



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media**

11th Central Asia Media Conference

Journalism education – improvement of the quality of education and new technologies

**Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
15-16 October 2009**

DECLARATION

The Eleventh Central Asia Media Conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in co-operation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, and with the assistance of the other OSCE field operations in the region, was held this year on 15-16 October in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Media professionals and government officials from all five Central Asian states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – participated in the conference. In addition, representatives of university journalism faculties, national and international organizations and national and international experts joined the conference to discuss the latest media developments in Central Asia.

The specific focus of this year's conference was journalism education. Participants examined the role of a journalist and journalism in modern society, assessed existing education opportunities, discussed best practices in journalism education, and exchanged experiences. The two-day event provided fertile ground for new ideas on how to face the challenges that journalism education in Central Asia encounters.

The Conference:

1. Welcomes the fact that all Central Asian states sent participants, both civil activists and government representatives, acknowledging the importance of the regional cooperation in the field of media.
2. Acknowledges that journalism is a civil activity; therefore, governments should refrain from over-regulating it.
3. Emphasizes that pluralism of the media is the key value and one of the most important conditions for the existence of democratic society. Therefore, it is vital to ensure pluralism in the educational systems as well.
4. States that an academic degree in journalism should not be a prerequisite for a journalistic career. Media outlets can employ journalists who do not have a degree in

journalism and this right should be respected by the authorities. Journalists should not have to meet government licensing standards in order to pursue their journalistic work.

5. Recommends, nevertheless, both basic academic and on-the-job education and training for media workers. Continuing training programs should be established for all journalists and other media professionals, including editorial staff, to further their existing knowledge and gain new skills.
6. Recommends that academic journalism education attract more practicing journalists as faculty.
7. Calls on academic and journalistic educational organizations to provide training for media professionals on entrepreneurial and technical skills, so journalists can establish and operate independent and self-sustainable media outlets.
8. Stresses the importance of international cooperation in journalism education. Calls for greater use of international experience and best practices in journalists' training and educational institutions. Greater exchange of teaching materials, faculty and experiences among Central Asian states should be promoted.
9. Notes that in the near future all media will be hosted by the internet. The notion of the local will become inseparable from the global; therefore, media education should reflect the global character of journalism.
10. Recommends incorporating Internet and online tools, including Web 2.0 tools, such as social networking, file-sharing platforms and other user-generated resources into the curriculum. All journalism students should be trained to use modern interactive technologies.
11. Calls on the states to assist state and private educational institutions with financing for their IT equipment and Internet access.
12. Believes that professional ethics should be incorporated into curricula to promote responsible media.
13. Encourages journalism schools to acknowledge the importance of investigative journalism for democracy and as a tool in combating corruption. Investigative journalism study should be afforded a high place in the curricula. The course on safety of journalists should be incorporated into curricula.
14. Encourages governments to support reforms of journalism education with all the above goals in mind, taking into consideration the fact that education provided for journalism students not only shapes their professional skills, but defines the media as a profession in general.