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PRESS RELEASE

OSCE, OECD launch investment and competitiveness initiative for Central Asia

BERLIN, 5 November 2008 - Attracting investment, improving the business climate and enhancing competitiveness in Central Asia were the topics discussed at a ministerial-level conference that ended in Berlin today.

The two-day event was co-organized by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It was hosted by the German Ministry of Economics and Technology.

The conference gathered more than 60 participants including ministers, state secretaries and other high-level officials from all Central Asian countries, and Afghanistan and Mongolia.

The participants presented their investment policy priorities and discussed the Investment and Competitiveness Initiative developed by the OECD and OSCE based on country consultations.

"The Initiative will assist the countries in developing their economies at sector and national levels. It will also promote regional economic co-operation, thus strengthening the region's stability and security," said Alexey Stukalo, Deputy Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

State Secretary Jochen Homann of the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology supported the Initiative, adding: "Improved competitiveness and the promotion of the private sector will help the countries of Central Asia improve the prospects for sustained growth and higher employment."

Ambassador Joan Boer, the Chair of the OECD External Relations Committee, said: "This Initiative is a part of the OECD Eurasia Programme which is an important milestone in our efforts to engage further non-OECD economies".

As a result of the conference, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan agreed to a concluding statement on the launch of the Initiative, while others expressed interest in the theme and may join later.

Under the Initiative, regional working groups will be established on priority issues for the participating countries. It will initially last for 3 years and be financed through donor contributions.