



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre

Vienna, 21 April 2009

To: All OSCE Delegations in Vienna

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Re: OSCE Office in Tajikistan

Spot Report: President's annual address to Parliament focuses on financial crisis



Office in Tajikistan

Spot Report

President's annual address to Parliament focuses on financial crisis

On 15 April, President Rahmon gave his annual speech to Parliament. It contained his views on achievements in the last year and plans for the coming year for various ministries within the areas of economy, agriculture, health, education, culture, defense and foreign affairs. The address focused on the effects of the global financial crisis on Tajikistan and the country's plans for facing the crisis. The Government has formed an anti-crisis commission, which has prepared a plan to address the many challenges arising as a result of the crisis. It is proposed to conduct a serious reform of the financial sector, and provide support for small and medium size enterprises, to attract investments and create employment for returning labour migrants. President Rahmon proposed a wide range of measures to speed up the registration of companies, simplify the process of receiving licenses, and reduce the value added, employment and profit taxes.

On energy and water issues, the President proposed more investments for alternative sources of energy and increased awareness of energy saving measures. Reporting on the various investment projects for hydro-electric power plants, President Rahmon assured that Tajikistan will not leave its neighbours without water.

The President mentioned the new law on "freedom of conscience and religious association" [see Spot Report SEC.FR/264/09] and stated that ideological pluralism, freedom of conscience and equality of all religions and confessions are guaranteed by the Constitution. He emphasized that the character of Tajik statehood will remain independent, democratic and secular.

Referring to media issues, the President expressed serious concern about information published on the Internet, stating that there is a "deliberate and ill-intentioned campaign against Tajikistan". President Rahmon made reference to research by media experts, covering the period from 2004 to 2007, which found that 80 percent of news and reports about Tajikistan contained "nothing but libel, slander, biased items and groundless forecasts". However, while noting that the freedom of speech may be both constructive and destructive, no example of legitimate or constructive media criticism was offered.

On Human Rights issues, the President instructed city and district authorities to categorically exclude the use of school children and students during the cotton harvest. He declared that the defense of human rights and freedoms is one of the main objectives of the State.

On combating terrorism, the President mentioned the OSCE among organizations with whom Tajikistan will seek to increase co-operation. Tajikistan will closely support the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan, as well as contribute to its economic development. On foreign policy direction, the President emphasized protecting the rights and interest of citizens and labour migrants abroad; strengthening of the positive image of the country in the world; ensuring information security; and conducting active humanitarian diplomacy.

The President concluded his address with a passionate call for all Tajik people to unite their efforts to ensure the prosperity of their native land.

20 April 2009