

The Ambassador of Turkmenistan, Sapar Palvanov, gave a lecture at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) on the topic of permanent neutrality.

Sapar Palvanov, the Turkmenistan Ambassador in Brussels, was invited by a student group at the Université libre de Bruxelles (Lale) to deliver a lecture on permanent neutrality.



With Derya Soysal moderating, he answered a series of questions related to Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality status.

Derya Soysal: What does neutrality mean for Turkmenistan?

Sapar Palvanov: Turkmenistan's neutrality does not mean isolation—it means active diplomacy and cooperation. Our neutrality is based on four key principles:

- We do not join military alliances or allow foreign military bases on our territory.
- We do not participate in conflicts, but instead, work to promote peace and dialogue.
- We maintain balanced diplomatic relations with all nations, focusing on mutual respect and cooperation.
- We support humanitarian aid and regional development projects contributing to long-term stability.

This neutral stance allows Turkmenistan to act as a bridge between countries and different political groups, making it a trusted and responsible international partner.

Turkmenistan has a history of successful diplomatic mediation, proving that neutrality can

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be a force for peace. Mediating in the Tajik Civil War (1990s) One of the earliest examples of Turkmenistan's role as a neutral mediator was during the Tajik Civil War in the 1990s. At that time, Turkmenistan facilitated dialogue between the Tajik government and opposition forces, hosting negotiations in Ashgabat and supporting UN-led peace efforts. These diplomatic efforts helped reduce tensions and

prevent further escalation, showing that neutrality is not about standing aside, but about actively working to prevent conflict.

Turkmenistan's Balanced Approach to the Russia-Ukraine Conflict. More recently, Turkmenistan has demonstrated its neutrality in the

Russia-Ukraine conflict. While many nations have taken sides, Turkmenistan has maintained strong diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian ties with both countries, while always rejecting war as a

solution to international disputes.

- Turkmenistan opposes war in any form. We believe that only peaceful dialogue can resolve conflicts, and we actively promote this principle in all international discussions.
- Humanitarian Assistance: Turkmenistan has sent aid to Ukraine, particularly for children affected by the conflict. At the same time, we continue to engage diplomatically and economically with Russia, following our policy of balanced relations.
- Economic Cooperation: Even amid the conflict, Turkmenistan has invited Ukrainian businesses to participate in major infrastructure projects in our country. Today, Ukrainian companies operate successfully in Turkmenistan, contributing to economic growth and stability.

These actions reinforce Turkmenistan's commitment to neutrality and diplomacy, ensuring that we remain a responsible and trusted member of the international community.

Turkmenistan's neutrality is not just a foreign policy principle—it is a working model that has proven successful in maintaining stability and fostering constructive international relations. Through our commitment to peace, humanitarian initiatives, and economic cooperation, we demonstrate that neutrality is not passive—it is a practical and effective approach to diplomacy in the modern world.

As conflicts continue to arise globally, the Turkmen model of neutrality can serve as an

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example of how balanced diplomacy and preventive measures can contribute to long-term peace. By staying neutral,

promoting dialogue, and fostering economic partnerships, Turkmenistan proves that non-aligned approach can play a vital role in international stability.

One of the most effective tools for maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia is preventive diplomacy—the effort to stop conflicts before they escalate. Turkmenistan has played a key role in developing this approach by establishing the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat in

2007. This is the first and only center of its kind in the world, created at Turkmenistan's initiative to support regional security and cooperation.

Derya: Why Is Preventive Diplomacy Important?

Sapar Palvanov : The goal of this Center is simple but crucial: prevent conflicts before they turn into crises. Instead of waiting for disputes to escalate into war or violence, the center helps countries resolve disagreements through dialogue, negotiation, and diplomacy.

Over the years, the Center has proven its effectiveness, becoming a recognized and successful model for handling regional tensions, security concerns, and cross-border disputes.

The Center has played an active role in resolving tensions in Central Asia, showing how diplomacy can be used to prevent conflicts before they become serious crises.

- Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border Conflict: When border clashes erupted between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the UNRCCA stepped in, working with both governments to calm the situation and promote diplomatic solutions. Thanks to these efforts, the conflict was prevented from escalating further.
- Ongoing Regional Engagement: The center continuously works with all five Central Asian countries to address water disputes, border disagreements, and security concerns through negotiation and mediation, ensuring that small tensions do not grow into larger conflicts.

Derya Soysal : What Makes the UNRCCA Unique?

Sapar Palvanov : It remains the only center of its kind in the world, showing that preventive diplomacy is an effective way to manage and resolve disputes peacefully. Because of its

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success, other regions are now considering establishing similar centers to help prevent conflicts before they spiral out of control.

