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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **OSCE Secretary General in meeting with Tajikistan President says strategic partnership must be further developed, discusses OSCE engagement with Afghanistan**

DUSHANBE, 27 March 2012 – The OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier in a meeting with Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon today emphasized the need to further develop the strategic partnership between Tajikistan and OSCE in politico-military, economic and environmental, and human areas, and shared views on the OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

“I attach great importance to the strategic partnership between Tajikistan and the OSCE, and look forward to further developing this relationship in a co-operative approach based on dialogue, mutual understanding and trust,” Zannier said. He commended the Government of Tajikistan for its support for the Office in Tajikistan and stressed the importance of the OSCE-Tajikistan Task Force as an “innovative and important platform” for identifying priorities for work with the host country’s officials and civil society, and the OSCE Office.

He also discussed with the President the implementation of the OSCE Ministerial Council 2011 Decision on strengthening OSCE engagement with Afghanistan. “Tajikistan’s support and direct engagement in implementing this Decision is central for its success,” Zannier stressed.

Underlining co-operation on border management, Zannier said: “The OSCE stands ready to expand the delivery of capacity-building activities to border guards securing Tajikistan’s long border with Afghanistan, particularly in light of the upcoming transition”.

OSCE engagement with Afghanistan was also the key topic of an informal gathering which Zannier convened today and which was hosted by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. Heads of five OSCE field operations in Central Asia, representatives of major international and regional organizations, as well as senior officials of Central Asian participating States and Afghanistan discussed areas where assistance was needed and ways to enhance synergies among regional and international actors.

In the meeting, Zannier underlined that the OSCE, which has all Central Asian states among its participants, and has an extensive field presence in the region, is “particularly well placed” to promote regionally-owned initiatives aimed at strengthening security and stability in and around Afghanistan as the country prepares to take on greater responsibility for its own security.

He emphasized the continued work of the OSCE in building the capacities of counter-narcotics agencies, police, and customs and border authorities from Central Asia and Afghanistan and said that OSCE training facilities, such as the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, “could be further used as regional platforms for building confidence and promoting co-operation and dialogue among Central Asian and Afghan officials”.

The OSCE Secretary General’s three-day visit to Tajikistan started on 26 March. During his visit Zannier also met with the Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, the Chairperson of the State Committee for National Security Satmumin Yatimov, and participated in the Fifth Regional Economic Co-operation Conference on Afghanistan. Tomorrow he will have meetings with the Interior Minister Ramazon Rakhimov and representatives of civil society.

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