

*Check against delivery*

**Statement of Kalman Mizsei to the Human Security and Transition Round Table in  
Ashgabat 22-23 April 2002**

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Government of Turkmenistan and the Commission on Human Security for having organized this Round Table on Human Security and Transition in Central Asia. We are honored to participate in this workshop and to hear the major human security challenges faced by Central Asian countries.

As the UNDP Global Human Development Report of 1994 initially pointed out, the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as a global security from the nuclear threat. However the concept has evolved beyond that of the state to concerns for the security of the people in it. Increasingly security means protection from the threat of hunger, unemployment, disease, crime, human rights violations and environmental hazards. The UN SG has called the world community to advance the twin goals of “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”

Human security usually implies a condition in which people can exercise their choices safely and freely, without fear that the opportunities that they enjoy today will be lost or taken away tomorrow. The loss of human security can be a slow silent process – or an abrupt, loud emergency. Humans can be at fault – with bad policy choices. So can the forces of nature. Or it can be a combination –when environmental degradation leads to a natural disaster, followed by human tragedy

The components of human security are interdependent. As the Central Asian experience shows, environmental disasters, limited access to scarce water resources, drug trafficking,

poverty, terrorism and ethnic disputes are no longer isolated events. They are no longer confined within national borders but these issues of insecurity in one country affects that of others in the region.. In our last South Eastern European Cluster meeting of UNDP, we found that the common denominator of our work is exactly human security. It is also of utmost importance in other regions.

## **2. Why addressing human security is important in Central Asia?**

Addressing human security is especially relevant to Central Asia for three reasons:

- 1) To understand the impact of economic and social policies of the transition had on people's well-being in the last decade. During the last ten years there has been a steep and fast decline of standards of living, loss of jobs, cutback on subsidies and free access to education and health services and social securities. It is important to design policies for the future that concentrate on good economic policies that take into consideration the well-being of people in the short and long term. For this to happen there has to be a dual process of economic reform and democratization.
- 2) Another reason why human security is on the agenda today in the region is because of the new opportunities that democratization, and new political processes, as well as the advent of market economy, can provide for people. Taking advantage of these opportunities means making sure that choices made today do not lead to less choices for tomorrow.
- 3) Finally, the third reason is that the region today needs to think about its position in the context of globalization, in order for the states to take advantage of the benefits while at the same time protect the benefits of the people within the states.
- 4) *Economic and social security:*

- A key challenge facing the Central Asian countries is translating the recent positive trends in macroeconomic indicators (GDP growth, low inflation, stable exchange rate, etc.) into real gains for people's well-being.
- Another pressing challenge for the region is the question of the relationships between unemployment, poverty, corruption and social exclusion.
- The poverty rate is as high as 60% in Kyrgyzstan, 47% in Uzbekistan and in Tajikistan, an estimated 80 per cent of the population live in poverty. Unemployment has been estimated by the World Bank to be as high as 30% across the region, with the most negative effects on women. The consequences are particularly difficult for single mothers whose salaries used to be the sole source of income for their families.
- Heavy dependency of Central Asian economies on natural resources may have in the long run a negative impact on diversification of economy as well as on equitable socio-economic growth and democratization process. Poverty increases not just because of the fall in output, but because of greater inequality in the distribution of income.
- In the sphere of financing and governance of education and healthcare the period since the independence caused enormous challenges and problems throughout the region. Coverage in primary and secondary education has declined from the near universal levels achieved during the central planning period. A major sign of the health crisis is that during the 1990s, people's life expectancy-especially of men-has dropped sharply in a number of countries
- Another challenge is how to deal with factors such as organized crime and illicit narcotics trafficking that affect people's security everyday. This meeting I am sure will provide insights on this.

➤ ***Environmental security***

- The Aral Sea crisis and the continuous drought in the major part of Central Asia combined with limited access to scarce water resources- are the obvious threats for human security in the region. Unless managed effectively, water, in particular, may prove a significant source of tension in the region. The Syr-Darya river, the real lifeline of the region, has blessed the Central Asia with ample amounts of water. But with socio-economic pressures growing, tensions over the use and management of this natural resource are likely to rise unless effective mechanisms for equitable management can be found. How can this trend be reversed?

➤ ***Political security:***

- Capacity of institutions, including civil society institutions needs to be strengthened to promote participation and broader democratisation. What are the links between people's participation and human security? What should the capacity building process involve?
- *Analysts identify ethnic conflict as a threat to human security as a result of limited and unequal access to power, water and land resources, widespread unemployment and poverty. To what extent is this a serious factor with the potential to undermine the reform process and contribute to further instability in the region.?*
- Regional Cooperation : what is the role of outside friends – how can we help the process of dual transition so that human security concerns do not suffer.

**What should be done by governments and the people of Central Asia and the international community to reduce the most critical human security threats?**

Laying new foundations for human security should be an overriding objective of economic, social and political policies in countries in transition. Undoubtedly, one of the

most challenging tasks is to rebuild a system of human security that is consistent with and supportive of human freedom.

Human security components are preventable and therefore, it is important to take advantage of institutional changes, the advent of market economy and of democratization processes to ensure that:

- a) Economic policies need to be drawn to induce growth, but growth that is pro-poor, equitably distributed;
- b) Social policies that ensure both quality and equitable access to services, but that are sustainable;
- c) Strengthening of institutions of democracy requires broad based consultative processes between the state and the people, through mechanisms such as free press, parliaments, local governments, etc..
- d) Regional cooperation is needed to solve national problems.

Failure to take these into consideration will mean not only an unequal growth, which is unsustainable as it does not involve all strata of the population, but also social discord and conflicts. After all, people get into conflictual relationships as a result of unhappiness with social situations, competition over resources, unemployment, etc.

**Possible role for UNDP:**

- Facilitate a national dialogue for consensus building on the human security strategy to identify the main human security challenges and mobilize all segments of the society, including government, civil society institutions and international development actors, for joint efforts aimed at addressing those challenges. National Human Development Reports produced on annual basis with the support

of UNDP in all Central Asian countries could be used as an entry point for such a policy dialogue.

- Strengthen civil society institutions in order to enable them to actively participate in the national policy making and implementation, fight corruption, and ensure allocation of sufficient resources for health care and education.
- Support to the development of democratic institutions and independent human rights agencies/Ombudsman capable of addressing human rights problems at the policy level as well as individual cases of human rights violations.
- Pursue preventive development interventions.
- Promote regional cooperation and strengthen regional institutions. UNDP's experience from other parts of the world has shown that regional frameworks for economic cooperation, joint water management, and joint efforts against terrorism, organised crime and drug-trafficking can be an important step towards further development co-operation among neighbouring states and serve to reduce international tensions in a region.