

## **“Connectivity Risks and Opportunities in the South Caucasus”**

*Reichenau a/d Rax, 07-10 November 2024*

### **08 November 2024, PANEL 1, 09.30-11.00: “Infrastructural Connectivity in the South Caucasus”**

- The geopolitical upheaval over the past decade had produced new realities and new opportunities for the South Caucasus region. It had put a special onus on economic cooperation, including on energy, infrastructure, and trade. In 2016, the RSSC SG had first delved into discussing infrastructural projects with the aim to discussing regional energy cooperation and establishing a potential energy security centre in the South Caucasus.
- Furthermore, the 2020-2023 war over Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian invasion of Ukraine since February 2022 have completely changed the geopolitical, strategic and economic (including industrial, infrastructural, energy, and trade) links of the South Caucasus region with regional and external actors. Our spring 2022 workshop addressing “Peace Building through Economic and Infrastructure Integration in the South Caucasus” had started to feel the impact of this new regional dynamics.
- This panel is part of a wider discussion on connectivity in the South Caucasus. It has been invited to present risks and opportunities to the eventual infrastructural connectivity between Europe and Asia through the South Caucasus. The following questions were asked to the speakers:
  - Can the South Caucasus be lost as a bridge between Europe and Asia by Georgia’s geopolitical re-orientation?
  - What regional impact on infrastructural connectivity can we expect from a possible Armenia-Azerbaijani peace deal?
  - Can the establishment of infrastructure projects linking Europe and Asia pre-empt the South Caucasus from slipping away from the European and Euro-Atlantic integration agendas?

- What are the conditions for the South Caucasus to establish itself as a reliable energy security actor?
- Would Iran and Russia act as spoilers of East-West connectivity?

**08 November, 16.00-17.30, and 09 November, 08.30-09.30: Interactive Discussion, Group Mason: “Armenia and Azerbaijan: Building Connectivity on Human Security”**

- The concept of human security was formally introduced in the 1994 UNDP “Human Development Report” which shifted the focus of security to the protection of individuals against human security threats and risks. The Report identified seven dimensions of human security:
  - Economic security (freedom from poverty)
  - Food security (access to adequate food)
  - Health security (protection from diseases)
  - Environmental security (protection from environmental hazards)
  - Personal security (protection from physical violence)
  - Community security (protection of cultural and identity security)
  - Political security (enjoyment of civil and political rights)
- The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also reflected key elements of human security. This resulted in having human security as a guiding principle in global development policies, disaster response, and conflict resolution.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasized the importance of human security. It demonstrated how non-military threats, such as global health crises, economic instability, social inequalities, and climate change, could lead to widespread insecurity that affected individuals’ security. Renewed calls have emerged for international cooperation to address non-military threats in the context of human security.

- The RSSC SG Handbook project on “Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats and Risks: From Best Practices to Strategies” was built upon the recommendation of participants to the 23rd workshop, held in Naples (Italy), in March 2022, to launch a new project tentatively focusing on building resilience across a broad range of human security threats. This recommendation was rooted in the concrete proposals of Dr Tatoul Manassarian who argued that the South Caucasus should not remain merely a geographic term, but it should be turned into an EU-shaped union with an agreed understanding and evaluation of common threats, risks and ways to mitigate them. As a starting point, regional experts should concentrate on commonalities, rather than differences and dividing lines. He suggested an experts-level joint mechanism for scanning the region for human security risks and threats (including food security, energy security, financial security, transportation security, information security, demographic security, health security, environmental security, poverty, hunger, and migration).
- Following up on these proposals, and using the power of the PfP Consortium network, the RSSC SG undertook this new Handbook project aiming to distillate current best practices on building resilience against common human security threats into effective strategies, policies and concrete measures. Eventually, a common vision over the future should be translated into a comprehensive list of common regional goals and objectives to be pursued over the next five to ten years. This, in turn, should lead to a deeper common security threats assessment.
- In that vein, we thought that the completion of this Handbook project could incentivize re-energizing Armenian - Azerbaijani dialogue on peace, security, and regional integration with a focus on **building human connectivity among experts in various areas such as: energy, infrastructure, trade, food, health, and with business groups as new forms of track 1.5 and track 2 dialogues.** To that end, we may draw upon the policy recommendations suggested by the contributors to the Handbook project.

- In conclusion, in this Breakout Group we would consider opportunities for boosting human connectivity between Armenia and Azerbaijan ensuing from building resilience against human security risks and threats. The aim is to develop policy recommendations that should be reflected in the final products of this workshop.