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PRESS RELEASE

Open and secure borders in Central Asia essential for ensuring stability, combating transnational threats, say participants at OSCE-supported meeting

VIENNA, 16 April 2012 – Participants of a ministerial-level, OSCE-supported meeting of the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) that started in Vienna today, stressed the need to join efforts to counter transnational threats while ensuring open and secure borders in the region.

“We need stronger regional co-operation in Central Asia in order to effectively fight human trafficking, drugs smuggling and terrorism,” said Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner opening the meeting.

“Today’s Ministerial Conference provides a key forum for dialogue to strengthen the co-operation, and is an excellent opportunity to share our experiences, know-how and vision for the entire region.”

The two-day meeting organized jointly by the OSCE, the Austrian Interior Ministry, the EU, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), focuses on such transnational challenges as illegal migration, drug smuggling, as well as on corruption. Special attention will be paid to the impact of the planned drawdown of international forces from Afghanistan.

Lamberto Zannier, the OSCE Secretary General, in his address underlined the importance of Afghanistan for the region’s security. “There is a need for additional, specific assistance in the field of border security and management in light of the anticipated withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan,” he said, stressing that the OSCE Central Asian participating States serve as a gateway for the Organization’s engagement with Afghanistan.

“Our primary objective remains the necessity to keep borders open and secure, while facilitating trade and the free movement of persons,” Zannier underlined.

The OSCE helps achieve the goal, he said, through building capacity of customs and border officials from Central Asia and Afghanistan, facilitating green border patrolling and surveillance, assisting export control and national border strategy development.

Dirk Meganck, the Director for Asia, Central Asia and Pacific from the EuropeAid (European Commission); Yury Fedotov, the UNODC Executive Director;

Rebeca Grynspan of UNDP; Interior Minister of Tajikistan Ramazon Rahimov; Albanian Interior Minister Bujar Nishani; Russian Deputy Interior Minister Sergey Bulavin; Turkmenistan's Minister for National Security Yaylym Berdiyev and other high-level representatives of all OSCE participating States, including from Central Asia, were also among speakers in the first session of the conference.

The CABSII was launched by the Austrian Interior Ministry in 2003 as a forum for discussing border management, border security and combating drugs in Central Asia.

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