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PRESS RELEASE**OSCE Office in Tajikistan equips police to cope with domestic violence cases**

DUSHANBE, 19 August 2010 - The first police station in Tajikistan specially equipped for working with victims of domestic violence, refurbished with support from the OSCE Office, was inaugurated today in Dushanbe.

The station, located in one of Dushanbe's most densely-populated neighbourhoods, is one of five nationwide that is staffed with police officers who have been trained, also with OSCE support, to respond to family violence cases and to address the needs of victims in a gender-sensitive manner. Each police station has set aside a separate, refurbished room where victims, especially women and children, can communicate with law enforcement officials in an atmosphere designed to alleviate fear and stigmatization.

"Establishing special units demonstrates the Ministry of Interior's commitment to treating domestic violence as a crime and to working with community organizations to support victims," said Ambassador Ivar Vikki, the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. "We encourage the authorities to support law enforcement further by passing the law on domestic violence, which has been pending since 2007."

"We are confident that specialized police units will encourage women victims to report instances of violence," said Interior Minister Abdurakhim Khahorov after cutting the ribbon at the inauguration ceremony. "We are building the investigative capacities of the Tajik police force as well as helping them to be more gender sensitive when it comes to domestic violence issues with specialized training, and in September 2010 the Ministry of Interior Police Academy will start a course on domestic violence for cadets."

The co-operative effort between the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the Interior Ministry helps police officers identify and investigate cases of domestic violence as well as refer victims to available community services. In addition to two special units in Dushanbe, three units for victims of domestic violence have been established in Kurgan Tube and Kulyab, in southern Tajikistan, and in Khujand in the north. Each special unit comprises officers, including at a minimum one female inspector, who were trained in domestic violence issues and investigation at a course organized by the OSCE in June 2010.

The special police units will open investigations, record files and regularly transmit data on registered cases to the Information Centre within the Interior Ministry. They will also contribute to good governance by co-operating with crisis centres and legal assistance centres operated by civil society organizations and the government's Committee of Women and Family Affairs. The Ministry is developing standard operating principles for victim referral.

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