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PRESS RELEASE**OSCE-hosted meeting urges renewed regional efforts to mitigate radioactive waste in Central Asia**

VIENNA, 7 May 2009 - Co-operation between international organizations and the countries of Central Asia should be stepped up to manage radioactive waste, which remains a major transboundary challenge in the region, said participants at a meeting held by the OSCE in Vienna today.

The meeting on support to Central Asia in mitigating radioactive waste problems brought together representatives of the OSCE, the UN Development Programme, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Bank to discuss ways to enhance regional co-operation between international organizations, donors and the private sector.

Areas of Central Asia, particularly the Ferghana Valley which encompasses parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, were important sources of uranium ore, and the region continues to grapple with problems related to nuclear waste storage sites, dumps and abandoned uranium mines.

"This joint presentation with the UNDP and IAEA is an integral part of informing a wider international audience about the dangers to human life, economy and environment from radioactive and toxic waste in Central Asia," said Ambassador Tesoriere, the Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

"Our presentations seek to demonstrate how these dangers can be addressed through a co-operative approach by international and regional organizations in partnership with the business and private sectors."

Neal Walker, UN Resident Coordinator in the Kyrgyz Republic, said: "What we find very positive has been the consensus forming in the Central Asian countries themselves about the urgent need to act and the specific ideas on what can be done to address this issue. This consensus will help the broader international community to put together the best possible package of solutions in the near future. At the end of June all stakeholders will meet to plan forward concrete actions."

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