform. The fact that this region is hemmed in among four nuclear-armed states – Russia, China, Pakistan and India – makes the danger of continued regional instability only more stark.

The basic conundrum now facing the international community is that because of Central Asia's cooperation in waging the war in Afghanistan, the West is now poised to greatly expand aid in a region where assistance efforts since the end of the Cold War have proved notoriously ineffective. The question then becomes: How can assistance be used to build momentum for reform instead of simply propping up governments whose own behaviour is ultimately destabilising?

The strategic risks of continued upheaval in the region warrant a considerable commitment of resources over a long period. The fighting in Afghanistan is estimated to be costing the U.S. government one billion dollars a month above normal costs,² and the terrorist attacks of 11 September caused massive economic losses to tourism, the airline industry and other sectors of the global economy. Given the costs associated with the terror attacks – put by many analysts at between U.S.\$100-200 billion³ – it would be foolish to skimp on reconstruction and relief efforts that could avert the sources of future instability and violence.

Already various figures have been cited from about U.S.\$6.0 billion over five years (the UNDP) to U.S.\$25 billion over a decade (based on a World Bank view that post-conflict reconstruction costs are about a billion dollars a decade for each

² Center for Strategic and Budgetary Estimates. *Estimated Costs of Operation Enduring Freedom*. Washington D.C. 2 November 2001.

³ Alan Hevesi, the Comptroller of New York City, has estimated costs to the city alone of around U.S.\$100 billion. Similar or greater costs have been imposed on the U.S. government and hard hit industries, particularly tourism. The ILO estimates that nine million people will lose their jobs as a result of the decline in tourism because of terrorism including one million in the United States and 1.2 million in the European Union. Many of the other job losses will be in developing countries.

million people in a country). Additional money will be needed to deal with problems in neighbouring countries, meaning that the regional bill could be twice as high. All donor governments will need to do more to build the necessary political and public support for increased aid at a time when the world is facing growing economic pressures.

Afghanistan will need a government, a basic administration and a measure of security before reconstruction can begin but consultation and coordination on the ground and design of programs should start immediately. This report sets out some priorities for donor countries and makes suggestions on ways to structure long-term aid to reduce tensions in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Most of the issues outlined here will be examined in much more detail in future reports from ICG's programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Central Asia and the Middle East.

II. PRIORITIES FOR AFGHANISTAN

A. DELIVERING AID

The immediate emphasis for aid delivery will need to be on using non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have a proven track record in delivering humanitarian assistance as a bridge to more effective work in reconstruction and development. The broad calculations regarding the formation of a multi-ethnic government, the parameters of an international security presence and the ongoing military situation on the ground will obviously all profoundly shape the effectiveness of assistance efforts over time. It is also vital to cut off the fuel that has fed conflict in Afghanistan so often in the past: outside support for respective military factions, the drug trade, the smuggling of consumer goods and the ability of respective militia leaders to carry out abuses with impunity. Boosting the role of Afghans who have not come to power at the point of a gun will also be essential.

The assistance delivered both to Afghanistan and the surrounding region need to be driven by some important core underpinnings. While the rhetoric used thus far by the World Bank, the U.S. government and the European Union has largely been reassuring in this regard, following these principles in practice has often proved difficult for the international community. Indeed, while the international community has made great strides in putting in place effective military operations in nations trying to emerge from conflict, it has been civilian structures and reconstruction efforts that have often lagged behind – at a high cost for stability. The following standards should drive reconstruction efforts:

- Aid commitments will need to be considerable, co-ordinated and long-term.
- Aid should to be delivered in a decentralised way, recognising the political realities of Afghanistan and the likely weakness of any central government.
- Local communities will need to be given an important stake in the projects, and the

provision of assistance should be used as a vehicle to promote basic civil organisation.

- Small, fast-disbursing and flexible community improvement programs will be more effective in preventing conflict than slow moving infrastructure projects built upon extensive planning exercises.
- Conflict prevention should be a consideration in the design of all projects to ensure equitable distribution of resources and efforts to reduce local tensions. Initiatives including employment and training for demobilised fighters, support and education for conflict resolution measures should also be a priority.
- There should be a significant emphasis on harnessing the abilities of women and Afghans now living around the world.

Most donors appear to recognise that a province-by-province, and perhaps even a village-by-village, approach will be needed. Afghanistan simply does not have a strong central state and there will not be one soon. Even with the establishment of some primary forms of national government, long experiences has made clear that the provinces in Afghanistan do not want – and will not accept – a powerful central state telling them what to do. Assistance efforts will need to be highly decentralised and channelling aid through Kabul-based structures will only exacerbate tensions between respective political and ethnic factions. Afghanistan needs to be built from the ground up both politically and physically, and no one is better positioned to identify local priorities and needs than communities themselves. The process of building a functional central state in Afghanistan, while obviously important, is a much longer-term endeavour.

The tendency of relief agencies to locate in major urban centres in Afghanistan has often led to the neglect of other areas. While many humanitarian organisations have had programs in a number of provinces, humanitarian workers have complained that decisions about programming are too often determined by local staff with family or political ties to particular areas, often in Pashtun-dominated areas. For example, both Hazarajat and

Badakhshan – two of the poorest areas of Afghanistan and populated by minority ethnic groups – have received little attention. Although Northern Alliance forces have controlled Badakhshan since 1996, and consequently the area was free of many of the operational challenges posed by work in Taliban-controlled regions, few agencies have programs there. This area is now receiving much more attention from aid agencies and the danger is that the situation is tilting the other way. This highlights the danger of Western aid being perceived as favouring certain regions or ethnic groups at the expense of others.

Identifying political players at a local level – shuras and other ad hoc civic groups through which needs can be identified and aid subsequently channelled – will be key to a ground level reconstruction effort. The first tender shoots of post-Taliban grassroots political life have already emerged – women have demonstrated in Kabul for full involvement in political and economic life and members of the Hazara minority in the capital have been discussing with Jamiat-i-Islami soldiers ways to protect their community. By making clear that money will flow to those communities that organise themselves, the international community can create tremendous impetus for building grassroots civil society. Such local organising efforts are also essential to diminish the stranglehold of local militia leaders on Afghan society while beginning to restore the basic rule of law. Aid must be seen as an incentive for better behaviour, not simply as lucre for helping the West secure its immediate war aims.

Programs like those run throughout the region by the Aga Khan Foundation that are community based and attempt to build stakes in local communities as a means to make projects sustainable have seen some successes. These long-term projects demand considerable community involvement, and have often relied on traditional mechanisms such as savings schemes to boost local resources. The Aga Khan Foundation projects have worked well because of their long-term, community-based view.⁴

Over the past several years, a number of humanitarian agencies, most notably the United

⁴ For more information see the Aga Khan Foundation web site at www.akdn.org.

Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat),⁵ have also been working to build and strengthen community organisations in and around Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, Herat, Bamyan and Farah. Despite the many problems that have plagued the UN's work, Habitat consistently received high praise not only from within the international assistance community, but from Afghans.

The idea behind the Habitat program has been to support the development of grassroots organisations at the neighbourhood level to carry out education programs, income generation activities, social services and local governance training. Membership in the community organisation begins with the local shura, but is expanded to include other community members, including women. The first community forums were composed of men and women, the latter having been the majority. Under the Taliban, the organisations were segregated on the basis of gender, but there was cooperation between them. For example, in Kabul, one community forum for men managed to obtain permission from the authorities to run a primary school for girls. Though Habitat is by no means the only model for such an enterprise, the fact that it has a good reputation among Afghans says a great deal.

Some existing work-for-food programs for women in Afghanistan also provide a useful model. Although such programs were initially unpopular with men, in those areas where they operate they have become quite popular. The women are paid to sew clothes for people in refugee camps, in return for which they are given food and must also attend classes in healthcare and literacy. These programs have been carried out in a culturally sensitive fashion, while providing much needed income and increasing health and literacy. The French NGO ACTED has seen some success with this model. Similar efforts where young men combined such demining and construction with literacy and political education, would be of great utility.

To get assistance moving as rapidly as possible, "trusted partners" – those NGOs already operating in the country such as Habitat, the ICRC, ACTED, de-mining groups and others – should be the court

of first resort. Given the tremendously high expectations that many Afghans will have after hearing lofty aid figures bandied about at pledging conferences, making a demonstrable difference on the ground in the immediate term is imperative. Spending on infrastructure should be limited to those projects that do genuinely help the poor by getting their goods to market or improving their healthcare or education. Those Afghans who have been working with local and international NGOs are the closest Afghanistan has to a multiethnic technocratic class and need to be boosted in terms of influence.

Afghans have constantly rejected the idea of a powerful central state, even one that offers them resources and opportunities. Given the bitter divisions of recent years, and the deep rivalries and suspicions among different regional groups, this will not soon change. Although it is important to establish a legitimate, multi-ethnic central government over time, it needs to be recognised that most important decisions will be made by local actors for some time to come. Given the severe breakdown in inter-ethnic links in Afghanistan, a grassroots approach is crucial.

Afghanistan lacks most of the institutions of a civil society but it does have educated and capable people who must be involved at all levels. There is no question that the continuing conflicts have destroyed much of the talent base and institutions: the early purges following the Saur Revolution in 1978 specifically targeted traditional leadership structures and more modern intellectuals and Islamists. Tens of thousands were killed, while others were driven into exile.

The Soviet occupation further accelerated the country's brain drain. Many of those with ties to modern Western institutions were arrested. Many more joined the flow of refugees out of the country. Of those who remained in Kabul, some fled or were killed during the civil war that followed the collapse of the communist government in 1992. The Taliban's repressive policies and its purges at the university drove out many of the remaining educated class, particularly women.

But not all left, and a number of Afghans that have remained in the country with experience in

⁵ For more information see the web site at www.pcpafg.org/Organizations/UNCHS/.

government or other relevant institutions have signalled their willingness to be part of a transitional administrative structure under U.N. auspices. They include district administrators, tribal leaders, members of local shuras and members of other community organisations. Even under Taliban rule a number of local administrators continued to play a role in trying to represent their community's interests to the authorities and dealt with U.N. humanitarian agencies responsible for reporting which districts were in need of wheat, seeds or immunisations.

