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### ANNEX

#### **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe**

#### **CBDSD Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding Tajikistan**

### **1. IDENTIFICATION**

Action: Addressing spill-over effects resulting from the crisis in Afghanistan

Action Reference: NDICI CR 2021 / 35

Cost: EUR 8 000 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).

Budget Line: 14 02 03 10

Duration: Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

Lead service: FPI

### **2. ACTION SUMMARY**

The withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan and the seizure of power by the Taliban on 15 August 2021 have the potential to impact the stability of Central Asia. It is feared that a further deteriorating political and security situation on the Afghan side could lead to acute crises in the border region linked to, for example the spreading of violent extremism or larger influxes of refugees. Although there has until now not been a major influx of refugees, Tajik authorities have repeatedly expressed requests for international support to secure the border and prepare for a potential refugee crisis.

This action aims to help Tajikistan's border management agencies as well as strengthen preparedness, also of border communities, to cope with the spill-over effects from the crisis in Afghanistan. Two of the three components build on ongoing interventions.

The first component will provide capacity building of military actors in support of development and security for development (CBDSD) by strengthening the Tajik border troops and the Committee of Emergency Situation and Civil Defence in relation to border management issues, fostering stability and countering any potential undermining of development efforts. These training and advisory support efforts will put particular emphasis on gender issues in border management, rescue operations, refugees' response and trafficking in human beings. National and international commitments as well as international best practices in relation to human rights and fundamental freedoms will also be addressed. This

component will build on the ongoing intervention, implemented by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This action focuses on ‘traditional’ border issues, like illegal drug and arms trafficking, as well as increased security threats from the crisis in Afghanistan including countering the spread of violent extremism, and the management of a potential refugee influx in a human-rights compliant, gender- and conflict sensitive manner.

A second component will strengthen the capacities of local authorities along the Tajik-Afghan border in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, which constitutes more than half of the Tajik-Afghan border. This action will include provision of training and advice on how to handle risks, including climate related emergencies, internally displaced people and the consequences of a potential influx of refugees. It will be guided by the principles of human rights, gender equality, fundamental freedoms and civil society engagement (including youth and women) in community affairs.

A third component will support young people towards a more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and safe environment in the targeted areas, including border communities. Coupled with developing their skills in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it primarily aims at facilitating their access to education and strengthening their ‘employable’ skills and competencies to their full potential.

### **3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

#### **3.1 BACKGROUND**

Tajikistan occupies a strategic position in Central Asia with its almost 1.400 kilometres of border with Afghanistan. The country faces increased security risks related to instability in Afghanistan which are further exacerbated by internal factors of fragility. The Tajik government has put its armed forces on high alert and relocated thousands of troops to the Afghan border. Communities on both sides of the border have deep historic, cultural and family links. This influences the country’s general approach towards Afghanistan.

At national level, Tajikistan has expressed critical opinions of the Taliban regime, including underlining the need for an Afghanistan Government reflecting the ethnic mix in Afghanistan.

Tajikistan’s southern border region with Afghanistan, a territory which is part of the regions of Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan, has long been characterised by instability and fragility. The environmental conditions, with high mountains prone to bad weather conditions, avalanches and flooding, hinder the provision of services and the protection of the civilian population by the Tajik authorities, including by the security forces. In particular the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is continuously affected by various challenges such as economic and energy crises, the increased threat of natural disasters due to climate change, and the impact of Covid-19, causing both humanitarian and socio-economic hardships.

