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### PRESS RELEASE

## OSCE Office in Tajikistan marks 15th anniversary with ceremony and book launch

DUSHANBE, 19 February 2009 - The OSCE Office in Tajikistan celebrated its 15th anniversary today with a ceremony that launched a book featuring the OSCE's work in the country.

"As a participating State since 1992, Tajikistan adopts OSCE principles and commits itself to democratization, respect of human rights, market reforms and national and regional co-operation in developing democratic institutions," said Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. "The OSCE Office supports the country on its path of progress."

Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, Ambassador Louis-Alkiviadis Abatis, representing the OSCE Greek Chairmanship, and Ambassador Herbert Salber, the Director of the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre, took part in the ceremony, as did parliament officials, political leaders, members of non-governmental organizations and representatives of foreign embassies and international organizations.

Zarifi presented a book titled "Tajikistan - OSCE dialogue and co-operation", which had been edited by his ministry and published with the support of the OSCE Office, during the ceremony.

The Office in Tajikistan opened in February 1994, making it the first OSCE field operation in Central Asia. Together with the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan, the Office assisted in the implementation of the peace process and acted as a guarantor of the Tajik Peace Agreement reached in 1997 following a five-year civil war. It worked to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement, dealing with political issues, return of refugees and military issues. The implementation of the peace agreement was successfully completed with the holding of multi-party parliamentary elections in February 2000.

Recognizing the progress made by the country since the end of the civil war, the OSCE Permanent Council in June 2008 changed the mandate and the name of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe to the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. The Office is tasked with promoting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments and supporting Tajikistan's co-operation within the OSCE framework, with a special emphasis on regional co-operation.

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