A word of caution, however, about community organisation. There is no question that local citizens participating in issues of governance and planning continue to place themselves in harm's way. Under the Taliban, there were a series of cases in which community organisations were specifically targeted for reprisals. In Herat during 2001 a number of members of a local organisation supported by Habitat were arrested, ostensibly because men and women were mingling. When the Taliban took control of Bamyan in 1998, a community group approached commanders to request that the Taliban ensure the safety of the population. The entire group of about 30 was taken into custody and shot; only two escaped. These incidents underscore the point that without some measure of protection from the international community – protection that so far the international community has been unwilling to provide – “peace building” through local structures can entail unconscionable risks for the Afghans who participate.

For local governance to be meaningful and effective over time, it will have to be part of a larger political process. There is considerable support across a wide swath of the country for a transitional process that builds on existing leaders with local credibility, without relying exclusively on those who can claim military conquest. The key to establishing a working transitional administration that can reinforce a bottom-up strategy of rebuilding local government is legitimacy, and reconstruction efforts will likely prove ineffective if the political process remains a wellspring of contention.

B. INFRASTRUCTURE

Even if Afghanistan is returned to its level of development before the past two decades of war, it would still be one of the poorest countries in the world. Likewise even if the country's infrastructure was returned to the level of 1978 it would be inadequate to meet the needs of a population that has risen from about 15 million to around 25 million, including refugees in the neighbouring countries. Therefore there will have to be substantial investment in reconstruction and development of new infrastructure.

Infrastructure development needs to focus on a narrow range of urgently needed repairs to roads, irrigation systems, hospitals and schools. Much of the work will have to be done in conjunction with mine clearance, a priority that the World Bank estimates will cost around U.S.\$500 million over a decade.

Tackling key issues such as repairing the main road network, rebuilding schools and clinics and repairing housing could also provide immediate employment for the millions of people currently without work. It will also be vital in terms of the long-term aims of building up the private and export sectors to make the economic gains sustainable.

C. EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Many Afghans fear that the current generation of children will be doomed to illiteracy and that their culture will disappear. Across the region, it is this fear that has driven many to send their children to the only available schools – madrasas. The years of conflict and the narrow cultural vision of the Taliban have meant a near total collapse of education in Afghanistan. Primary school enrolment is about 30 per cent for boys and less than five per cent for girls.⁶ Aid toward education in recent years has been minimal, and it must now become a priority. Such assistance is not only essential to rebuild Afghanistan and create a stable society, but it is a vital way of illustrating the commitment of the international community to the

⁶ Figures cited by Afghanistan World Bank Approach Paper 7 November 2001.

Afghan people while directly improving the lives of girls and women.

Education is always a culturally sensitive issue but in Afghanistan it has been a source of significant violence. There is a wide range of attitudes towards education, particularly for women, in different communities. Hazaras and Ismailis tend to place considerable emphasis on education while traditional Pashtun chiefs have in the past resisted efforts to get girls into school. No single approach on this matter is going to work everywhere in Afghanistan and in some areas there is a need for considerable caution and tact in developing educational programs.

There will need to be immediate funding for schools across Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia in the form of equipment, books and direct payments to teachers. Directly incorporated into this effort will have to be respect for the needs and priorities of ethnic minorities, including language appropriate texts and curricula. This should include steps to encourage a broad-based education that includes considerable information about tolerance and other cultures.

A massive expansion of education opportunities at all levels across the region will be a vital step in taking some of the steam out of extremism. The provision of scholarships for the international exchange of students will also help rebuild Afghanistan's technocratic skills. Equally important will be steps to broadly expand the availability of specific vocational skills in areas such as irrigation, high-altitude farming and mountain environmental issues. The Aga Khan Foundation University of Central Asia may provide a model of the sort of institution that focuses on the needs of people living in mountainous countries.

Urgent measures need to be taken in the area of health, particularly ensuring that hospitals have sufficient supplies of materials and that the salaries of health workers are paid. There needs to be a rapid assessment of the health needs of women which were widely neglected during the Taliban years.

Priorities will also have to be HIV and TB, both serious causes of concern across the region. Drug

use is fuelling an emerging HIV epidemic that could have very serious social and security repercussions if allowed to rage out of control.⁷ Particular attention needs to be paid to those in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran who are among the worst affected by the drugs problem.

D. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Media and communications are key issues. Afghanistan has long suffered a shortage of information and independent media outlets, allowing local militia commanders, the Taliban and rumour to be prime sources of information.⁸ The most important source of independent news has been the British Broadcasting Corporation. A BBC survey carried out before the crisis showed that 72 per cent of Pashto language speakers and some 62 per cent of Dari speakers in Afghanistan listened daily to the BBC World Service.⁹

Afghans and other across the region will need to be reassured of the intentions of the international community and kept abreast of the rapidly changing political and security situation. This will only be possible by making a major effort to improve communications and information as rapidly as possible. Without a major effort to expand information, broad participation in political discussions about the country's future will be impossible.¹⁰

Afghanistan has no functioning telephone network – under the Taliban there was a system linked to Pakistan's network but that has been cut. Efforts should begin to put in mobile phone systems covering as much of the country as possible. It should be operated by an international trust

⁷ For more on the security implications of HIV see ICG Issues Report No. 1, *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue*, 19 June 2001.

⁸ For more information on the state of the media under the Taliban see Reporters Sans Frontiers report on Afghanistan 18 September 2001 available at: www.rsf.fr/UK/html/asia/rapport/taliban.html:

⁹ For details on radio and television in Afghanistan see www.clandestineradio.com/intel/afghanistan.htm:

¹⁰ For more on the role of communications in rural development see FAO web site at www.fao.org/sd/KN1_en.htm. The ITU's Tampere Convention provides a framework for the use of communications in emergency situations.

See www.itu.int/home/index.html.

administered by an organisation such as the International Telecommunications Union to ensure its services are affordable and access is as wide as possible.¹¹ Communities could also be provided with basic communications centres, consisting of a phone, generator, fuel, a television with a satellite dish and a radio. Wind-up radios could be distributed in such volumes that they would lose their resale value and would not simply end up being resold in the markets of Peshawar.

A top priority should be to establish Radio Afghanistan as a public service broadcaster outside the control of any faction. This will require agreement among the groups making up any broad-based government and international funders who will have to provide the financing. Infrastructure development and training could be done through the many NGOs involved in media development.¹² However the importance of developing a free independent broadcaster needs to be impressed on all faction leaders from the start of any political process. Only with concerted effort by the international community will Afghanistan be able to develop the social architecture – the laws, institutions and regulations – for a free media.

Efforts should begin immediately to develop programming for radio and television covering education, literacy, news, healthcare, debates on long-term planning and prospects for Afghans. This should begin with existing outlets including well established international broadcasters such as the BBC but expand to develop new local media.

Efforts should also be made to train Afghans in journalism and to plan for the emergence of a new print and broadcast media. Subsidised print shops, open to all those willing to put together magazines and newspapers should be opened in major cities

to encourage the emergence of a print media catering to all political view points. Subsidised distribution is also essential.

In 1999 a group in Hazarajat launched a monthly newsletter called *Alghochak* (Stepping Stone). While the focus of the newsletter has been on identifying the needs and problems of Hazarajat, it also ventures into the political realm, discussing how to involve local communities in decisions about assistance and how to “empower Hazara authors” to be involved in “national reconciliation.” The planned expansion is to include publication of a quarterly magazine in Dari and the production of short documentary films about Hazarajat culture and history. The organisation would act as a clearing house for other information about the area. What is remarkable about this effort is that Hazarajat is one of the poorest areas of Afghanistan, and one that has seen comparatively little attention from aid agencies. The newsletter/clearing house project is run entirely by Hazara Afghans.

An active media will be a key component in the rebuilding of Afghanistan and must be a priority for the United Nations and other development organisations. A strong focus needs to be put on developing popular involvement in government, monitoring the commitments of groups to peace and human rights standards and ensuring that minorities can develop the cultural space needed to feel confident in a broad-based government. A successful media cannot be developed in isolation – it depends on the rule of law, respect for human rights and protection for journalists. All of these are distant, but not unachievable, prospects in Afghanistan.

E. HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights abuses by all parties to the long running conflict in Afghanistan have been severe. No international agency working in Afghanistan has done serious protection work, and neither the U.N. nor member states have yet taken credible steps toward addressing the issues of impunity and accountability, although the U.N. has committed itself to such goals. This does not necessarily distinguish Afghanistan from a great many other conflicts or countries, except perhaps by the combined duration of the war, scale of abuses and

¹¹ Experiences in Kosovo and other parts of the Balkans illustrate that it is possible to develop mobile systems quite rapidly but if they are handed over to a private sector monopoly they become punitively expensive and a focus for corruption.

¹² These include such groups as Article 19 (www.article19.org). Effort to build up the media should draw on experience from the Balkans and elsewhere gathered by such organisations as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Open Society Institute, UNESCO, the International Federation of Journalists and the European Broadcasting Union.

singular failure of the international community to focus on these concerns other than selectively.

Human rights protections will need to be built into any agreements from the start if a broad-based Afghan government is going to work – through training, monitoring by international observers and using Western leverage with military commanders to insist that they not perpetuate the cycle of retribution and ethnic violence. The U.N. has been involved in some human rights work to date in Afghanistan, including gender awareness training for the staffs of local and international NGOs and advocacy on a limited range of rights issues, including discrimination against women and girls, the right to receive assistance and denunciations of specific abuses. However, the limited UNHCR protection program has been hampered by an inadequate number of protection officers, frequent acquiescence to Pakistan's policies with regard to refugees and limited support from donors.

There has also been limited monitoring by the Civil Affairs Officers deployed under the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSCA), but these officers have been hampered by the lack of a clear mandate and frequent bureaucratic infighting within the U.N. system. Unfortunately, the reports produced by these officers have generally been treated as confidential – largely eliminating the value of monitoring to the Afghans.