At the same time the vulnerability of young people in Tajikistan is increasing at the national level. Studies show that at least one third of young people are in NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 89% of all NEET are girls. This setting also affects the border communities. Relations between civil society, including youth, and the Government of Tajikistan are tense in particular in these regions, and the risk of young people drifting into crime or other forms of violent behaviour is high. Trafficking of human beings, weapons and

narcotics and organised crime negatively impact the security along the border. Situations of instability in Afghanistan also have a direct impact due to their geographical proximity and due to the close links between the populations on both sides of the border. If the situation in Afghanistan further deteriorates, observers fear that there may be an increase in terrorist activities and organised crime also on the Tajik side of the border, as well as the risk that an influx of refugees could further undermine stability in the area. Not least, there is a risk of insecurity regarding the potential formation of ‘dormant cells’ of extremist individuals or groups. However, little reliable information is available at this time. Local community leaders play a key role in maintaining security.

The Tajik Border Troops have created Special Border Units whose core function is to prevent and confront threats emanating from Afghanistan’s volatile situation. However, in spite of ongoing EU funded capacity building (Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, ending in December 2021), there is now need for further strengthening of these units to enable them to manage the volatile situation in a conflict sensitive manner.

Over the past two years, some progress has been made in the framework of another EU funded intervention (Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace), creating a dialogue between the local government and local communities in Gorno-Badakhshan, involving in particular vulnerable youth, and ensuring the participatory delivery of some essential public services. This work has shown the effectiveness of participatory governance and youth education and involvement for peace and stability. Given the increasing fragility of the socio-economic situation over the past months, fostering opportunities for youth education and inclusion in both Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan will become even more crucial to strengthen resilience in these regions.

This new action responds to the above challenges in line with the priorities set out in the EU Strategy for Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> In particular, it reflects the attention that the EU pays to strengthening cooperation on common security challenges and addressing drivers of instability, including inter-ethnic violence, poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation, limited political participation, institutional weaknesses, corruption and mismanagement of natural resources.<sup>2</sup>

### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT**

The withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan and the seizure of power by the Taliban on 15 August 2021 have a strong potential to impact the stability of Central Asia and in particular Tajikistan. A further deteriorating political and security situation on the Afghan side could prompt instability, including spread of violent extremism and potentially also refugees trying to cross into Tajikistan, constituting an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed. In line with Article 9,

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<sup>1</sup> JOIN(2019) 9 final, Brussels, 15.5.2019 and Council Conclusions 10221/19 of 17.06.2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

paragraph 3, point (a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, this situation constitutes a threat to the functioning State institutions or to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and State institutions cannot cope with that threat. The objectives of the action cannot be met by recourse to non-military actors because both the border guards and the Committee on Emergency Situations and Civil Defence (CoESCD), that together constitute the key actors related to border management and disaster response (incl. refugee reception) in Tajikistan, are both formally under the country’s military forces.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (l), (n), (p) and (s) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (l) support for measures to ensure that the specific needs of women and children in crisis and conflict situations, including preventing their exposure to gender-based violence, are adequately met; (n) support for measures to promote and defend respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, and the related international instruments; (p) support for measures to address the potential impact of sudden population movements with relevance to the political and security situation, including measures addressing the needs of host communities, and (s) capacity building of military actors in support of development and security for development, in accordance with Article 9. Such activities are in accordance with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, which specifically provide for the use of the NDICI to (1) build the capacity of military actors in partner countries to deliver development activities and security for development activities; and to (2) support the provision of capacity building programmes in support of development and security for development, including training, mentoring and advice, as well as the provision of equipment, infrastructure improvements and services directly related to that assistance.

**3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The dynamic and very unpredictable developments in Afghanistan cause legitimate security concerns in Central Asia in general, and in Tajikistan in particular. The country’s leaders have on numerous occasions appealed to the international community to provide support in enhancing the capacity of relevant national and local institutions in addressing these challenges. Thus, the action is based on the assumption that authorities continue to be committed to the activities and that the risks associated with reduced general commitment to implementation is low.

However, the dynamic nature of the developments in Afghanistan can lead to acute crises in the border region linked for example to the spreading of violent extremism or larger influxes of refugees. Such developments would of course influence the action and could potentially lead to changed priorities and modified emphasis of activities.

