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**PRESS RELEASE**

**OSCE Office in Tajikistan to hold workshops on the newly-formed Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman**

DUSHANBE, 4 September 2009 - The OSCE Office in Tajikistan, in co-operation with local law firm Tajik Juridical Consortium (TJC), has organized two workshops on using and assisting the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Tajikistan, the first of which will take place in Khujand tomorrow.

The second workshop will be held in Istaravshan on Sunday. Participants include lawyers and advocates, civil society representatives, local authorities and law enforcement officials.

"The main purpose of these workshops is to explain the function and purpose of the newly-formed Human Rights Ombudsman Office of Tajikistan," said Rahmatillo Zoyirov, director of TJC. "It is necessary for this formal institution to be promoted, developed and strengthened, for local communities and citizens to understand its purpose and for government structures to assist it when they can."

The Human Rights Ombudsman Office, headed by Ombudsman Zarif Alizoda, formally began its operations in May of this year.

"We hope that the establishment of the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman will support the work of human rights defenders and that the public will thus experience a significant strengthening in the protection of its rights," said Payam Foroughi, Human Rights Officer at the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

The OSCE and other international organizations including the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights plan to assist the Ombudsman Office of Tajikistan by providing technical assistance, training and consultation as well as assisting the Ombudsman's staff to attend relevant local and international forums.

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