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PRESS RELEASE**OSCE Office hosts regional anti-trafficking consultations in northern Tajikistan**

KHUYAND, Tajikistan, 13 April 2011 – Two days of consultations among national and regional government authorities, civil society and international organizations on how to combat human trafficking in northern Tajikistan concluded today in Khujand.

The consultations were organized by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, which brought together representatives of the government's national Interagency Commission on Combating Human Trafficking and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with local stakeholders to explore ways to co-operate in implementing the newly adopted national action plan to combat human trafficking.

"The Government of Tajikistan's dialogue process is helping identify new ways that government bodies, civil society organizations and international actors can address human trafficking in a comprehensive way," said Maria Gratschew, a Gender and Anti-trafficking Officer at the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

The consultations opened with a roundtable discussion, chaired by the Head of the Interagency Commission on Combating Human Trafficking, that included the First Deputy Governor of Sughd Region, 11 heads of regional departments, representatives of the OSCE, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and media and civil society organizations from Khujand, Istaravshan and Penjikent. Noting that Sughd region is a source and transit area for human trafficking, participants focused on the need for public education, particularly in rural areas, on how to prevent individuals falling prey to traffickers.

Representatives of Tajikistan's national interagency anti-trafficking commission, the Sughd regional commission, the OSCE and the IOM also visited two shelters in Khujand that support children at risk of being trafficked to learn more about the regional authorities' innovations such as offering rent-free premises to be used for shelters for families at risk, as well as their co-operation with civil society organizations and international and local donors.