Risks	Risk Level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
The security situation in the border region with Afghanistan deteriorates severely with an impact on the implementation	M	The activities planned are aimed at supporting the Tajik authorities to better manage security threats. However, in case of a severely deteriorating security situation it might

of activities.		be necessary to move at least parts of the capacity building activities to Dushanbe.
The patrolling troops have a negative record related to human rights and gender-responsiveness.	M	Capacity building activities will be planned using a human-rights based approach and gender-responsive perspectives. Human rights, and international humanitarian law will also be mainstreamed in all training modules and good internal governance in relation to related challenges will be fostered.
Lack of political will at decision-making levels within the national government.	M	The support has been requested by the Government. However, to ensure buy-in on all necessary political levels, prior agreement will be secured by the implementing partners, through existing long-standing cooperation with the Tajik authorities. Political dialogue will be held for the whole duration of the action.
Delays may be caused by the difficult environmental conditions.	L	The implementing partners will carefully plan the implementation of activities based on the environmental conditions.
Lack of willingness of central and local authorities to engage in dialogue with youth and their organisations.	M	The focus will be on the identification of areas of obvious mutual concern and interest for both local authorities and youth organisations.
Corruption poses a threat to in principle all actions undertaken, not least in connection with the actions on the border (also taking into account the level of corruption on the Afghan side of the border).	H	The implementing partners will need to be vigilant to the risk of corruption influencing the behaviour of the counterpart actors. They must fully integrate this topic into all actions, from training sessions to procurement.

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

The overall objective of the action is to contribute towards multilateral efforts in addressing spill-over effects in Tajikistan resulting from the crisis in Afghanistan, including their potential to undermine stability and national development efforts.

### **4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- 4.2.1 To assist the conflict sensitive stabilisation of Tajikistan's southern border region with Afghanistan in support of security for development;
- 4.2.2 To strengthen resilience of authorities and communities, including women and youth, in order to maintain peace and stability in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO);
- 4.2.3 To facilitate a more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and safe environment in the respective targeted areas for women and youth including through the provision of adequate skills.

## **5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS**

**The main expected results/outcomes include:**

**Expected Result (1):** Consolidated capacity of the Tajik Border Troops and the Committee of Emergency Situation and Civil Defence (CoESCD) in addressing and tackling illegitimate activities as well as factors of fragility linked to natural and man-made emergencies in the border areas in a conflict sensitive manner which fosters security for development.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Build the capacity of the Tajik Border Troops to enable effective, human-rights compliant, and gender-, youth-, and conflict-sensitive planning and operations;
- 5.1.2 Build the capacity of the CoESCD to enable effective, human-rights compliant, and gender-, youth-, and conflict-sensitive emergency response to natural and man-made emergencies;
- 5.1.3 Provide practical skills training for Tajik Border Troops and CoESCD officers in compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law;
- 5.1.4 Provide support to Tajik Border Troops and CoESD instructors to foster internal training capacities with a specific focus on mainstreaming human rights based, and gender and conflict sensitive modules into internal curricula;
- 5.1.5 Renovate and/or refurbish key infrastructure and provide equipment for civilian purposes (e.g. first aid kits, etc.).

**Expected Result (2):** Increased resilience of communities and local authorities to address man-made or natural disasters in GBAO and in particular in the border region.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Build the capacity of Government agencies as required for effective, gender- and conflict-sensitive crisis and emergency management, including through provision of technical assistance, training, tools and systems;
- 5.2.2 Work with community-based organisations and local NGOs to increase awareness about inclusive, risk-informed and resilient development planning and the importance of emergency preparedness and adaptation measures;
- 5.2.3 Work with community-based organisations to update local development plans in an inclusive manner in alignment with relevant government and local plans;
- 5.2.4 Support the construction of equitable and climate resilient critical infrastructure including but not limited to refurbishment or establishment of emergency shelters and emergency response infrastructure.

