



Your Excellence's!

Thank you all for the invitation and the opportunity to participate today in a very important meeting, thank you for your efforts and the continuous work that you started at the Stockholm meeting at the OSCE in November 2022, assessing the lessons of the pandemic and including the format about the importance of preventing new risks and disasters in the OSCE region, including the scale of the disaster flow both inside and outside Afghanistan.

Central Asian women leaders, together with Forum Asia partners, consulted with partners and created a platform to address the needs and requirements of victims of conflict in Afghanistan and of systemic discrimination and persecution after the Taliban came to power.

It is important today to understand the countries where refugees from Afghanistan are fleeing for their right to life. They are mostly activists, women, leaders, minorities, and creative people like artists, documentary filmmakers, human rights activists.

Are the countries of Central Asia ready to provide them with security and a decent life?

There are systemic problems...

The region of Central Asia in the flow of new risks, conflicts and disasters, including systemic, unresolved...

Solutions to problems:

New collaborative inclusive strategies:

- *on prevention and deterrence of risks, conflicts and disasters through the promotion of gender equality and gender justice from the level of communities to global;*
 - *on localization of key OSCE security and Human Dimension programs with equal participation of leaders from among girls, women, minorities, youth: from community level to global,*
 - *including inclusive educational programs for refugee women and youth on horizontal leadership development, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship development for women and youth*



Systemic unresolved, acute problems of Central Asian countries that negatively affect security and development issues

MAP OF RADIOACTIVE AND TOXIC TAILS



The Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic manages, among other things, 36 tailings and 25 dumps with a total volume of 15.7 million cubic meters, including

- 31 radioactive waste tailings with a volume of 7.2 million cubic meters
- 5 tailings with toxic waste with a volume of 5.2 million cubic meters
- 25 dumps of substandard ores with a volume of 3.3 million cubic meters

- *"legacy of the Soviet system"*, 92 uranium tailings dumps in the KR, Mailuu Suu is listed among the 10 most dangerous places in the world, all Central Asian countries are subject to so-called Natech accidents, i.e. technological accidents caused by natural disasters. The risk of Natech accidents is compounded by changing weather conditions and more extreme weather events due to abrupt climate change.

Obstacles from the past...

