

## **Report on the Third Annual Joint OSCE – Tajikistan Task Force**

### **Dushanbe, OSCE Office in Tajikistan, 20 February 2009**

The third annual joint Task Force brought together nearly 100 OSCE officials and representatives from different ministries, agencies and civil society at the OSCE Office in Tajikistan on 20 February 2009. The meeting was co-chaired by Abdullo Yuldashev, the First Deputy Foreign Minister, Herbert Salber, the Director of the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre, and Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. The OSCE Greek Chairmanship was represented by Louis-Alkiviadis Abatis, Deputy Head of the Greek Chairmanship Task Force in Athens. Representatives of the 2008 Finnish Chairmanship and 2010 Kazakh Chairmanship also took part in the meeting.

In his opening remarks, First Deputy Minister Yuldashev conveyed support from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and welcomed the constructive atmosphere and dialogue between the OSCE and Tajikistan. Ambassador Salber recalled the successful Task Forces in 2007 and 2008, and commended this forum as a unique model for cooperation. Ambassador Pryakhin appreciated the Office's strong cooperation with the host country in all three dimensions, as well as on issues of regional importance. Ambassador Abatis stated that the Central Asian region is a priority for the Greek Chairmanship, and conveyed a message of support to the field operation in its dialogue with the host country on strengthening democratic institutions and civil society. He also looked forward to further engagement with Afghanistan and the launching of the Border Management Staff College this spring. The representative of the outgoing Finnish Chairmanship, Ms. Katja Silventoinen, appreciated the cooperation in all three dimensions and encouraged its continuation, and summarize the achievements in 2008 such as the establishment of a new mandate and Finland's support for the Border Management Staff College and the development of a national border strategy, as well as for a shelter to support victims of domestic violence.

First Deputy Minister Yuldashev delivered a key note speech in which he described the host country's views on several fields of cooperation, including: 1) countering the threats of terrorism, narcotics and trans-border organized crime; 2) addressing trafficking in human beings; 3) responding to the sources of labour migration; 4) cooperating on reforms to the penitentiary system; 5) supporting demining efforts in line with the country's Ottawa commitments; 6) addressing water supply, including Tajikistan's Lake Sarez. He stated that Tajikistan would welcome the establishment of regional centres, which, he proposed, could address issues such as dry land, cargo transport, alternative energy resources and training for law enforcement. He emphasized that the country was interested in regional mechanisms for supporting the right to development, including through the rational use of water resources. The First Deputy Minister also welcomed OSCE engagement with Afghanistan.

During the discussions, participants elaborated on the role of Tajikistan in the OSCE, new developments and achievements since the 2008 Task Force meeting, and plans to assist the country further, based on the OSCE Office's new mandate of 2008, which tasked it with promoting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments, with a special emphasis on regional co-operation. They convened into three working groups based on the OSCE dimensions for practical discussions.

### *Working group on Political-military activities*

Participants of the working group discussed the establishment of a Border Management Staff College, which is due to be opened in Dushanbe this spring and will train senior-level border officers, as well as ways to assist customs services in combating illegal arms trafficking and the drug trade in the region, including intercepting shipments of drug precursors, used for heroin production in Afghanistan. They spoke about initiatives to support the fight against terrorism, police reform and the destruction and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, as well as about demining efforts. The working group contributors also emphasized the importance of political dialogue and supported the activities of the Public Council and the social partnership club.

### *Working group on Economic and Environmental activities*

Participants exchanged views on the continued OSCE support for: information centres for labour migrants, small and medium-sized enterprises and job creation, water management and development of national sectoral environmental strategies and alleviating radioactive waste contamination. They also discussed the role of civil society, such as an OSCE-supported youth movement, the “Green Patrols”, in raising awareness on environmental issues and in the implementation of the country’s Aarhus commitments. As many activities are addressing subjects of a regional nature, the participants discussed ways to enhance transborder cooperation, including support for transport and transit issues.

### *Working group on Human Dimension activities*

Discussions in the Human Dimension working group focused on supporting further democratization of the media, increased co-operation to combat violence against women, promoting women in leadership positions, and promoting key international and OSCE human rights and democratization principles and commitments. Participants discussed activities to support the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and activities to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. With respect to strengthening human rights, representatives of the OSCE, government, and civil society exchanged views on combating corruption, support for the newly established Ombudsman institution, access to places of detention, and the signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture. They also spoke about the involvement of civil society in discussions on electoral reform, particularly in light of the upcoming 2010 parliamentary elections and the need for a reformed law prior to the elections.

### *Conclusions*

The Deputy Head of the OSCE Greek Chairmanship Task Force, Ambassador Abatis summed up the discussions noting that the Task Force provided a unique forum for joint consultations on issues of common concern. He was pleased with the constructive and positive discussions in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, and hoped that this dialogue would help the OSCE Office in Tajikistan to make further contributions to strengthening political dialogue, democratic institutions and civil society. The Head of the International Organizations Department of the MFA, Muzaffar Husseinov appreciated the constructive dialogue and looked forward to the forthcoming opening of the Border Management Staff College. He conveyed a message of support to the OSCE and reaffirmed Tajikistan’s appreciation of its partnership with the Organization. Ambassador Pryakhin looked forward to continued and fruitful cooperation, and Ambassador Salber appreciated the concrete results of the meeting and wished the participants success.