

**Recommendation from the Japan-EU Conference on  
Tajikistan-Afghanistan Border Management and Cross-border  
Co-operation  
(February 28-29 2012, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)**

**1. Introduction**

(1) The Japan-EU Conference on Afghanistan-Tajikistan Border Management and Cross-border Co-operation was held on 28-29 February 2012 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Conference, co-organised with the assistance of EU-UNDP BOMCA and BOMNAF Programmes, was designed within the framework of initiatives identified at the EU-Japan summits in Tokyo on 28 April 2010 and in Brussels on 28 May 2011, where Japan and the European Union reconfirmed their commitment to pursue cooperation on security, reintegration, and development assistance in the region and thereby promote a secure, stable and prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan. The objectives of the Conference were to discuss: (a) the improvement of security and stability at the border and within borderlands regions; (b) the enhancement of cross-border co-operation in border management; (c) the facilitation of legitimate trade and transit; (d) the reduction in illicit movement of goods and people.

(2) The Conference focused on a wide range of issues, which border management encompasses in Central Asia: international and local initiatives and contributions in the region; (disaster) risk management measures; collaboration at border crossing points; cross-border cooperation between services; trade and economic relations; Customs and Border Services' reform and modernization; technical assistance and capacity strengthening.

(3) The Conference brought together senior border commanders, government officials and experts from Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which attendance increased in both number and ranking compared to the previous event in 2010. Officials and representatives of the AKDN, EU, GIZ, Japan, Mission East, OSCE, Russian Federation, UNDP, UNODC, UNOPS and the USA also presented related international and local initiatives and contributions in the region.

The following lessons were drawn after one-and-a-half day's discussion.

## **2. Lessons learned**

**(1) Risk and border management requires securing the border from both sides, with an equal level of commitment, and is based on information exchange.**

Assistance to fostering direct and concrete collaboration between the Governments of Tajikistan and Afghanistan is of utmost importance, while cross-border and cooperative development programmes between both countries also hold very significant capacity building potential.

The problems of Afghanistan should be tackled within a regional perspective and efforts needed to identify, assess and monitor levels of threats should converge towards sharing information and intelligence between services, at all levels – locally between communities and border posts, regionally and internationally.

**(2) Enhanced cross-border cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan and the other Central Asian countries is at the core of border security.**

There is still limited cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the Government of Tajikistan in matters of border control despite massive illicit narcotics' trafficking, movement of persons and arms trade along their shared borders. Increased cross-border co-operation is essential at all levels: locally, between communities separated by the border; between both governments at an operational level in particular, through the implementation of joint operations involving related services or other initiatives, such as prevention activities; eventually, political reforms and good governance are unavoidable pre-conditions, and participants expressed great interest in an enhanced cross-border policy dialogue that would be based on the organization of more meetings between high-ranking officials, supported by operational meetings at Border Liaison Offices, thereby building political bridges between both countries.

**(3) Particular highlight was put on the importance of legitimate trade and transit as one of the pillars alleviating poverty and supporting sustainable**

## **economic growth in the region.**

Improving border management also depends on social welfare and local economic development.

Insecurity and illegal activities being a major impediment to the development of safe trade corridors and transit routes, economic growth is virtually impossible without addressing all means necessary for ensuring security, including border security such as: increased skills and capacities of border and customs services' human resources, as well as enhanced control systems, modern equipment (no helicopters are available for border management on either side of the Tajik-Afghan border) and upgraded infrastructure.

Achieving the above and supporting efforts practically will require ongoing communication and a continuous commitment at the highest political level by Afghanistan, Tajikistan and all other Central Asian countries.

### **3. Way forward**

- (1) These recommendations will be reported to the next Japan-EU Senior Officials' Meeting, which oversees progress in Japan-EU bilateral relations, with a view to particularly discuss possibilities to further enhance Japan-EU cooperation in Central Asia;
- (2) Continued political commitment by Japan and the EU for social welfare, economic development and political reforms in Central Asia;
- (3) Japan and the EU will participate to the Ministerial Conference of the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) scheduled for 16 and 17 April 2012 and convened in Vienna (Austria) and in view of the political importance of security and stability in the Region, encourage all concerned countries to do so as well.
- (4) Recognising the growing importance of strengthened border co-operation in Central Asia due to increasing regional trade and the consequences the drawdown of ISAF forces may have for the region, Japan and the EU could envisage holding another conference of this kind in the coming years.