As with humanitarian and development efforts, progress in human rights protection obviously depend on the broader context of the political and military situation. All parties are concerned about the possibility of returning to something like the 1992-1995 period of anarchy, with the added possibility of a guerrilla Taliban force based near Kandahar. The U.N. should move as soon as feasible to deploy monitors under the broader protections of whatever Multinational Force is put in place. The establishment of a monitoring mechanism should take place simultaneously with the deployment of political officers mandated to negotiate with local leaders regarding potential cooperation with the transitional government.

Human rights protection will also depend to a large extent on fostering accountable institutions. If there is a transitional government in Afghanistan

that has the support of a large proportion of local leaders from a range of ethnic groups, there might be the opportunity to strengthen, rebuild, or in some cases, create such institutions. One issue that deserves attention at the earliest possible moment is how to deal with past abuses. There have never been serious international efforts to bring to justice anyone responsible for human rights violations in Afghanistan. Independent human rights groups as well as U.N. investigators frequently point out that the resulting climate of impunity has led to a cycle of abuses. In the most obvious example, the failure by U.N. agencies to investigate the massacre of more than 3,000 Taliban troops in and around Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997 may have contributed to the subsequent massacre by the Taliban of at least 2,000 Hazara residents when the Taliban took control of the city the following year.

Even now, there has been very little interest on the part of states ostensibly committed to a peace settlement to see the links between ending impunity and achieving peace. A State Department official dealing with War Crimes issues indicated to ICG that the U.S. government would look at a possible hybrid combination war crimes tribunal and local truth commission down the road, but that nothing will be done until “the dust settles”. This is a dangerous approach, and many Afghans have expressed concern about the prospects of former war criminals returning to power.

There are no institutions currently operating in Afghanistan capable of carrying out systematic human rights investigations or pursuing justice. However, this is not to say that expertise is entirely lacking. What happened in Yakaolang is a case in point. In January 2001 the district, which had been under Taliban control, was taken over briefly by the combined forces of Shia Hizb-i-Wahdat and Harakat-i-Islami. Ten days later, the district was retaken by the Taliban, who then massacred some 170 residents, including several local humanitarian workers and village elders. After the area was again retaken by opposition forces, local jurists conducted their own fact-finding, and took affidavits from scores of witnesses in preparation for what they hoped would one day be an internationally-led investigation into the massacre.

These efforts are important because they demonstrate that people with experience still exist

in Afghanistan, and they include trained judges and others who care enough about human rights to risk their own safety. The Taliban retook the district in May 2001, and were again driven out in June. During their retreat, the Taliban burned down most of Yakaolang town and many surrounding villages. Copies of the affidavits are stored in a secure location in Islamabad and family members and survivors in Yakaolang have formed an organisation, Citizens Against War Criminals, that has called for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal and for immediate efforts to ensure that former war criminals do not hold positions in a new government or in any national military or police force.

Establishing a national level truth commission to account for the abuses of the past may be the best way to deal with the legacy of more than two decades of war, so long as the worst offenders – those responsible for major war crimes and crimes against humanity – do not escape justice. Such a commission, along with other local human rights bodies, could also be designed to help promote a cultural understanding of human rights that is sorely lacking in Afghanistan.

F. DRUGS

Only about 1 per cent of the proceeds from drugs grown in Afghanistan remain in the country but this, nevertheless, is a key part of the economy, sustaining hundreds of thousands of people. Poppies have been grown and opium processed into heroin in areas controlled both by the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, a fact that Western officials have been reluctant to acknowledge. Although the Taliban instituted a ban on poppy growing in July 2000, this had little effect on the amount of drugs leaving the country because of the presence of large stockpiles. However, poppy farmers were increasingly angry with the Taliban for limiting their livelihood. These farmer are expected to return rapidly to growing poppies given the limited options available to them.

Iran and Pakistan – prime consumers of narcotics and important smuggling routes – have been deeply harmed by the drug trade. Both have vast population of addicts and their economic and political institutions continue to be seriously weakened by drugs corruption and violence.

Tajikistan as well continues to struggle with growing numbers of addicts and the pervasive influence of narcotics related crime. Unless there is a serious effort to tackle the drug problem across the region, lawlessness and corruption will continue to be endemic and the threat of a full blown HIV/AIDS crisis will soon materialise.¹³

Most of the limited anti-drug aid to the region has gone to boosting interdiction. Much more needs to be done in crop substitution and demand reduction. Drugs should be tackled, not in isolation as a policing issue as so often in the past, but as a key aspect of development and conflict prevention.

This will mean tackling not just the trafficking of drugs but the poverty that leads to drug production and use. Programs to combat the spread of HIV infection such as needle exchange points should be strengthened and expanded, and addicts must not be penalised for participating in such programs, but rewarded. Successful efforts will also demand that officials engaged in anti-drug trafficking roles be provided with salaries that will lessen the likelihood of their selling out to the drug gangs.

European countries should increase their contribution to combating the drug problem in Central Asia through a more coordinated and effective EU program that complements existing bilateral and international projects. Farmers who eradicated their opium poppy crops under the Taliban should be encouraged not to go back to growing that crop through crop substitution programs and other assistance. While EU guidelines for policy among member states put priority on harm reduction issues, much EU assistance to this region is targeted instead at interdiction which often has low levels of success and unfortunate unintended consequences such as boosting the power of repressive police forces.

¹³ See ICG Asia Report No 25, *Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict*, 26 November 2001.

III. PRIORITIES FOR CENTRAL ASIA

It will be impossible to stabilise Afghanistan without addressing the situation in neighbouring countries. The states of Central Asia continue to face serious challenges and concerted activity by regional governments and by the international community will be needed to prevent broader conflict. There is a risk that a measure of stability could be introduced in Afghanistan, only to be undermined by instability in surrounding states.

Further, the fundamentally undemocratic nature of these regimes make international assistance tricky. Donors will need to strike a careful balance between short- and long-term goals, and carefully condition aid to ensure maximum leverage. Indeed, there has been considerable assistance to the states of Central Asia since their independence,¹⁴ but these countries have consistently failed to embrace economic or political reform. Before 11 September, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were all generally considered “bad partners” where the attitudes and actions of national governments were the main impediment to effective assistance. This has largely been because of high levels of corruption in national and local government in the region, and also because of government attempts to avoid political liberalisation and economic reform.

Too much aid has disappeared in corrupt government structures, and other packages have merely resulted in large-scale prestige construction projects that have little obvious use. Too often inappropriate models of economic development developed in Eastern Europe were put in place.¹⁵

A new approach must coordinate different strands of cooperation, from military aid to human rights issues, into a high-level political strategy aimed at

¹⁴ Total U.S. assistance to Central Asia in 1992-2000 was more than U.S.\$1.7 billion, including U.S.\$650 in USAID assistance. Japan has also provided considerable aid in the form of direct grants, credits and technical assistance. At least U.S.\$1.5 billion in credits have come from Japan, in addition to direct grants and technical assistance. The World Bank is also a major player, and the EU has donated considerable technical aid through the TACIS program, and also humanitarian aid.

¹⁵ See USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2001-2005 (July 2000), p. 11.

ensuring long-term stability in the region. This will entail a strong and concerted effort to influence government policies in practice rather than on paper. Up front conditionality must be used to secure reform instead of simply securing promises of reform.

A. UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan is an important key to stability in Central Asia, not only because of its role in the present anti-terrorist campaign, but also because it combines potentially dangerous social conditions with a lack of government will to implement significant economic or political reforms. Donors and aid organisations working in Uzbekistan will need to develop a new, concerted approach to the country that emphasises the danger of continuing with present government policies, while offering support to assist genuine reform. Without such an approach, international assistance will merely mitigate some of the social consequences of government policy, while setting the table for long-term instability.

Uzbekistan is a combustible mix of authoritarianism, worsening economic conditions, extremist Islamist sentiment and severe social problems. Unfortunately, government policy over the past decade has exacerbated tensions and fed the growth of radical movements, including the armed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)¹⁶ and the radical Hizb-ut-Tahrir that has pledged itself to overthrow central Asian governments using non-violent means. By suppressing all forms of dissent and political opposition, and conducting a repressive campaign against all forms of independent Islamic activity, the government has encouraged more young men to join radical movements

Reforms. There is little evidence that the Uzbek government is planning significant social reforms, and officials have told visiting diplomats that it would be “difficult” to pursue substantial reforms

¹⁶ For more details see ICG Asia Report No. 21, *Uzbekistan at Ten: Repression and Instability*, 21 August 2001 and ICG Asia Report No. 14, *Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security*, 1 March 2001.

at the present time.¹⁷ In light of such an attitude, the international community will need to take a much stronger line with the government, and work to dispel President Karimov's apparent belief that support for Western military action in Afghanistan has obviated the need for progress in either democracy or market economics. Continuing aid must be conditional on real progress in economic and political policies, and general budget support would only prove a disaster. Efforts to work on a local and community-based level, while usefully circumventing the government, will only go so far in the absence of a commitment by the government to change. Indeed, significant aid to Uzbekistan over the past decade from the U.S., Japan and the EU has had almost no perceptible impact in securing systemic change, and military aid should be approached with extreme caution.

Future aid will need to focus on conflict prevention and security in its full sense. Effective assistance programs will need to insist on an end to human rights abuses, an improvement in the judicial system, a widespread poverty reduction program and government policies that liberate the economy from semi-state monopolies, promotes structural reforms, including currency convertibility and limits the influence of corrupt elements within the elite. There is also an urgent need for effective education and independent information that will limit the ability of radical elements to recruit young people to their cause. For international leverage to be effective, the U.S., the EU, Japan, international financial institutions and other major players will need to act in concert and make clear that Uzbekistan will only enter the ranks of modern states if it seriously pursues reform. In the absence of goodwill from the Uzbek government, significant economic aid should be withheld, and what assistance is provided should aim to improve the social conditions of ordinary people, provide channels of information and improved education and attempt to limit human rights abuses.