**Mailuu Suu
Uranium**
23 – tailings,
13 – mining dumps,
abandoned mines,
factories, workshops
Period: 1946-1968

**Min Kush
Uranium**
4 tailings,
4 mining dumps,
workshops, ore
stockpiles, mines
Period: 1955-1969

**Kadzhi-Sai
Uranium**
1 tailing,
Mining dumps, a
mine, a plant
Period: 1949-67

33 radioactive tailings and 25 mining dumps are located at 6 sites in Kyrgyzstan



пос. Шекафтар

пос. Ак-Тюз

пос. Орловка

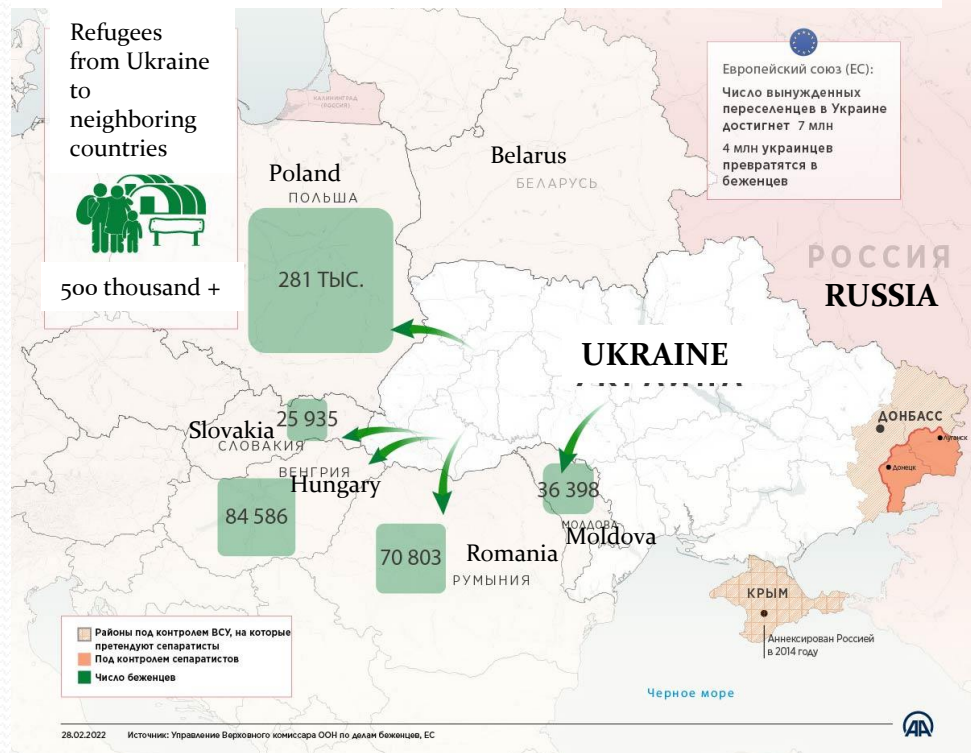


Systemic unresolved, acute problems of Central Asian countries that negatively affect security and development issues

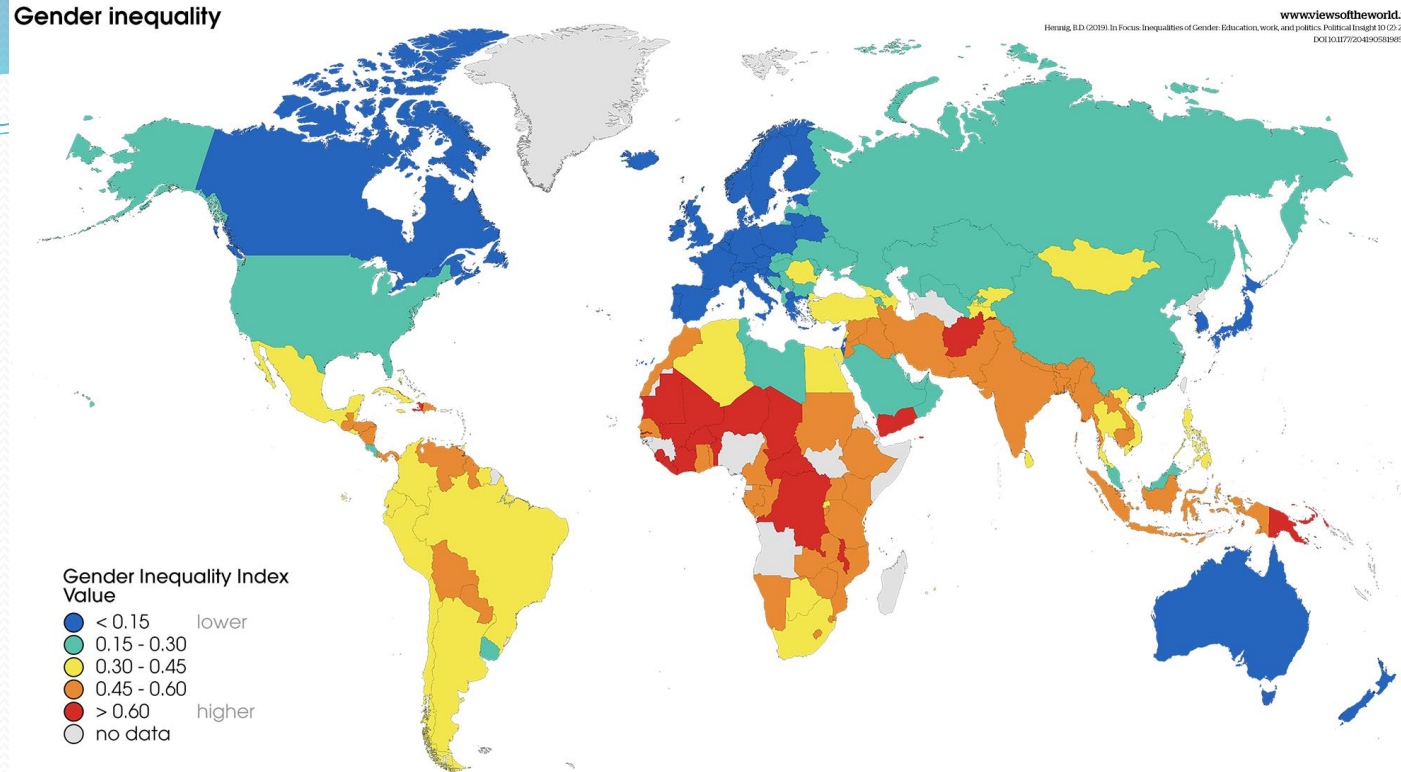
- ***border conflicts***, including military conflicts in April – May 2021 in the border areas of the Batken oblast,
- ***systemic impunity leads to*** a deterioration of the human rights situation, especially the situation of girls, women, youth, minorities and vulnerable groups in Central Asian countries,
- **degradation of the justice system and law enforcement agencies** leads to growth of radical fundamentalism in the Central Asia region,
- ***shrinking political space*** for civil society leads to an increase in poverty, destitution and marginalization of the majority of citizens due to the lack of access to quality education, equal access to information, quality services and protection of labor rights,
- ***gaps between authorities at all levels and communities, between rich and poor, the lessons of the pandemic have shown how weak and incapable state institutions are to address new risks and disasters, as a result, conflicts erupted in Kazakhstan in January 2022, in Gorny Badakhshan in May 2022, and others...***
- ***new challenges related to the situation in Afghanistan, security threats for Central Asia countries and OSCE member states...***

