



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

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EU statement in response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Pryakhin back to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his presentation today and for his comprehensive report.

The European Union is committed to supporting the work of the Centre in assisting the host country to meet its commitments across all three dimensions. We are especially pleased to hear of further progress in deepening the relationship between the OSCE Centre and the Tajik authorities, not only through the reinvigorated Task Force, but also through consultations with the Host Country at many levels. We commend the Centre's more structured engagement with civil society and regional authorities, which should encourage greater transparency, openness and partnerships. The results of these exercises have now been incorporated in the 2009 Programme Outline document.

In this context, it is encouraging to hear about Tajikistan's commitment to pursue activities to promote more effective border management and security. The National Border Strategy project, launched with assistance from the Finnish Chairmanship, as well as training on patrol management and leadership and customs assistance, provide a sound basis for the further development of initiatives in response to the Ministerial Council decision 4/07 on OSCE engagement with Afghanistan. It is also to be hoped that discussions on the establishment of a Border Management Staff

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College, which have now resumed, will lead to a positive outcome acceptable to all parties concerned and enable a centre of excellence to be set up to provide practical assistance and spread best practice throughout the OSCE.

Since 2001, the European Commission has been deeply engaged in efforts to support border management reform and the fight against drugs in Central Asia through two assistance programmes – the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) and the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA). Both programmes have a regional scope and are part of our long-term commitment to the region, as confirmed by the EU-Central Asia strategy. The EU welcomes the OSCE's involvement in border management in Central Asia and we look forward to coordinating our activities with those of the OSCE, including via the existing monthly coordination meetings held in Dushanbe.

In another example of the OSCE's willingness to respond to the Tajik authorities' requests for assistance, it is welcome that the Centre and MIA, supported by the SPMU, have conducted a joint needs assessment in February 2008 to look at potential joint activity on police reform issues. We look forward to the development of concrete assistance projects in the areas of most immediate need.

The EU commends the Centre on its continuing work in the area of small arms and light weapons, as well as mine action. The programme has made a huge contribution and the development of a regional Coordination Council would be a more positive legacy of the civil war than the economic as well as human costs incurred over the last 10 years. We look forward to further reports of success in completing Phase II of the programme, and the shift away from disposal activities towards technical assistance in drafting legislation for the handling of explosive material.

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The EU is seized of the importance of effective water resource management and recognises the Centre's contribution to the development of a regulatory and policy framework on this and similar environmental threats. As with many environmental questions, water management has wider regional implications and the EU supports the Centre's efforts to co-ordinate activities in these areas with Governmental institutions and civil society to develop a long term approach through a National Environmental Sectoral Strategy, which it is hoped will be adopted this year.

In the economic sphere, the EU is concerned about the pervasive and systemic problems of corruption and cronyism. The OSCE can and should play a useful role in promoting good governance at a national and local level, as well as developing capacity through its network of information and resource centres. These can make an effective contribution, at low cost, to business development and trade facilitation, notably on the border with Afghanistan.

The EU commends the Centre's support to the process leading to the establishment of a national institution for human rights (Ombudsman). We trust that the Host Country will take advantage of the Centre's expertise, and that of other OSCE executive structures, notably ODIHR, in promoting the functions and role of the Ombudsman. The EU is also pleased to hear about the Centre's involvement in discussions on the draft Law on Religion but by contrast is troubled by the report of a lack of progress in the area of penitentiary reform.

The EU strongly believes that a vibrant and pluralistic media is essential to the development of democratic accountability. In this respect, we are disturbed by the suggestion that 'media freedom, access to information and general media development was marked by stagnation and continuing problems'. The Centre's involvement in donor coordination, capacity building and training in this sphere, and in supporting the 9th Central Asia Media Conference, is therefore welcome.

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Gender awareness and equality as well as gender mainstreaming remain key areas of activity. Meanwhile, support for improved regional cooperation in combating trafficking remains a crucial element of OSCE-wide activity to address this scourge, and we welcome the engagement of experts from the OSCE's SPMU and the Office of the Special Representative conducting a joint needs assessment in February.

The reorganisation and refocusing of the Centre's activities, and significant uplift in the budget for 2008, provide a sound basis for the further expansion of activities across all three dimensions, in response to the Tajik Government's requests for assistance. This will of course require a broad mandate and the continued existence of a network of field missions in the provinces. The EU hopes that outstanding differences will soon be overcome to enable the OSCE Centre to continue its activities in all three OSCE dimensions, including the promotion of the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments.

The EU would like to thank Ambassador Pryakhin once again for his report, and to his staff for their dedicated work in often difficult circumstances. The EU looks forward to further discussion of the Centre's activities in the context of the 2009 Programme Outline.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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