Human Rights. For example, while the security services will likely receive some forms of aid, the government's human rights record is difficult to ignore, and there is a very thin case for providing any assistance to the Uzbek Ministry of Internal

Affairs until this situation is improved.¹⁸ The security services can play a role in tackling serious crime problems, including drugs trafficking, arms smuggling and terrorist activity, but a sea change is needed in how they view their role. The judiciary is also blighted by corruption, a shortage of experienced personnel, a Soviet-era psychological and institutional legacy that ensures bias against defendants and a lack of independence from government officials and the security forces.

Projects focusing on people's legal rights have thus far had very limited success in Uzbekistan, but some small-scale projects such as those run by the American Bar Association¹⁹, have arguably had some impact on court proceedings and the legal process. Support should be given to human rights associations, including those that have not been allowed to register by the government. The two major groups are the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and the Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan. Pressure should be brought to bear on the government to legalise these groups.

Information. Severe state censorship in Uzbekistan has ensured very limited access for the population to objective information. In 2000, the government imposed restrictions on internet access to sites that criticised Uzbekistan. Outside elites in the capital, there is very limited knowledge of political events in the region, or in the wider world, ensuring that radical groups find fertile ground in which to spread their own views. Long-term support must be provided for independent media outlets: not

¹⁷Ahto Lobjakas, 'EU Fails to win commitment from Uzbekistan on aid shipments', *Eurasianet*, 31 October 2001. www.eurasianet.org.

¹⁸ International donors are paying more attention to the role and function of security sectors in post-conflict or transition societies, recognising that they form both the obstacles and the main agents for change in conflict prevention. Policy development in support of security reform has often appeared overly-theoretical. Of late, the central question of how to operationalise support is being addressed by a host of multilateral and bilateral actors. See Dylan Hedrickson, "A review of Security Sector Reform", Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College London, September, 1999; Nicole Ball, Transforming Security Sectors: The IMF and World Bank Approaches. *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*, (1) Centre for Defence Studies, 2001. See also "Security Sector Reform as a Development Issue", OECD/DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation, June 1999.

¹⁹ Projects include monitoring and recording of court cases, providing resources for legal clinics, and training for young lawyers. Contact details: American Bar Association: www.abanet.org/home.html

only does this enable them to function, but it provides a measure of protection against government repression. Improving access to information will also require continued political pressure on the government to relax licensing restrictions on independent media outlets, end the repression of journalists and relax censorship of the internet and other media.²⁰

Economy. Without significant structural reform, Uzbekistan's warmed-over Soviet style economy is doomed to continued decline. Uzbekistan has a highly centralised economy run by a very limited group of corrupt political officials. Current economic developments raise serious concerns over the long-term political stability of the country. Poverty is rising,²¹ external debt is quite high²², foreign investment has decreased and inflation is rising. Water shortages, land scarcity and population growth have only added to this already dangerous mix. Most international financial institutions and independent economists are gloomy about Uzbekistan's prospects unless serious reforms, including currency conversion, are put in place and political instability could well be sparked by the continuing economic decline.

Currency convertibility is a particularly ripe area for reform where international assistance can be effectively used. The system of multiple exchange rates and problems with convertibility of the national currency, the som, have ensured Uzbekistan's isolation from international markets and practically put a stop to foreign investment.²³

²⁰ On repression of journalists see ICG Report No 21; *Uzbekistan at Ten: Repression and Instability*, 21 August 2001. Also Human Rights Watch; *Uzbekistan Violations of Media Freedoms*; New York; 22 July 1997 and the Committee to Protect Journalists at:

www.cpj.org/attacks00/europe00/uzbekistan.html.

²¹ See ICG Asia Report No. 16 *Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest*, 8 June 2001.

²² By the end of 2000 Uzbekistan had an external debt of US\$ 4.15 billion – 48 per cent of GDP at the official exchange rate. The European Union, External Relations: *The EU and Uzbekistan*, July 2001, Available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/uzbekistan/intro/

²³ Uzbekistan has a three-tier exchange rate system. Official and commercial rates are determined by the state, while the black market rate is determined by natural supply and demand. At the official exchange rate on 6 November

The lack of currency convertibility is the number one problem limiting private sector growth and foreign investment. Without moves towards conversion, there is no hope that private sector investment will return. Repeated attempts by international financial institutions to encourage currency convertibility have been blocked by the government, largely due to corruption and fears that it would trigger public unrest over rising prices. The International Monetary Fund closed its office in Tashkent in April 2001 in response to the government's sluggish approach to reform. The international community should consider an up-front swap: if the government pursues convertibility, donors will help underwrite the cost of providing an interim social safety net to ease the brunt of reform. By using such an approach to assistance, the international community can ensure that money follows reform, and that the long-term economic and social prospects for Uzbekistan are improved. The IMF is in the process of resuming its relations with Uzbekistan and its efforts should be supported alongside increased pressure for reforms.

Regions at risk. Donors and NGOs should also focus more assistance outside the capital. Three areas of Uzbekistan are particularly vulnerable: the Ferghana valley,²⁴ Karakalpakstan and the Surkhan-Darya region. Karakalpakstan is a remote, desert area in the north-west, blighted by environmental problems, particularly those associated with the Aral Sea, and largely ignored by government development policies. Socio-economic problems are high, with particular concern over health issues, water resources and agricultural decline. A severe drought over the last two years has worsened the lot of the already impoverished and unhealthy population of Karakalpakstan.

The Surkhan-Darya region is also becoming extremely vulnerable, because of poor socio-economic conditions, and its proximity to Tajikistan and Afghanistan. In August 2000 armed groups apparently linked to the IMU attempted to

2001, U.S.\$1.00 was equivalent to Uzbek Som 681.77; the commercial rate fluctuated at about Uzbek Som 900.00; and the black market rate averaged Uzbek Som 1,350.00.

²⁴ ICG Asia Report No. 16. *Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest*, 8 June 2001.

cross the border from Tajikistan, and were met by the Uzbek army. As a result of the armed clashes, at least 10,000 villagers were displaced from the border zone and housed in temporary camps. The borders with Tajikistan and Afghanistan are closed, seriously damaging cross-border trade.

Government repression and extreme poverty have combined to provoke at least some support for militant groups in the region. A political analyst with links to the Uzbek opposition informed ICG that Surkhan-Darya is now a fertile recruiting ground for the IMU, perhaps even more so than the Ferghana valley.²⁵ There has been little international assistance to the region, and there are very few local NGOs. The region is increasingly militarised and under close control by the interior ministry, making activities difficult. The donor community needs to improve access and assistance to this area in short order, particularly programs aimed at tackling economic tensions and educational needs.

There has been considerable international attention paid to the problems of the Ferghana valley that stretches across Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, but little in the way of concrete aid has resulted. The region has traditionally been the most religious in Uzbekistan, and it has become a major recruiting ground for the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir, resulting in a huge security clampdown by Uzbek security forces, and much heightened border control. There have been a number of proposals for programs to tackle the problems of the valley on a regional basis, but all have been rejected by Uzbekistan.²⁶ A conflict prevention program by the United Nations Development Programme in the Ferghana Valley foundered on Uzbekistan's objections, but was useful in bringing international attention to the region's problems, as did an assessment by the Centre for Preventative Action.²⁷ Most projects in the valley have been limited to southern Kyrgyzstan and northern Tajikistan. Those projects working solely in Uzbekistan have been confined to small-scale development efforts, microcredit schemes and small business assistance programs. Further steps

by international organisations and NGOs should seek to further these low-level projects, and build up community-based organisations and cross border ties.

Education. Education reform is also much needed. Problems include low salaries for teachers, high prices for textbooks and stationery and the low quality of educational materials – a dangerous trend in a country where 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 25. The average salary of a schoolteacher in Uzbekistan is approximately U.S.\$10 a month at the black market rate. Low salaries have forced the best teachers into working for foreign companies, small private businesses or to emigrate.

The once free education system has now been unofficially “privatised”, but most students are forced to pay bribes to secure entrance or to pass exams. In 2001 the bribe to enter the Tashkent Institute of Law averaged U.S.\$5,000, while the most expensive school in Uzbekistan is the Police Academy, where entry “fees” exceeded U.S.\$10,000.²⁸ As a result of the increasing corruption, many young people avoid the education system all together. Muslim leaders, in particular, are concerned by the decline in education. Yusuf Abduraim, imam at a mosque in Tashkent, noted that the decline in education of both secular and religious subjects has led to a rise of religious sects and radical groups. “Poverty has caused the rise of religious fanaticism, not an increase in religious knowledge. The poorly fed and the uneducated cannot grasp the deep philosophical meaning of the Koran”.²⁹

There have been a number of successful education programs with international assistance. Education programs conducted by the American Council for International Education/American Council for Collaboration in English Language Studies, the British Council, the U.S. International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the Open Society Institute, and DAAD have been successful in promoting international exchanges and retaining links to the outside world for young scholars. There is much scope for expansion of educational programs, and it is one area where international assistance can make a difference in helping to

²⁵ ICG confidential interview.

²⁶ Barnett R. Rubin et al. *Calming the Ferghana Valley Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia*. Council on Foreign Relations. New York. 1 June 2000

²⁷ Ibid:

²⁸ ICG confidential interviews.

²⁹ ICG telephone interview, Tashkent, 8 November 2001.

mould future elites, and challenge stereotyped perceptions of the West.

The government needs to promote more basic educational programs, root out corruption from education and cooperate more closely with moderate Muslim leaders in developing society's understanding of Islam. Without a concerted national and international effort, there is a danger that Uzbekistan will move from being a well-educated society with universal education, to a nation where rising numbers of the population lack basic education and are increasingly radicalised.

B. TAJIKISTAN

The political and economic future of Tajikistan will be a key factor in ensuring stability in the whole of the Central Asian region, including Afghanistan. Paradoxically, the present crisis has given Tajikistan a window of opportunity to emerge from its international isolation and make serious strides forward in its own fragile peace process. Tajikistan's leadership needs to seize this opportunity and cooperate with the international community in strengthening state structures, allowing nascent elements of civil society to develop and removing obstacles to economic growth. International assistance will be crucial in helping shore up a fragile peace process, reducing poverty and meeting the humanitarian needs from three years of drought. Although a renewal of the civil war in Tajikistan is unlikely in the short term, there is a danger that the country could increasingly become a base for narcotics trafficking, organised crime and radical Islamist movements that could threaten stability throughout the region.