Turkmenistan's Vision: Expanding Preventive Diplomacy Worldwide Turkmenistan believes that preventive diplomacy should be a global priority. Given the success of the UNRCCA, there is now growing interest in creating similar centers in other parts of the world to help regions affected by political and security tensions.

As a neutral country committed to peace, Turkmenistan continues to promote preventive diplomacy as the best tool for ensuring long-term stability—not just in Central Asia, but around the world.

Turkmenistan strongly believes in peaceful diplomacy and international stability, and this is why we initiated the recognition of 2025 as the International Year of Peace and Trust. This resolution, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, is not just a symbolic declaration—it is a call to action for all nations to prioritize dialogue over conflict and trust over division.

Today's world faces many challenges, conflicts, and diplomatic tensions.

Now, more than ever, countries need to work together, rebuild trust, and use diplomacy to resolve disputes. Turkmenistan believes that trust is the foundation of peace, and that lasting peace cannot be achieved without open and honest dialogue. By leading this initiative, Turkmenistan seeks to strengthen international cooperation, promote peaceful negotiations, and encourage global leaders to focus on conflict resolution.

High-Level International Conference in Turkmenistan

As part of this global effort, Turkmenistan will host a major international conference in 2025, dedicated to the International Year of Peace and Trust. This event will bring together world leaders, diplomats, and representatives from international organizations to discuss practical steps to strengthen global peace and stability.

This conference will serve as:

- A platform for dialogue on preventing and resolving conflicts, ensuring that diplomatic negotiations remain central to global decision-making.
- An opportunity to reinforce Turkmenistan's role as a mediator, actively promoting peaceful solutions to regional and international disputes.
- A forum to recognize successful peace agreements worldwide, proving that diplomacy

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can lead to real and lasting outcomes.

The International Year of Peace and Trust is already producing positive results. One of the most important developments this year has been the

historic border agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This long-standing territorial conflict, which lasted for decades, has now been peacefully resolved through diplomatic negotiations and trust-building efforts.

Turkmenistan welcomes this agreement, as it perfectly reflects the spirit of 2025—a year dedicated to peaceful solutions and mutual understanding. We hope that other nations facing disputes will also take this opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue and find diplomatic solutions to their conflicts.

Turkmenistan is optimistic that 2025 will be a turning point in international relations—a year where countries choose diplomacy over war, cooperation over confrontation, and trust over division. The

successful resolution of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border issue is an encouraging example, and we hope to see more peace agreements and diplomatic breakthroughs during this symbolic year.

By promoting the International Year of Peace and Trust, Turkmenistan is not just supporting an idea—we are actively working to create a world where diplomacy prevails, cooperation grows, and peace becomes a shared global responsibility. The upcoming high-level conference in Turkmenistan will be an important milestone in this mission, bringing nations together to build a future based on trust, dialogue, and stability.

Derya: WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOU: THE ROLE OF FUTURE DIPLOMATS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Sapar Palvanov:

As future diplomats, policymakers, and international relations experts, understanding neutrality, preventive diplomacy, and global connectivity is more important than ever. Instead of becoming more stable, the world today is facing growing conflicts, political tensions, and unresolved disputes that are resurfacing. Every year, new crises emerge, making the international landscape more complex.

In this challenging environment, diplomatic solutions, peaceful dialogue, and neutral

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platforms for negotiations are no longer just options— they are essential. This is why Turkmenistan's experience can be valuable. Our neutrality, role in preventive diplomacy, and commitment to global connectivity offer practical lessons for resolving international disputes and strengthening cooperation between nations.

Now The world needs more than just traditional diplomacy—it needs:

- Reliable mediators who can help conflicting sides negotiate and find common ground.
- Neutral spaces where countries in conflict can hold discussions without external political pressure.
- Preventive diplomacy strategies to ensure that small tensions do not escalate into larger crises.

Countries that offer neutral, independent diplomatic space-like Turkmenistan—are becoming more important in global politics. Our historical role in mediating the Tajikistan conflict in the 1990s, as well as our balanced approach to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, demonstrate that neutrality, when used effectively, can be a tool for peace and stability.!

In conclusion, Turkmenistan's model of neutrality and diplomacy provides valuable lessons for the future of international relations. In today's world, where global tensions and conflicts are increasing, it is important to explore practical ways to promote peace, trust, and cooperation.

As we move toward 2025, the International Year of Peace and Trust, I invite all of you—students, academics, and future diplomats—to take an active role in this global initiative. Participate in discussions, explore diplomatic solutions, and think about how neutrality and preventive diplomacy can be used to create a more stable and interconnected world.

I look forward to your questions and a meaningful discussion on how diplomacy, cooperation, and dialogue can help shape a more peaceful future.

Thank you!