New challenges related to the situation in Afghanistan, security threats for Central Asia countries and OSCE member states...

War between Ukraine and Russia: refugees have flooded into Europe



Gender inequality



Globally, women account for only 38% of human capital wealth versus 62% for men. From an economic point of view, human capital wealth can increase by 21.7% worldwide, whereas overall well-being can increase by 14.0% with gender equality at least in income [Wodon and de la Brière, 2018].

The situation for the Central Asia region is characterized by the fact that Kazakhstan leads the ranking in terms of gender equality, being 44th out of 162 in the world ranking

Uzbekistan, which ranks second in the GEI (Gender Equality Index) rating in Central Asia, is in the second category of HDI – "high level of human development". Tajikistan, together with Kyrgyzstan, is placed in the third category according to HDI – "average level of human development". The country ranks 70th in the GEI list.

Kyrgyzstan ranks last out of the four Central Asian countries represented in the GEI, being in the 82nd place out of 162 overall. The main factors contributing to the relatively low position of the country are maternal mortality, amounting to 60 deaths per 100,000 births, the teenage fertility rate, amounting to 32.8 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19, and the highest difference in the level of economic activity (30.9%) between men and women.

Women and migration:

- Migrant women experience other difficulties compared to men at all stages of the migration process.

Migration policy in the participating States rarely includes gender aspects that reflect the specific needs of migrant women. The limited access of migrant women to legal employment channels and their inequality in labor legislation makes them particularly at risk of exploitation.

The ODIHR's activities in the field of gender equality and migration are aimed at expanding existing practical knowledge on how to make the migration policy of OSCE participating States more gender-oriented.

As a result of these activities, ODIHR has published a trainer's manual on gender and labour migration, and facilitated the organization of regional training courses for policy makers based on this manual.

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/d/37229.pdf>

Victims of the new Afghan government:

- **Refugees 1.** According to Washington, after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies removed more than 122 thousand civilians from the country. Among them were, in particular, former local employees of the armed forces of Western countries stationed there. 2.

According to the European Commission, 42 thousand Afghans received asylum in the EU last year - this is the second largest group of refugees after Syrians. <https://www.dw.com/ru/es-ne-beret-na-sebja-nikakih-objazatelstv-po-priemu-bezhencev-iz-afganistana/a-59045606> 3.

To date, the competent authorities of Tajikistan have not granted refugee status to 5.5 thousand Afghans. It is precisely the number of Afghans who, having entered the territory of Tajikistan, received only a "temporary certificate of an asylum seeker" and are forced to renew it every month. <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/31783778.html> About half of the children of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan do not attend secondary school. Education in the only special school for Afghan refugees "Somoniyon" is not affordable for everyone, and some do not consider it necessary to send their children to Tajik schools. The uncertain future of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan has a negative impact on the education of their children.

According to the UN, there are about 14 thousand Afghan refugees in Tajikistan.