The key aim of assistance must be to strengthen weak government structures and reintegrate disparate regions within a viable overall state without provoking renewed armed opposition. Demobilising former opposition fighters and helping them return to civilian life is vital and funding should be supplied for retraining and education. Without assistance, there is a danger that these armed groups will move further into criminal activity, or continue to oppose the government using armed force. Tajikistan is slowly emerging from civil war that raged between 1992 and 1997, and large parts of the country remain

outside effective government control. Former paramilitary groups have only partially been integrated into a national army, and the security situation remains difficult. Tajikistan's economic situation also remains dire, with the lowest per-capita income in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and very limited prospects for foreign investment.

President Rakhmonov has emerged from a difficult peace process as an increasingly authoritarian leader. The opposition is divided roughly into groups that form part of a loose coalition government (the Islamic Renaissance Party) and Islamist groups and paramilitary commanders that retain their independence, notably in regions such as the Gharm valley to the east of Dushanbe. Political competition has often been drawn along regional lines, with most of the present presidential circle come from the southern Kulyab region and the northern Leninabad region, traditionally the most economically developed, being largely excluded from political power. The sparsely populated Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast is extremely remote, and forms a territory almost forgotten by Dushanbe. The government must be encouraged to seek a broader base of support, and not use international assistance or cooperation with the military campaign against Afghanistan as an excuse for discontinuing dialogue with the opposition. There will be occasions when force may have to be used against rebel commanders, but the emphasis must be on peaceful reintegration of former opposition fighters into civilian life, and the gradual improvement of the security situation throughout the country, including the Gharm region.

Economy. Tajikistan's economic situation is bleak, and remains dependent largely on the export of cotton and other agricultural goods. Government revenues are extremely small, amounting to around U.S.\$120m per year, and average salaries in Tajikistan are about U.S.\$10.³⁰ A significant part of local incomes comes from remittances from Tajiks working abroad, mostly in Russia and other parts of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Foreign assistance makes up a large part of government revenue, and among the international financial institutions the most significant contributor has been the World Bank, which

³⁰ ICG interviews in Tajikistan October 2001.

contributed some U.S.\$261million in 1996-2001, focusing on structural readjustment, post-conflict rehabilitation, housing and water projects.³¹

The government's foreign debt is high, estimated at U.S.\$1.205 billion in 2000.³² Debt renegotiation should be at the top of the international agenda, although significant conditionality should be attached to new terms. These should focus on poverty reduction programs, practical efforts to limit corruption, steps to improve the investment environment and significant efforts to strengthen government capabilities. Since international organisations provide an increasing proportion of social services in Tajikistan, efforts must be made to improve the sustainability of programs and begin to build up the capacity of Tajikistan's ministries to deliver such services themselves. This may involve short-term stipends for ministry staff, training in delivery mechanisms and equipment provision, but the main principles must be transparency and realism. All aid programs should aim to build up personnel resources, and aim at local ownership of projects to ensure their continued success. This will mean focusing on traditional low-level community structures as the basis both for increased social activism and for local infrastructure projects and aid delivery.

While Tajikistan's cooperation with aid agencies has often been sporadic, there is some indication that the political will of the government to effect change is beginning to improve. Because of the war on terrorism, Tajikistan faces possibly a one-off opportunity to improve its economic viability, and at least some members of the government understand this.

EU member-states should upgrade their representation in Tajikistan, as and when the security situation allows. For example the British development agency DFID has no presence in Tajikistan, and funds no projects there. This is partly because of the security situation, but it is vital that European aid agencies increase their contributions Tajikistan. The EBRD also has an important role to play, but should ensure that oversight of projects remains paramount to ensure that no particular group gains particular favouritism in funding. For the first time,

Tajikistan has a potential market in Afghanistan and there is scope for some level of food-processing and low-level manufacturing for export. The EBRD should also focus investment efforts on sectors that will provide significant employment and would be sustainable in the long term such as agriculture.

The most serious problem in economic terms is the lack of any government strategy for economic rehabilitation. The government has drawn up a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, but there is a huge gap between planning and implementation. Understandably, the politics of compromise rather than efficiency have governed post-conflict governance, and donors must continue to recognise the fragility of the coalition arrangement with the opposition, and not push the government to the point of collapse. At the same time, there is scope for a much more robust attitude toward those ministries that have blocked progress.

Information. Tajikistan, like Afghanistan and Uzbekistan would also benefit substantially from efforts to improve education and access to information. The mass of the population generally has limited access to information about their own political situation, often contributing to growing tensions in the region and the rise of extremist groups. The government should begin moves to relax censorship of the media, and to provide private companies with broadcasting licenses. The international community should aim to set up better training facilities for journalists and to provide alternative sources of funding for media outlets. Internews³³ runs a number of projects in Tajikistan focused on training programs for journalists, similar projects to that of Radio Salaam in Kyrgyzstan. The civil war and general economic decline have ensured that the education system is in a perilous state. There is an urgent need for international efforts to fund school programs, provide textbooks and reverse the decline in education among the population.

C. KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan, while less linked to the situation in Afghanistan, should also be considered as a part of the regional security picture. With the right kind of

³¹ World Bank Tajikistan profile, at www.worldbank.org.

³² EBRD Transition Report Update. April 2001.

³³ Internews Tajikistan, www.internews.tj.

assistance, and with improved government policy, Kyrgyzstan could become a relatively stable state in a region of instability. Conversely, failing to address the challenges in Kyrgyzstan could lead to a still more authoritarian environment in the country, and fuel extremism, particularly in the south.

Kyrgyzstan's government has already lost considerable international goodwill through its increasingly undemocratic practice and a failure to follow through with reforms.³⁴ For example, the main potential electoral opponent of President Akaev in 2000, Feliks Kulov, remains in prison on dubious charges. As a whole, groups close to Akaev increasingly dominate the political system, and widespread corruption has undercut aid programs and limited foreign investment. President Akaev must be given the clear message that backsliding on democracy will only further isolate his nation.

Economy. There needs to be a fundamental reassessment of aid policies in Kyrgyzstan, with much greater emphasis on better uses of resources, long-term sustainability, community involvement, transparency and accounting, and programs in the south of the country. The south has faced incursions by the IMU in the past three years as well as a growing drug trafficking problem, inter-ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and serious border conflicts with Uzbekistan. Technical assistance and aid to government bodies has little obvious impact, while low-budget microcredit schemes and community group support programs are often successful. Emphasis must be placed on meeting the needs of people, and ensuring that they take ownership of projects by investing their own work or money in projects.

Kyrgyzstan has a weak economic base and has attracted little foreign investment. The government began far-reaching economic reforms in the early 1990s, but much of this structural change has been undermined by corruption and difficulties in policy implementation. A small elite has benefited from economic liberalisation, but most of the population exists at near-subsistence levels, particularly outside the capital, Bishkek. The

government has produced an interim poverty reduction program and is working on a 10-year comprehensive development program, but much of this work has little impact on real government policies, and serves mainly as window dressing for donors. Further assistance should be predicated less on the production of government plans on paper, and more on evidence of implementation of existing reform policies. Currently the IMF restricts new disbursements of aid due to fears of debt overload.

Foreign loans and other financial support make up a major part of government income, and foreign debt has now reached approximately U.S. \$1.8 billion, with debt servicing a major drain on resources at about 40 per cent of government revenue in 2001.³⁵ The government, supported by some Western politicians, has called for Kyrgyzstan's inclusion in the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative, but there is little indication at present of positive moves in that direction by international financial institutions. The international community should consider debt renegotiation, but only as part of a package that includes government implementation of broader political and economic reforms.

As with many of the states in the region, regionalism poses a major potential threat to the country's integrity. The north and south are divided not only by major geographical barriers, but also identity, religion and geographical orientation. Further infrastructure improvement is vital to bind the two parts of the country together more closely, and limit the constant drift of young people and professionals from the south to the capital. There have been several plans for infrastructure projects in the region including a planned railway from Osh to Western China, improved road connections between Bishkek and Osh, and from Osh to Batken and on to Tajikistan, as well as improved water infrastructure. However, even large infrastructure projects should involve local communities as much as possible, and seek local solutions to problems where possible.

Education. Kyrgyzstan's Soviet-era education system has declined sharply since 1990. There is an urgent need for funds to research, write and

³⁴ For more details see ICG Asia Report No. 22, *Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the 'Island of Democracy'*, 28 August 2001.

³⁵ EIU, Country Report, *Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan* (July 2001).

publish local language textbooks, and to provide direct financial support to teachers to stem the flow from the profession. Teacher salaries average around \$10 per month, and there is little incentive for young people to work in schools. International aid should aim to provide support for teachers, possibly through a training and stipend program, offering higher pay to teachers who have passed additional training programs.

Information. Although Kyrgyzstan offers one of the most open information environments in central Asia, recent events have increased pressure on independent media outlets. There is a continuing urgent need for support and political pressure on the government to end harassment of the independent press. The situation is best in Bishkek and Osh. Outside major towns there are few local radio stations, and limited television reception, particularly in mountain areas. There is a need for more local radio stations that will provide not only news, but will also act as a point of contact for local communities. A good example is Radio Salaam, based in town of Batken. Salaam is the first radio-station in Batken, and was set up with funding and oversight from UNICEF and implemented by Internews and a local NGO, the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI). The original idea of the station was that it would broadcast in three languages (Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik) throughout the Ferghana Valley, but at present it reaches only Batken town, and broadcasts only in Kyrgyz and Russian. Plans are in place to increase its range to other areas that at present receive practically no radio broadcasts.³⁶ Similar projects in other parts of the country could have a major impact on information provision and community cohesion.