**Expected Result (3):** A more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and safe environment is created for women and youth.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.3.1 Build the capacity of local organisations and young people to help resolve conflicts peacefully and provide support to implementation through youth-led community activities;
- 5.3.2 Equip young people, including girls, with necessary skills for economic empowerment, and support them in finding employment opportunities;
- 5.3.3 Facilitate access of adolescents and children to education, psychosocial counselling, peer support networks;
- 5.3.4 Increase the capacities of mental health workers, social workers and other relevant professionals to provide assistance and counselling and to contribute to conflict resolution;
- 5.3.5 Arrange participatory governance platforms bringing together young people, local governments, and community leaders for inclusive local decision making on issues related to service delivery and development.

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES**

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>3</sup>.

#### **6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

This grant will contribute towards achieving specific objective 4.2.2. and expected result (2).

##### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

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<sup>3</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

NGO with knowledge and experience from similar work in Tajikistan, in particular in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because **the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation** at the date of the Financing Decision. The grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Aga Khan Foundation.

**6.1.2 Indirect management with an international organisation**

A part of this action, a CBDS action (capacity building of military actors in support of development and security for development), may be implemented in indirect management with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This implementation entails the support to the stabilisation of Tajikistan’s southern border region with Afghanistan in order to counter destabilisation tendencies undermining Tajik development efforts (specific objective 4.2.1) and expected result (1). The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: the nature of the action, their established contacts with the Tajik Border Troops, their experience from similar actions in Tajikistan.

**6.1.3 Indirect management with an international organisation**

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity which will be selected by the Commission’s services using the following criteria: experience from working with protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices in relation to youth as well as with youth development/capacity building in Tajikistan and the region as well as experience from managing larger influx of refugees. The implementation by this entity entails working towards specific objective 4.2.3 and expected result (3).

**6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET**

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 8 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

**Indicative budget breakdown**

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Component 1: Stabilisation of Tajikistan’s southern border region with Afghanistan, composed of		
6.1.1. – Indirect management with OSCE	4 600 000	N.A.
Component 2: Increased resilience of communities and local authorities to address man-made or natural disasters in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, composed of		

6.1.2. – Direct grant (direct management)	2 500 000	N.A.
Component 3: A more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and safe environment for women and youth in border areas, composed of		
6.1.3. – Indirect management with an international organisation	900 000	N.A.
Total	8 000 000	N.A.

### 6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under direct management for component 2 and indirect management for components 1 and 3. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation to Tajikistan**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

### 6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final report. Each report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

### 6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, evaluations will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

### 6.6 AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

## **6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY**

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Requirements for European Union External Action (or any succeeding document) shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

## **7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

In the context of the EU Comprehensive Approach, attention will be given to maximising operational linkages and synergies with other EU funded activities on the ground.

The second and third component of this measure will be implemented in synergy with the ongoing Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace grants related to civil society actors promoting dialogue (including Central Asian cross-border dialogue) and prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in Central Asia.

All components of the present measure are complementary to EU support to integrated border management in the region, the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). BOMCA aims at contributing to increased security and stability within Central Asia through improved integrated border management, and by facilitating movement of people and goods across the borders. Coordination will therefore be ensured with the BOMCA implementing team and the BOMCA programme managers at the EU Delegations to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in order to ensure these actions are complementary and not overlapping.

This measure is also in line with other ongoing initiatives, such as the EU-funded intervention “Integrated Border Management in the Silk Route Countries”, the global EU-ACT project, and the “Central Asia Drug Action Programme” (CADAP). The action will also interact with the regional EU expert for security and counterterrorism in Central Asia, to be posted in Bishkek.

The European Commission is also preparing the launch of a study to understand better the dynamics, dissemination and impact of fundamentalist Islam in Central Asian countries. The study also aims to understand how the EU can best take it into account through its external policies and programmes, including in the view of the Taliban regime take-over in Afghanistan. It will focus on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Where relevant, the conclusions of this study will feed into the present action.