



Resolution 1599 (2008)¹

The situation in the Republics of Central Asia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. When they became independent in 1991, the newly sovereign states of central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) proclaimed as their strategic goal their transformation into free democratic societies, based on market economy and integrated into the international community.
2. However, confronted with the authoritarian legacy of the former regime, with the challenges of simultaneous multifaceted transition in political, economic and social areas, and with waves of instability resulting from violent ethnic, religious and social conflicts, central Asian states have had enormous difficulties in making headway towards this goal. Progress has been further hindered by the lack of real political commitment to, and wrong conception of, reforms, and the absence of democratic traditions and accountability. Initial high public expectations of rapid transformation quickly turned into disappointment, which dramatically weakened both internal motivations of political elites, and public support for reforms. Hence, transitions have brought mixed results, transformations are far from being completed and, in some cases, there is clear regression.
3. As former republics of the Soviet Union, the states of central Asia are participating states in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and thus are politically bound by the OSCE human dimension commitments, including respect for human rights, the rule of law and promotion of the principles of democracy, which to a large extent coincide with the Council of Europe's core activities.
4. However, the performance of central Asian states in these areas, from one country to another, ranges from limited improvement to complete failure. Democratic principles have failed to take root within societies and ruling elites and to replace authoritarian methods of government inherited from the past. Power remains highly centralised within the executive, with no effective checks and balances. Democratic institutions are weak, if not a mere imitation. Human rights abuses, corruption, misuse of power and ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty are areas of concern, and steps by the authorities to deal with these problems must be encouraged.
5. Moreover, public authorities often fail to deliver the basic services in the social, economic, education and health protection fields which citizens are entitled to receive from a modern state. The lack of a tradition and of effective means of democratic control over authority, together with lack of accountability, result in deep popular suspicion of state institutions. Conditions are therefore ripe for tension between the state and the population, and for rapid ascendancy of extremist militant groups. Corrupt and inefficient public authorities force ordinary people to seek a just society.
6. In order to avoid the further deterioration of the situation in central Asia, with a real risk of social and political instability, these countries need to proceed with profound reforms in order to move towards good governance, political transformation and social stability. Problems that they are faced with need a locally grown political response, which could be fostered by, but not imported from, the international community.

1. Assembly debate on 23 January 2008 (6th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11460](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Mercan). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 January 2008 (6th Sitting).



7. The European political and social experience interests and attracts elites and peoples of central Asia. Europe should use its influence and soft power to promote liberalisation and political reform in the region. However, central Asia must not be considered as an arena for a new geopolitical “Great Game”. Any externally designed projects which exclude the existing political forces or ignore local realities or interests of the majority, would only bring about destabilisation and would be doomed to failure.
8. As central Asia is not part of Europe, states of the region are not potential candidates for joining the Council of Europe. However, taking into account the situation of central Asia in Europe’s neighbourhood, and its growing vulnerability to illegal migration, drugs production and smuggling, arms trafficking and the threat of extremism and terrorism, our Organisation should promote stability and good governance in central Asia, strengthen national capacities and establish reliable co-operation with these states in addressing common threats.
9. Furthermore, the Council of Europe, building on its experience of transitions in central and eastern Europe, could contribute, in co-operation with the European Union and the OSCE, to redefining the scope of reforms in central Asia, thus increasing their chances of success.
10. The Assembly urges the authorities and political forces of central Asia to:
 - 10.1. engage in serious reforms aimed at good governance, institutional modernisation, political liberalisation and accountability;
 - 10.2. address without delay urgent issues their countries are faced with, such as corruption, organised crime, poverty or the spread of disease, thus regaining the confidence of their population;
 - 10.3. strengthen national capacities and step up international co-operation in the fight against illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, drugs production and smuggling, money laundering, arms trafficking and terrorism;
 - 10.4. make use of international expertise, in particular that of the Council of Europe, regarding democratic transition;
 - 10.5. make progress in meeting political commitments entered into in the framework of the OSCE in the fields of building democracy, guaranteeing respect for human rights and abiding by the rule of law, and in particular to:
 - 10.5.1. allow political pluralism and provide conditions for genuine political competition through free and fair elections;
 - 10.5.2. ensure the genuine separation of power between the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches, and the proper functioning of democratic institutions;
 - 10.5.3. guarantee all basic human rights and political freedoms, including freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of the media;
 - 10.5.4. enable free political discussions and investigations about political prisoners;
 - 10.5.5. abide by all international standards as regards the torture and ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.
11. The Assembly calls on member and observer states of the Council of Europe to:
 - 11.1. strengthen the dialogue with authorities of central Asian states aimed at promoting and supporting reforms towards good governance, political liberalisation, institutional modernisation and accountability, and at sharing experience of, and expertise on, democratic transition;
 - 11.2. maintain issues of democracy, human rights and the rule of law as central items on the agenda of the dialogue, while avoiding that these issues are perceived as tools of pressure aimed at achieving political or economic benefits;
 - 11.3. provide support to the strengthening of democratic institutions and civil society organisations in the countries of central Asia and to develop co-operation with them.
12. The Assembly calls on the European Union and the OSCE to make use of the Council of Europe’s experience of, and expertise on, democratic transition in their programmes and activities in central Asia.
13. The Assembly invites the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to:
 - 13.1. inform the authorities of central Asian states of the core activities and achievements of the Council of Europe in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

13.2. consider ways of sharing with the central Asian states the Council of Europe's experience of, and expertise on, democratic transition;

13.3. contribute to strengthening civil society organisations in central Asia and to involve them in European cooperation networks.

14. The Assembly welcomes the ongoing co-operation between Kyrgyzstan and the Venice Commission, and encourages the other states of central Asia to establish such a co-operation.

15. The Assembly declares its readiness to contribute to establishing political dialogue with central Asia at the parliamentary level aimed at the strengthening of democratic principles and standards. With this in mind, it resolves to:

15.1. keep the parliaments of central Asian states informed of its activities and of its resolutions and recommendations;

15.2. consider inviting representatives of the parliaments of central Asian states to follow those plenary sessions, committee meetings and other activities which deal with topics of common interest;

15.3. consider inviting central Asian parliaments to be associated with European Conferences of Presidents of Parliaments;

15.4. encourage its official representatives at international parliamentary forums where central Asian parliaments are represented to establish contacts and develop dialogue with their representatives.