Borders. The complex borders between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the Ferghana valley are a constant source of friction, and Uzbekistan's severe restrictions on cross-border movement have limited regional trade and exacerbated relations between border communities. Attempts to move forward with demarcation of borders has been very slow, but there has been some significant work at local level by NGOs to bring together border communities to

work jointly on issues such as water and land. Among those active in this area are the Foundation for Tolerance International, which has gained increasing recognition for its work, with projects ranging from people's diplomacy to government lobbying.

Several areas of Kyrgyzstan are particularly vulnerable. Batken, in the south, is a remote area lying between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It experienced incursions by Islamist militants in 1999 and 2000 and is also increasingly troubled by border disputes, water and land conflicts and the growing drug trade from Afghanistan. The region is ill-equipped to deal with these problems, with little economic development, and a major problem with water and irrigation.

A UNDP project has achieved some success by working to develop community groups in villages, which have assessed their own needs and applied for grants and credits to fund a variety of projects, from water infrastructure to school building. In most cases, communities have contributed their own funds and labour. As a result, there has been a sense of ownership of resulting projects, which ensures that they are maintained and not misused. In 2000 43 per cent of project costs came from community organisations themselves.³⁷ The UNDP project deserves considerable attention: not only is it a very effective use of funds, but it is also playing a significant role in building up social activism, in an area where the population has very little other opportunity for inclusion in decision-making.³⁸

D. TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan shares a 744 kilometre border with Afghanistan, the longest of any of the Central Asian nations. However it appears to have been the least effected by the current crisis. President Saparmurad Niyazov has declared his country "neutral in perpetuity" and has thus avoided many entanglements with other nations. Turkmenistan was, however, the only Central Asian country to maintain cordial contacts with the Taliban, indeed

³⁶ Radio Salaam, Resource Centre in Batken: Batken, Hodzhaeva Str. 22, Tel: (03254) 22036 Fax. (03254) 36100; E-mail-address: btoled@osh.kg.

³⁷ UNDP, *Preventive Development in the South of Kyrgyzstan, Annual Report 2000* (Bishkek, 2000), p. 16.

³⁸ Ibid:

it even hosted several attempts to make peace between Afghanistan's warring groups.

Turkmenistan has the fifth largest gas reserves in the world but has had problems getting its energy to markets. An idea under consideration since the mid-1990 is to build a pipeline across Afghanistan to take the gas to the energy-hungry countries of South Asia. Construction of such a pipeline requires a marked improvement in the security situation in Afghanistan and is unlikely in the short-term. It could, however, benefit both neighbours if revenues were held by a trust and put to useful ends. Pipelines themselves, however, do not make countries wealthy and need to be considered as part of a much broader national development plan.

As one of the world's most closed and tightly controlled societies, there is little room for manoeuvre for Western donors. The country is a member of the United Nations but not of the Commonwealth of Independent States or any other regional grouping. It is difficult to make a clear assessment of its stability except to say that Turkmenistan has a very rigid dictatorship, an unstable economy with high debts and obstacles to getting its oil and gas to market, all factors that put it at risk of internal strife.

Like many countries in the region, Turkmenistan is suffering from a worsening drugs problem. Precise figures are not available but experts in the region estimate that Turkmenistan is a key stop on the drug route from Afghanistan to Russia and the rest of Europe and a major route by which chemicals needed to make heroin are shipped into Afghanistan. Work on drugs, particularly given the rising number of users, and HIV may provide a useful entry point for increased Western assistance.

E. REGIONAL ISSUES

The increased international attention in Central Asia should be galvanised to help resolve some of the most pressing regional issues that are a source of serious tensions. Indeed, it has long been the failure to make progress on regional issues such as border disputes, water resources trade and infrastructure that has continued to badly retard development in the region.

Only coordinated international pressure will bring the often sharply divided governments in the region to the negotiating table with anything that resembles good faith. However, this is no easy task. The strategic interests of the major players – Pakistan, Iran, Russia, India, China, Uzbekistan and the United States – have often been sharply at odds, as have relations between neighbouring states.

Long-term projects for high risk regions such as the Ferghana Valley will likely succeed or fail largely on the basis of the ability of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to achieve some minimal level of cooperation. To date, projects with excellent prospects such as the UNDP Ferghana Valley project have foundered on Uzbekistan's reluctance to take part. Areas such as the Ferghana, where traditional economic and cultural ties cross national borders, are unlikely to prosper economically as essentially three separate national enclaves.

Borders. Uzbekistan has based its position on its security fears, claiming that tight border controls are essential to combat terrorism. The international community should recognise these concerns, but also be realistic that the border controls have done more to interrupt commercial traffic than to stop either terrorists or the flow of drugs. Border guards are often poorly educated, corrupt and abusive toward locals. Blocked borders have diminished economic opportunities and so helped raise the appeal of Islamist extremism.

Water. Water disputes are also indicative of the need for greater regional cooperation. Previous attempts to resolve them bilaterally have been largely stillborn.

A pattern of tensions has emerged between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan cuts gas supplies to increase pressure on Kyrgyzstan to agree to favourable water and border deals. Kyrgyzstan responds by using more water to generate hydropower, thus causing floods ahead of the growing season. Later when Uzbekistan needs water for irrigation, less is available. Both sides have suffered from the problem.

The water issue is complicated, partly as borders between countries in Central Asia have not been

properly demarcated, and also because people living in border areas often receive their water supplies from the neighbouring country. Thus, some people in Southern Kyrgyzstan receive their water from Tajikistan, whereas Tajiks receive their water from Kyrgyzstan. In a number of cases, rivers (for instance Syr-Darya and Amu-Darya) run through several Central Asian countries, and there is disagreement as to how much water each country may use for irrigation and energy-generating purposes.

Disputes are the more difficult to resolve as relations between the Central Asian countries are strained and much of the region continues to suffer from drought.

Regional Cooperation. The international community should consider whether there are possibilities to expand the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to include other representatives from within and outside the region. An expanded Shanghai Cooperation Organisation might include senior U.S. and EU representatives, which could allay the fears of Uzbekistan that it is merely a vehicle for Russian and Chinese interests in the region.

Other forms of regional cooperation in security matters should also be explored, with a possible role for the OSCE and the U.N. in forming a cooperation council that would address security issues.

While it may be tempting in strategic terms for the U.S. to focus attention on Uzbekistan, and seek to limit Russia's influence in the region, in the long run only a genuine U.S.-Russian partnership is likely to provide a possible forum in which some level of security cooperation can develop. The EU could also play a useful role as a third party with a less sensitive strategic stake, but this would require real EU cooperation on the ground, and a strong, long term political commitment to the region.

External Assistance. The U.S. and the EU should consider conditioning their assistance to Central Asia on a commitment by states in the region to accept OSCE mediation of outstanding disputes on borders, water use and property claims. The OSCE could lend much needed technical expertise to these discussions and the presence of neutral

mediators could go a long way toward reducing regional tensions and allaying the abiding suspicion between the respective capitals.

The OSCE has not yet been particularly effective in Central Asia but the lessons it has learned with similar issues during the last decade in Eastern Europe could be of tremendous utility. Without international engagement on these issues there is a danger that ethnic minorities will continue to feel distinctly at risk throughout the region, and that increasingly Central Asia will be transformed into a series of mono-ethnic states harbouring deep irredentist sentiments.

Communications. Transforming the communications and information environment in the region could also go a long way to establishing the infrastructure for further economic development. A city such as Osh, in southern Kyrgyzstan, is well-placed to act as a transport and communications hub for the region but it lacks adequate airport facilities, and its road to the capital, Bishkek, though improved, remains poor.

Although there has been some investment in transport infrastructure in the region (e.g., the road linking the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent has been modernised), most roads are still in a very poor state of repair making mobility throughout the region increasingly difficult, particularly in winter. Given the region's already marginal economic situation, it simply cannot afford to take a "go it alone" approach to infrastructure development.

The EU should revive a proposal of its TACIS program for modernisation of the road from Osh to Batken, while attempting to involve Uzbekistan in a regional transport network. The Asian Development Bank remains a major player in infrastructure regeneration in the region, and wisely continues to press for regional solutions to transport problems.³⁹ Any aid provided for such projects should also be conditioned on countries in the region achieving basic agreements governing border-crossing procedures, visa regimes and tariffs.

³⁹ ADB Press release, 'ADB stepping up assistance to Central Asia', 8 November 2001. Available at www.adb.org. The ADB plans U.S.\$400 million in loans and U.S.\$5 million in technical assistance to regional projects over the next three years.

A NATO plan to expand Internet access across the Caucasus and Central Asia (a “Virtual Silk Road”) is an example of how to boost communications capacity and encourage regional cooperation. Governments should consider a range of improvements to regional electronic communications as a way to encourage cooperation as well as to promote open media and greater educational opportunities.

Regional Security. All its neighbours are concerned that military assistance from the U.S. will further strengthen Uzbekistan’s strategic position in the region. Any such assistance must be balanced by attention to the security concerns of the neighbours. There is a real danger that Kazakhstan, in particular, will respond to a more powerful Uzbek military by increasing its own capabilities. The capacity of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to compete in a regional arms race is extremely limited, and a more aggressive regional policy by Uzbekistan would likely prove deleterious to regional cooperation.

IV. PRIORITIES FOR PAKISTAN

No neighbouring country has been more affected by the U.S.-led campaign against Afghanistan than Pakistan. Indeed, the military government has been forced to review the core of its domestic and foreign agendas as a result of intense U.S. pressure. As the primary supporter of the Taliban, Pakistan quickly realised that unless it cooperated with the United States, it would face a perilous degree of international isolation and economic hardship.

Pakistan has long practised a strategy of strategic depth with regard to Afghanistan, desiring a friendly government in Kabul as a means to ensure that it could concentrate on India. However, Pakistan has had hostile relationships with the government in Kabul for all but about seven of the past 50 years. The only exception has been the Taliban period. Afghanistan even voted against Pakistan’s membership in the UN.

The complete reversal in Pakistan’s policy came as a result of both carrots and sticks, and no factor makes this more clear than the remarkable spike in anticipated U.S. aid levels to Pakistan. Before 11 September 2001, Pakistan was slated to receive some U.S.\$17 million in U.S. aid during 2002. After the terror attacks, this aid package jumped to U.S.\$1 billion.