According to unofficial statistics, more than 3 thousand of them are children and teenagers of school age, of which only about a thousand attend school. More than 300 children study at "Somoniyon" school, 610 children study in Tajik schools. Children of Afghan refugees studying in ordinary schools face difficulties when writing, *because in Afghanistan the ligature is widely used, whereas in Tajikistan the Cyrillic alphabet is widely used.* <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/31838618.html>

- *In 1993, the Republic of Tajikistan was the first in Central Asia to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is alarmed by the deportation of Afghan asylum seekers by the Tajik authorities in November 2021. 11 men, women and children were forcibly returned to Afghanistan on 11 November, pending consideration of their asylum and protection applications.* <https://www.unhcr.org/centralasia/15481-unhcr-urges-tajikistan-to-halt-returns-of-afghans-at-risk.html>
- The length of Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan is more than 1400 kilometers, the number of Afghan refugees in Tajikistan exceeds 15 thousand people. This is reported by the Tajik service of Radio Liberty with reference to the head of the State Committee for National Security (SCNS) of the country, Saimumin Yatimov. At a meeting of heads of security agencies and intelligence services of the CIS countries, Yatimov stated that 500-600 Afghan citizens try to cross the Tajik-Afghan border every day <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/glava-spetssluzhb-tadzhikistana-zayavil-15-tysyach-afganskih-bezhentsev/31511208.html>

Refugees in tent camps...

- The first stop on the way of a migrant who has left Afghanistan is a temporary tent camp. Two countries —**Iran and Pakistan**— have placed them on the Afghan border with the right to accept refugees. The conditions there correspond to the difficult economic situation of both states. Despite this, some of the refugees will almost certainly have to stay where they are accepted. Statistics show that 36% of Afghans who have ever fled to Pakistan still live in a tent camp. Meeting with them is not without risks for those fleeing from the Taliban. Tehran (**Iran**) has agreed to deploy tent camps in three provinces bordering Afghanistan. But there are already too many Afghan refugees there: from 800 thousand to a million, according to various estimates.
- **There are 4 million of them on the territory of Turkey**, including about a million in the metropolitan area of Istanbul. The vast majority of them are from Syria. The attempts towards their integration into local society bears no fruit yet, but ethnic crime is growing and local xenophobia is increasing in response.

Representatives of civil society: journalists, human rights defenders, creative, talented people

- To date, the Taliban has already responded with violence to HRDs, particularly WHRDs, who have been calling for democracy to be restored and human rights to be upheld in the country. As a result, HRDs have either been forced to stop their legitimate human rights work in the country completely, or otherwise suffer the consequences – whether it be through arrest or worse, through physical violence.
- To reduce destitution, poverty and the humanitarian crisis, it is important to restore the right of girls to education
- It is important to restore civil, political and economic rights of women and minorities
- It is important to restore the right of citizens to freedom of association, peaceful rallies and actions
- The leaders of the Central Asian countries should be guided in their work to prevent new risks, conflicts and disasters by the guiding principles of the UN, OSCE and the European Union on protection of the rights of human rights defenders, journalists and activists

Girls, women, minorities and vulnerable groups.

- Officially, since the seizure of power, the Taliban movement has been governing the country on the basis of decrees, removing parliament from governance. Today, their governance is characterized by uncertainty, arbitrariness and disregard for the rule of law. It is not yet clear whether the Taliban considers the legislative framework of Afghanistan, including the Constitution, to be valid.
- The subject of justice is currently not functioning, while a number of reports indicate that the Taliban movement intends to use corporal punishment and the death penalty within the framework of the application of Sharia law.
- Since August 2021, after the Taliban capture of Afghanistan, many restrictive and prohibitive measures have been introduced, including those based on gender stereotypes and prejudices. UN experts believe that such steps are a collective punishment of women and girls. Women from ethnic, religious and other minority communities, such as Hazaras, Tajiks and Hindus, as well as women in families without men, turned out to be in the most difficult situation. After the establishment of the "new order" in Afghanistan, women and girls have become more at risk of human trafficking, forced marriage, as well as sexual exploitation. Afghan women are being isolated and discriminated against, the Taliban have forbidden them to return to their jobs, as well as to appear in public places unaccompanied by men. Women cannot use public transport on their own and should adhere to a strict dress code.

