

Opening Remarks
High-Level Commemorative Conference
20 Years OSCE Presence in the Kyrgyz Republic: Achievements and Future Prospects
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Honourable Chairperson Minister Lajčák,

Honourable Minister Aidarbekov,

Dear honourable Madame Otunbayeva,

Excellences, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank our honourable guests for their welcoming words and enlightening address; I would like to express my wholehearted gratitude for taking the time to participate in today's important event – it is something that we value greatly. The visit of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister Miroslav Lajčák to Kyrgyzstan shows how much importance the OSCE places in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Today's conference marks a special year for the OSCE family and the OSCE presence in Kyrgyzstan. 20 years ago, the Permanent Council decided to open the first OSCE field presence in the Kyrgyz Republic. The first field presence – then called “the OSCE Centre in Bishkek” – was opened by the request of the Kyrgyz Republic; it was a relatively small mission, aiming to assist the country in addressing the challenges of new state is facing and to support the country's development in a rapidly evolving region and changing global security environment.

Since then, over the last 20 years, the mission has grown both in size and in meaning by adapting to the needs and priorities of the host country. When I joined the mission in 2016, I was greatly honoured to have the privilege to serve in Kyrgyzstan and represent the largest regional security organization of the world.

Kyrgyzstan, a country of great history and vast beauty, became an independent country in 1991. In 1992, it joined the United Nations and the OSCE as a full and equal member and participant. Our mission is to not only assist Kyrgyzstan through promoting the OSCE's comprehensive security model, but to also to support Kyrgyzstan in the OSCE as a whole.

Since the opening of the OSCE's first field presence in 1999, our Office and Kyrgyzstan have developed a symbiotic, flexible, and steadfast relationship. Two decades have shown that the OSCE's purpose in addressing challenges in the politic-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions have borne fruit – as can be observed all around us today, by way of Kyrgyzstan's democratic development and the strengthening of its institutions for the modern age.

In its early years, the OSCE established the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, connecting young people from across the Central Asian region and offering a high level international education. Many of its alumni are now serving their countries in high positions both in the public as well as the private sectors, and remain connected through the OSCE across borders.

The OSCE's presence in Kyrgyzstan has seen six Ambassadors from five different countries, from Poland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the Russian

Federation, and Switzerland – all friends of Kyrgyzstan, underlining the close relationship the OSCE enjoys with the country. Since its early days, the OSCE presence stands behind the country through positive as well as challenging times.

In the past 20 years Kyrgyzstan has gone through fast and dynamic changes that brought with it brighter visions for the future of the country – and also through challenging times; the OSCE had always supported the country in realizing its brighter future. After 2010, the OSCE was one of the main partners to assist in improving security and community relations.

In 2017, Kyrgyzstan held presidential elections, in which the OSCE and its institutions played a key role to foster and promote competitive and free elections. Today, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek works with almost all state institutions and civil society to further the country's development, hand-in-hand with the Organization's values.

The OSCE's main mission is to assist in implementing its commitments, prevent and mitigate conflicts, while promoting a balanced and comprehensive model of security that covers a wide range of issues: from crucial confidence-building between states, to economic good governance, the protection of the environment, and the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

The OSCE offers a valuable toolbox of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. It facilitates negotiation, mediation and supports regional co-operation initiatives. Nowadays the Programme Office in Bishkek put a special focuses on programmatic work on

the ground, in order to assist Kyrgyzstan and its citizens according to the countries needs and priorities, based on our Office's mandate adopted in 2017.

In conclusion

I am privileged to say that is an absolute honour to have the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajčák, representing the 57 participating States, Foreign Minister Chyngyz Aidarbekov, and former President Roza Otunbayeva with us here today to mark our 20 year history, and I would like to thank you all once again for your welcoming speeches and your participation in our commemorative events.

In the framework of today's conference, we will have interesting presentations and discussions by our national partners and our staff covering areas that we work in, such as the OSCE's contribution to peace and security, to promoting environmental security, to enhancing electoral reform, the Academy, and its key achievements, lessons learnt and way ahead.

During this year, which commemorates 20 years OSCE history in the Kyrgyz Republic, we will hold a number of events to raise awareness of our work, promoting the OSCE's approach to security. Herewith, I would like to congratulate our very able staff, of which by the way 107 of 120 in total are nationals of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as all our national partners with all the work they do for this beautiful country.

Chon Rakhmat!

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a wonderful and interesting conference.