Economy. Pakistan faces a series of stern challenges to undo years of bad policy choices. The country has considerable human and financial capital but has squandered it for decades. A stagnant economy, intelligence services that have long supported Islamist extremists, military rule, continuing disputes with India, especially over Kashmir, a collapsed education system and the flight of its technocratic class, have all left Pakistan as a country in real danger of itself slipping toward chaos.

The international community’s challenge is to coordinate and deliver its assistance in a way that actually helps secure change within a government that has long been hostile to increased transparency and the broader agenda of reform. Simply bailing the government out of yet another self-induced debt crisis or offering generous

budget support will do little to set Pakistan on a more stable path. Indeed, there is a real danger that the current strategic dynamic will encourage the government to believe that it can actually be rewarded for its long track record of misadventure.

Several areas will need particular attention. Support for Pakistan must secure substantial changes in the country's fiscal structures, and it may be necessary to create an entirely new tax structure that underpins a more secure Pakistani state. This will likely only be achieved with substantial international help to prop up an interim social safety net that can cushion the blow to the people, particularly in healthcare and education.

Tax reform and anti-corruption measures will need to be sweeping, and the tax department could well have to be rebuilt from the ground up. The measures taken thus far against the deeply rooted and systematic corruption in this system have been cosmetic at best.

The United States has made clear that there will be a large-scale effort to address Pakistan's debt crisis. However, this must be accompanied by measures to put in place a more accountable and open market system, or else Pakistan will only repeat the cycle.

Smuggling from Afghanistan is an issue that can best be addressed by Pakistan reducing import tariffs and using a less corrupt tax system as a means to raise government revenue. Concerted and co-ordinated efforts by all donors to pressure Pakistan to clean up the banking sector are also vital. Money laundering needs to be dealt with systematically to cut funds to extremist groups both inside the country and in Afghanistan.

Drugs. Regional efforts to address the drug problem also must involve Pakistan closely. The government and the military have been involved in the drug trade, and the country has not made credible efforts at either interdiction or undercutting demand. Efforts to help repatriate the millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan will also go a long way toward removing one of the lingering sources of social instability.

Education and *health.* Any number of commentators have rightly identified the woeful

state of Pakistan's education system as a prime source of extremism and instability. The government policy that supported Pakistani religious schools as a means to shape young Taliban leadership has certainly proved disastrous, and is yet another example of the security services making dangerously ill-advised strategic decisions.

Madrasas are flourishing in Pakistan's inner cities, and since the late 1970s, the number has gone from about 3,000 to nearly 40,000 across the country. They have spread rapidly because many Pakistanis have no other choice of a school to which they can send their children.

There is a clear need to provide the alternative of secular schools and to put in place an education system that is actually sustainable by the government and communities. While the government has indicated that it would like to modify the madrasas – controlling their message and broadening their curriculum – this approach should be rejected. The international community needs to provide an alternative that focuses on literacy and small local level schools. Some funding should come from communities to make sure there is a sense of ownership and sustainability.

Unlike in some parts of central Asia, the issue is not the shortage of trained people but a shortage of resources and a lack of government will to promote education. While some teacher training will be needed, there are plenty of well-educated unemployed people in Pakistan. There will also need to be an emphasis on girls education and combating resistance to this concept in areas such as the Northwestern Frontier Province.

In too many cases, teachers have been harassed and secular schools closed, with some even burned to the ground. Assistance should be channelled to model schools. The provision of materials and establishment of effective local partnerships will ultimately be more important than simply having the international community try to underwrite the education system.

Pakistan's health care system also desperately needs attention, and again reform will need to be built around sustainability and local participation. Obviously close oversight of aid to Pakistan is

essential, and efforts to assist the military should be approached with a jaundiced eye given the long role of the security services in fuelling regional instability.

V. PRIORITIES FOR IRAN

The situation in Afghanistan allows the international community an avenue to constructively engage Iran without softening its concerns regarding Tehran's links to terrorism and suspected production of weapons of mass destruction. The issues of refugees, drugs and the treatment of Afghanistan's Shia minority provide particularly ripe topics for cooperation. ICG will be exploring these issues in more detail in future reports.

Despite Iran's publicly ambivalent stance toward the U.S.-led military action in Afghanistan, the international community should intensify efforts to relieve the increasingly critical problem of the some 2.3 million Afghan refugees in the country. Droughts in recent years have made this problem more difficult, and helping voluntary repatriation could go far toward promoting stability in both Iran and Afghanistan.

The international community may wish to experiment with trial returns for community leaders among the refugee population, so that these individuals can assess the local situation before making a decision on a permanent return.

Increasing international community efforts to combat drugs would also provide a focus on an area of mutual concern. With between two and six million drug users, Iran faces a growing threat from crime, smuggling and public health threats such as HIV/AIDS. Efforts to combat the drug trade could include modest technical assistance and strengthened cooperation between Tehran's drug agency and its counterparts both in a number of Western countries and the UNDCP in Vienna. This cooperation should include intensified exchange of information.

Iran obviously will also continue to take a keen interest in the shape of any political settlement in Afghanistan. As a neighbour with a significant religious minority in the country, Iran's concerns should be taken into account while the international community makes clear that Afghanistan's future is to be decided foremost by the Afghans themselves. Ensuring the protection of

minority rights would go far to address Iran's legitimate concerns about Afghanistan.

In the framework of President Seyed Mohammad Khatami's offer for dialogue among civilisations, the international community should increase its help for the establishment of a people-to people dialogue between private Iranians, Europeans and Americans. The international community should encourage and finance programs that encompass an intensified exchange of intellectuals, academics, artists, athletes and Shia and Christian clergymen.

Moreover the international community should support mutual visits of members of the Iranian and Western parliaments and elected members of local, municipal and regional councils. If Iran continues its reforms, the U.S. administration and Congress should reassess economic sanctions.

VI. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

A. COORDINATING STRUCTURES

Donors are starting to plan coordinating structures for delivering relief and recovery assistance both to Afghanistan and the broader Central Asian region. These considerations will need to incorporate both security arrangements for Afghanistan and the overall mechanism for channelling assistance. Developments are fast moving, complex and still uncertain. That said, the basic contours of the coordinating structure envisioned by the United Nations, the World Bank, the United States, the European Union and others has begun to emerge.

The World Bank has indicated that it will establish a trust fund for disbursing reconstruction and relief assistance to Afghanistan. However, the hope that international donors will provide non-earmarked funds for such an account will likely run afoul of legislative restrictions in many donor countries. Accordingly, the international community should consider establishing a number of sub-funds within this larger account to allow donors to channel assistance more directly to those areas they view as a strategic priority. These should include:

- *Central Asia Relief and Redevelopment Fund:* A multi-billion dollar general fund aimed at promoting regional development and providing funding for humanitarian work, poverty alleviation, human rights development and health, with a focus on TB, HIV and child immunisation. Infrastructure efforts within the fund should focus on improving regional linkages, particularly rebuilding road networks and irrigation systems.
- *Education and Media Fund:* This would expand education and information across the region with the explicit aim of undermining the message of extremism and the influence of madrasas.

Most in the region would send their children to a secular school ahead of a madrasa but often they have no alternative. The fund should include massive support for primary

and secondary education across the region. Institutes of higher education, modelled on the new University of Central Asia being set up by the Aga Khan Foundation, with a heavy emphasis on vocational training, could also be developed.

This fund would also expand press, radio, television and Internet access in the region and rebuild information networks across Afghanistan. It would provide support to communications infrastructure and community-based communications centres and develop media capabilities. This effort should also include a large-scale public diplomacy campaign to allow all Afghans to find out more about the political processes underway.

- *Afghan Returnee Fund*: This would facilitate the return of the large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran and encourage educated Afghans to come home – even temporarily – to help rebuild their country. Diaspora and refugee Afghans have much they could contribute to peace building and reconstruction if they are given jobs and support.
- *Afghan Demining Fund* – This would pay for the clearing of mines. Between U.S.\$500 million and U.S.\$1 billion will likely be needed to ramp up existing mine clearance work with two primary aims: clearing irrigation systems and arable land and improving transport links while providing work for men, particularly those demobilised from militias.
- *Regional Drugs Fund* – This would combat drugs through crop substitution, poverty reduction, and regional cooperation on interdiction and focus on reducing dependency for the between five to ten million drug users in Central and West Asia. It should commit considerable resources to harm reduction, production, education and trafficking.

The initial plans announced by the international community for Afghanistan are in the range of U.S.\$1 billion a year over a decade. They would

involve a massive humanitarian effort aimed at combating the famine that could affect seven million Afghans and dealing with the large numbers of displaced and refugees. The rapid advances of the international military campaign have opened up important routes for humanitarian assistance, and the international community should be able to provide adequate assistance during the winter and to begin the planting required for the coming crop.

Overall humanitarian needs over the next two years are estimated to be between U.S.\$1.2 billion and U.S.\$1.5 billion. It will be vital to ensure a smooth transition from humanitarian action and funding to longer-term development and reconstruction.

B. THE EUROPEAN UNION

The greatest concern about current European Union policy toward reconstruction in the region is funding levels. It is clear that the first change in European policy needs to be a commitment to funding for redevelopment in Afghanistan and for the region as a whole.

The EU will also need to make political commitments beyond those already in place to increase links with Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia. Some EU statements to date betray a continuing sense that the situation in the region remains a relatively low priority, behind the Balkans and the Middle East which absorb most of its aid money and attention. At a hearing at the European Parliament on aid to Afghanistan, the official in charge of the Asia Directorate at the European Commission suggested that EU aid to Afghanistan would become “more modest” as requirements shifted from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction.

While the European Union over the last ten years has provided on average Euro 50 million per year to Afghanistan in the form of humanitarian assistance, no EU money in the present financial perspective is as yet earmarked for longer term reconstruction and development efforts.