- "In addition to serious restrictions on freedom of movement, expression and association, as well as women's participation in public and political affairs, this policy leads to limited opportunities to find work, earn a living, which plunges women into increasing poverty," experts say. UN human rights defenders expressed extreme concern about the violation of the right of women and girls to secondary and higher education, related to the requirement that women and men be separated from each other in educational institutions, and female pupils and students observe a special dress code.
- Besides that, most secondary schools for girls are still closed. "Today, women and girls are being purposefully ousted from the public life of Afghanistan...", the experts said in their statement.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs was liquidated in the country and the premises of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission were seized.
- According to traditions in Afghanistan, if the family of a potential bride does not give her away voluntarily, the groom can take her away (there are girls running away from such traditions in the camps of Tajikistan). Refugees from Afghanistan: girls and women, minorities are afraid of persecution in refugee camps, since they receive threats in social networks from men.

Recommendations:



- Research programs are important for assessing the needs and demands of refugees from Afghanistan in Central Asian countries and the OSCE region for early warning regarding risks and threats to the OSCE Human Dimension
- It is important to support civic educational programs for the development of horizontal leadership of women, strengthening programs to create conditions for the development of women's entrepreneurship, involving activists of women community leaders both inside Afghanistan and in refugee camps, in tent camps, involving women leaders of Afghanistan, such as leader Habiba Sarabi, former Minister of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan, and former Governor of Bamyán Province. (www.womenlearningpartnership.org)
- It is necessary to strengthen dialogue and networking platforms to discuss key issues on the effectiveness of the implementation of National Action Plans by Central Asian countries to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for promotion of gender equality and gender justice

Recommendations:

- It is necessary to contribute to the cessation of aggression and war on the part of Russia in Ukraine, as sanctions against Russia lead to a humanitarian crisis, an increase in poverty and destitution in the Central Asian region,
- Expand assistance to victims of the war in Ukraine by providing technical and legal assistance to representatives of CSOs and NGOs in Ukraine in the format of the OSCE Human Dimension,
- Strengthen the OSCE partnership with key UN, EU and OSCE institutions to promote gender equality and gender justice through broad coalitions of feminist organizations to restore the rights of girls and women, promoting the universality of human rights and freedoms in the Central Asian region, both in practice and in the format of the development of democratic legislation in the Central Asian countries;
- Promote the adoption of laws of a democratic format, excluding discrimination and violence (such as laws against mass media, strengthening state control over the independent NGO sector following the example of the SCO and CSTO countries, laws posing a danger to the freedom of speech and self-expression of citizens, allegedly representing the "fight against extremism");
- It is important to promote the development of a new migration policy for Central Asian countries because of sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation due to the war in Ukraine
<https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/A%20AC.293%202022%20L.1%20English.pdf>
- Promote equal participation of women, youth, representatives of mass media, minorities in negotiation processes in times of crisis, focusing on the prevention and deterrence of new risks and disasters in the OSCE region, especially in Central Asia,

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the promotion of equal participation of active citizens in the regions for joint preparation of local action plans and overcoming risks and threats based on the principle from local to global (<https://learningpartnership.org/>)
- Expand access for public organizations to provide the necessary information about risks and threats at the local level under Business and Human Rights (www.fidh.org)
Develop partnership with the involvement of a wide range of experts and organizations involved in the processes of protecting communities from risks and threats.
- Expand national platforms for cooperation in the area of citizens' access to information from international projects in the regions with increased participation of citizens living in risk zones in decision-making processes at all levels of government. <https://www.forum-asia.org/>
- Monitor all risk and disaster prevention projects in the regions in partnership with local leaders and communities (www.gndr.org)

Innovation and creativity:

- Bir Duino proposes a special visit program for a group of students from leading educational institutions in Sweden and other countries in the WLP organization to promote gender equality and gender equity in the various countries of the WLP+20 Solidarity Partner Network <https://learningpartnership.org/>
- Climate change, new risks and disasters provided new opportunities for community women leaders to find new tools to influence decision making at all levels of government and to develop inclusive recommendations to donors and government on the importance of localizing key projects both country, regional and global.
<https://www.gndr.org/forced-displacement-global-report/>
- It is necessary to promote the development of an inclusive action plan to ensure effectiveness of mass media in the face of crises, risks and disasters, involving journalists and experts on the situation in Afghanistan.
- It is necessary to contribute to the development of national emergency action plans to prevent new risks and conflicts in the Central Asia region, involving OSCE chairing countries to exchange best practices of good governance.