

10 December 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Inauguration of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive
Diplomacy for Central Asia**

I would like to commend President Berdymukhammedov and the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting the International Conference on “International Cooperation in Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution.” This conference also marks the inauguration of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Ashgabad.

The establishment of this Centre is an excellent example of how a group of Member States from a particular region can pool their resources together and work with each other through the United Nations to address regional challenges. In this regard, I express my appreciation for the efforts of the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for this achievement. These Central Asian countries are also playing an increasing role in the work of the United Nations General Assembly.

We have often been quite vocal in promoting the merits of conflict prevention – quoting old proverbs such as, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” – but quite often our work in this regard remained on the level of paying lip service to preventive diplomacy. In Central Asia we are taking a concrete step now. Through the establishment of the regional centre the United Nations shows its commitment to assisting the governments of Central Asia to cooperate more closely on regional issues related to conflict prevention. These include a wide range of cross-border issues: from combating international terrorism and drug trafficking to equitable water resources management.

At the same time the centre will take a pro-active approach to conflict prevention by assisting the countries as a catalyst for building democratic institutions and processes, development of civil society and respect for human rights.

Broad outreach to civil society groups as well as the involvement of various regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are further elements that underscore the wide base of support and expertise for the Centre’s actions.

All this together may serve as further boost and example for other Member States to take collective action on a regional as well as global level in preventive diplomacy.

The very issues the Centre will be dealing with are the very same issues that the broader membership of the United Nations, all 192 Member States, has on its agenda in the framework of

the General Assembly. Progress on those issues on a regional level – preventing conflicts in any part of the world is very much in the interest of all Member States.

As President of the United Nations General Assembly, I wish to thank the government of Turkmenistan for hosting and supporting this important centre. I wish the Centre good luck in its future work.