The European Union – its institutions and member states – should reconsider this approach, recognising that this situation represents a clear threat to its common interests. As one of the four

co-chairs of the “Afghan Steering Committee” created at the 20 November 2001 Washington conference on a post-Taliban Afghanistan, the EU has a responsibility to redouble efforts to mobilise funds for the country’s reconstruction, well ahead of the January 2002 pledging conference in Tokyo. Europe is as vulnerable to terrorism as the United States, 80 per cent of Europe’s heroin comes from Afghanistan, some 28,000 Afghan asylum seekers arrived in Europe in 2000 and a worsening of relations with the Islamic world would hurt Europe significantly both because of its proximity and because of its large Islamic populations

The European Union should also work to establish a comprehensive program of assistance to the Central Asian region by adapting the TACIS assistance program⁴⁰ to make it more useful to beneficiaries. TACIS, originally designed to facilitate the former Soviet republics’ transition to a market economy, has proved of only limited usefulness to Central Asian nations whose development needs are very different from those of, for instance, Russia. For the period 2000 – 2006 TACIS will dispense roughly Euro 500 million per year, of which only Euro 25 million a year is projected to go to Central Asia.

The EU will also need to work jointly with the U.S. and Japan to push the governments of the region to take credible steps toward lasting political and economic reform. The EU needs a much more political approach to its aid policy. Recognition of the geopolitical importance of Central Asia to the interests of EU states is an important start, but it must be followed by a concerted political and economic effort that coordinates bilateral assistance by member-states with a reformed EU program towards Central Asia.

In a recent paper entitled “Re-evaluation of EU policy towards the central Asian countries”, foreign policy chief Javier Solana stated bluntly

⁴⁰ The TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) program is the main instrument of EU assistance to the 13 countries of the former Soviet Union. The main element of Tacis support aims to transfer know-how and expertise to institutions and organisations in the partner countries, in the areas of institutional and legal reform, private sector and economic development, societal change, infrastructure, environmental protection, rural economy and nuclear safety. For more information, see europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations

that while the EU “should have no illusions about ... the limited instruments available to us in supporting our objectives”, it did have immediate and long-term interests in Central Asia. Without reform, Solana noted, the region would become a “breeding ground for extremism and terrorism.” Yet, Solana admitted, there were serious questions “as to the extent to which we are willing to make available sufficient resources to make a difference.”⁴¹

C. THE UNITED STATES

The United States, as the prime victim of the 11 September attacks, continues to drive both the military response in Afghanistan and planning for reconstruction and humanitarian efforts. Although planning for reconstruction is still evolving rapidly within the U.S. government, an initial approach has emerged. The initial overall breakdown in the U.S. inter-agency draft plan for the first five years of regional assistance is U.S.\$5.2 billion of which U.S.\$650 million would be dedicated to humanitarian relief in the first 6-24 months, and U.S.\$1.2 to U.S.\$1.5 billion would go to humanitarian relief over the full five years.

The evolving strategy concept within the U.S. government weaves together five distinct tracks of activity: military, humanitarian, political, security and reconstruction. To some degree, the entire effort is designed to demonstrate coalition determination to continue in peace as well as in war and a readiness to stay engaged over the long haul for recovery.

Among the reconstruction priority areas in the U.S. inter-agency draft plan of overall reconstruction needs are: health; education; reintegration; agricultural recovery and food security; emergency public works and other income-generating projects; basic infrastructure and private sector reform. Quick impact activities linked to resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, such as demining, and providing seeds and fertilisers will also be given a high priority. Not

⁴¹ “Suggestions by High Representative Javier Solana for a re-evaluation of EU policy towards the Central Asian countries, SN 4369/1/01, 26 October 2001. See also *Financial Times*, “Central Asia states force way into EU consciousness”, 30 October 2001

surprisingly, many of these approaches track the current planning approach being forwarded by the World Bank.

The thematic elements being stressed within the initial U.S. planning documents and discussions include:

- Decentralised service delivery with local and regional determination of priorities
- The participation of women; and,
- Regional approaches to development, with Afghan reconstruction taking place within Central Asia development – there will be funding announced from the start for frontline countries.

The U.S. Treasury is working with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club on a plan to deal with U.S.\$250 million of outstanding debt. Of this sum, U.S.\$95 million is held by international financial institutions, U.S.\$115 million is held by major donor countries and U.S.\$40 million is held by private banks.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

There are no guarantees that money and diplomatic attention will bring stability to Afghanistan and its neighbours but the chances of success are greater now than ever before. The international community has been galvanised into action and pressure is developing for quick results. However, peace will only come to this region with sustained and considerable efforts over many years. There must be an awareness of the risks that interest will fall off when the cameras leave or that aid to the region will divert resources from other problems around the world.

Many Afghans would express scepticism about the lofty pledges to rebuild their country. Too often in the past, they have been abandoned while outside support has been channelled to military groups. Now is the time to change this situation by devoting the necessary resources – possibly as much as U.S.\$25 billion over the next ten years – to stabilising the country and providing security, building a government based on consent and putting in place an administration to handle reconstruction.

Stabilising Afghanistan will require that donors also pay close and sustained attention –and provide considerable further resources – to the neighbouring countries. The crisis in Afghanistan presents opportunities for Pakistan to repair some of the damage its institutions and society have suffered since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the late 1970s. It might open a window to new constructive relationship between Iran and the West. It could focus attention on Central Asia in a way that brings development and stability to a perilous region.

All of this can only happen if the commitments are made to provide the necessary resources and energy.

Osh/Brussels, 27 November 2001

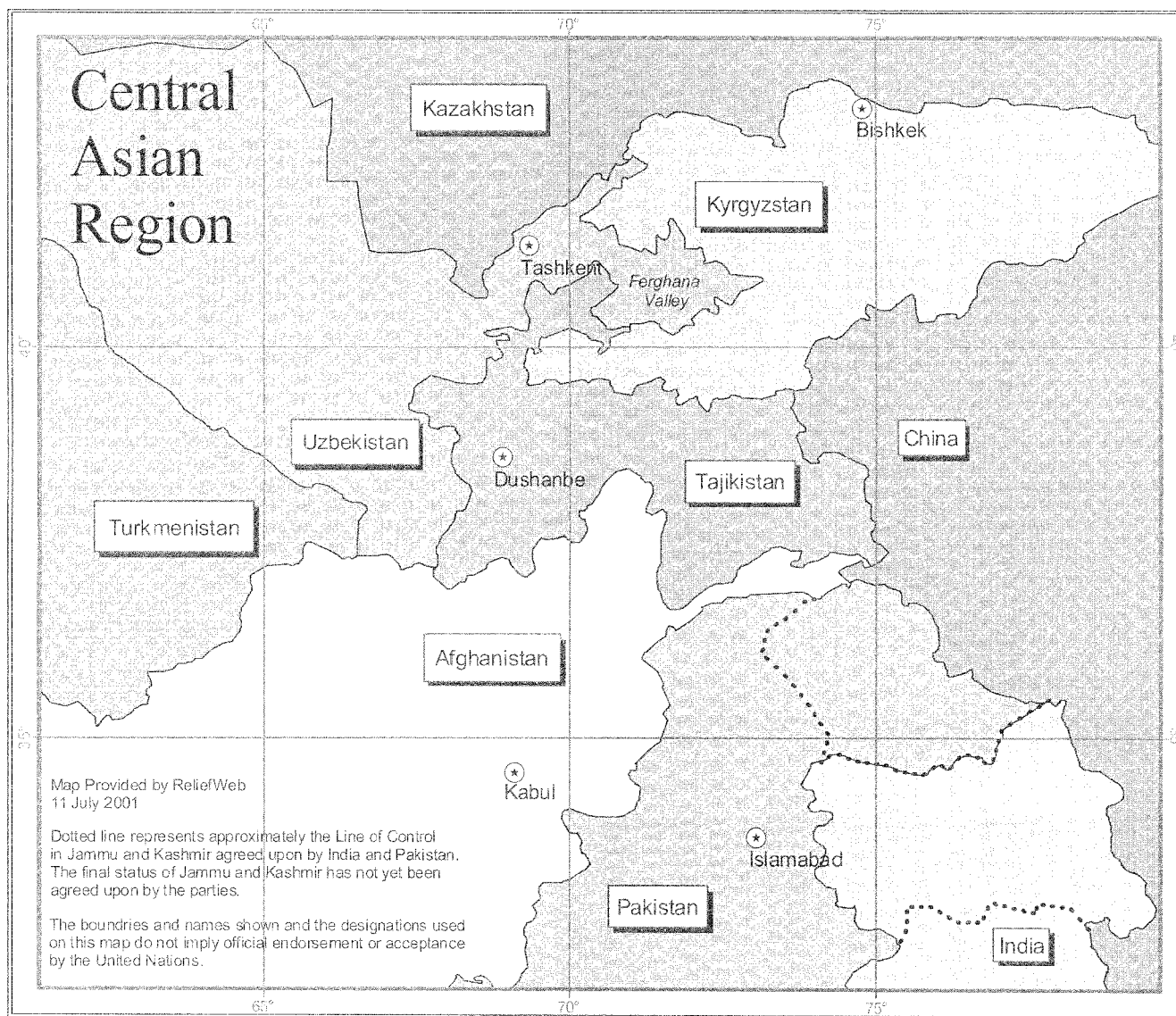
APPENDIX A

MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



APPENDIX B

MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA



APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analysis and to generate support for its policy prescriptions. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has been President and Chief Executive since January 2000.

ICG's international headquarters are at Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris. The organisation currently operates field projects in nineteen crisis-affected countries and regions across four continents:

Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa; Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Asia; Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in Europe; and Colombia in Latin America.

ICG also undertakes and publishes original research on general issues related to conflict prevention and management. After the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, ICG launched a major new project on global terrorism, designed both to bring together ICG's work in existing program areas and establish a new geographical focus on the Middle East (with a regional field office planned for Amman) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (with a field office planned for Islamabad).

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Foundation and private sector donors include the Ansary Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Ploughshares Fund and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

November 2001

APPENDIX D

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APPENDIX E

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