

Events

The Centre has provided technical support to the initiative of the "Coalition of for Democracy and Civil Society" and the Central Commission on Elections and Referendum of the KR to conduct the third republican scientific-practical conference "Institutions of Civil Society, and Elections", which took place on 27-28 August in Issyk-Kul. More than 100 representatives of Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament), election bodies, political parties, NGOs and Media participated in the conference. Among the key issues discussed during the roundtables were implementation of the new provisions of election law and transparency of election campaign and active participation of the civil society in election process. In conclusion, several public agreements between the participants of the electoral process were adopted: memorandum of mass media for fair elections, declaration of political parties for free and legitimate elections, as well as recommendations for the training of national observers representing NGOs during the elections.

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Activities of the Centre

OSCE Centre supports election related activities in Kyrgyzstan

From 15th to 30th July, the Central Commission on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic with the technical assistance of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, had conducted a series of training seminars for newly appointed staff of provincial (plus Bishkek and Osh cities) election commissions. The participants of the trainings were provided with the clarification on recent amendments to the Election Code, as well as instructions related to the electoral procedures. The trainings have been conducted by the experts of the Central Commission on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic. Eighty representatives of the regional and district election commissions have discussed a wide spectrum of election-related problems, including such issues as: preparation and monitoring of accurate voters' lists, including additional lists of voters, uniform procedure for the formation of election commissions with the participation of representatives of political parties and public organizations, control over expenditure of candidates during electoral process and monitoring of mass media in elections.



(Handing over the copies of Election Code by the Central Election Commission to the representatives of political parties)

Under a project "Publication and Circulation of the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic", the OSCE Centre has provided support for the publication of an additional 6,000 copies of the Election Code, which will be used for free circulation among political parties, NGOs, election commissions, public organizations and the media. To follow up the election support programme, the OSCE Centre is planning to support the publication of the Commentaries to the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the Centre will provide assistance in preparation and publication of the brochure of recommendations for the local observers during the elections in the Kyrgyz Republic. These brochures will be used as the manual for the training programs for the observers representing political parties and NGOs.

News

On 22nd July a Memorandum was signed between the Kyrgyz Republic and the OSCE Centre under which the OSCE Academy in Bishkek shall be registered with the organizational-legal form of "Public Foundation" in accordance with the Civil Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. According to the agreement, the OSCE, through its Centres in Bishkek, Tashkent, Ashgabad, Almaty and Dushanbe, shall provide organizational support to the programmes of Academy and assist in co-operation with other higher education institutions in Central Asia. Furthermore, the agreement ensures equal regional representation in the structure of the OSCE Academy, and a proportional approach to Central Asian students' admissions. Being a unique center for education, research and development of dialogue in Central Asia, the Academy will continue to fulfill a role in the provision of education to young specialists in key areas such as Good Governance, conflict prevention/resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation. On August 6, the Academy has been registered with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Justice as an independent regional organization.

Events

From 23-29th August, the "Youth and Elections-2005" forum took place in Issyk-Kul devoted to forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections. The forum was organized with the aim to increase the knowledge of young people about civic and political rights, the national electoral system, legislation, and international standards. The experts together with other participants discussed the importance of youth participation in the political life of the country and good governance. The event was organized by the public foundation "Peremena" and supported by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, Soros Foundation, the U.S. Embassy and others. Included among the participants were parliamentarians, representatives of the State Committee on Youth, Tourism and Sport, CEC, the media, election experts, students and school children from all regions of Kyrgyzstan. Youth leaders are now expected to go back to their respective regions and organize roundtables and discussions for young people. The events will aim to share knowledge and experience gained during the Forum, and facilitate preparation of the future public and political leaders of the country.

Activities of the Centre and OSCE Programmes

In the framework of supporting the reform of the prison system and humanizing the criminal legislation the OSCE Centre, together with the Ministry of Justice, ODIHR, Prison Reform International (PRI) and Soros Foundation, organized a conference on the reform of the Kyrgyz probation service. The intention of the conference, which took place on the 19th and 20th July, was to initiate a broader discussion on the role of probation as an alternative means of sentencing, as well as the possibility to transfer the service from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice (the transfer of the prison system has already taken place). A Central Asia regional 10-day summer course for staff from correctional institutions was also held which focused upon international and regional experiences in the area of probation-service development. This was the second program of this kind to be organized in Central Asia. The first - held last year in Kazakhstan - dealt with questions concerning the general reform of the penitentiary service in Central Asia.



Together with ODIHR, Soros Foundation, Prison Reform International and independent journalists, OSCE supported a journalistic competition from 1st July 2003 to 1 May 2004. The aim of the competition was three-fold: to raise public awareness with regard to reform of the penitentiary system; to foster the humanization of the criminal executive system; and to encourage a change of public opinion towards the use of alternative (non-custodial) means of sentencing. More than 30 journalists participated and on 23rd July six competitors covering issues such as human rights in penitentiary institutions, humanization of detention conditions, alternative means of sentencing, etc, received awards for their work.



During the summer months the OSCE Centre provided technical assistance to the Secretariat of the National Council on Good Governance. The project aims to create a website within a year that will facilitate public access to information on broad governmental reforms in both the public and private sectors. The overall objective is to promote transparency and public dialogue in pursuit of implementation of the state's anti-corruption strategy.



OSCE Academy in Bishkek has recruited a new batch of students for the 2004/2005 Masters Programme, which begins in September. After interviews had been conducted in the capitals of Central Asian countries, in collaboration with the OSCE centres, the final admission committee meeting took place in Bishkek. The committee worked from 5 to 8 July, and selected candidates according to criteria developed by the Academy and approved by its Board of Trustees. The total number of students studying in the Main Masters Programme in autumn was increased from 25 to 30.

Visits

In the beginning of August, an expert group representing ODIHR OSCE has paid a two-day working visit to Kyrgyzstan. The ODIHR experts had meetings with the Central Commission on Elections and Referendum of the Kyrgyz Republic, local and international agencies involved into election process. The visiting experts have been informed about the OSCE Centre's activities on support of the civil society in the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the realization of the election assistance programme within the frameworks of the UNDP's project "National Capacity Building in Electoral Administration in the Kyrgyz Republic".



From 4th-8th July, at the request of the Secretariat of the National Council of Good Governance of Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek in co-operation with the UNODC Office in Tashkent organized a legal assessment mission on anti-corruption laws of Kyrgyzstan. During the mission, meetings took place with senior officials and competent professionals of various national ministries and organizations responsible for drafting and implementing anti-corruption legislation. Furthermore, a review was conducted to ascertain to what extent current laws complied with the UN Convention Against Corruption.

In Focus

Adequate protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities contributes greatly towards a state's success in minimizing ethnic tensions that could create a context for wider conflict. To respond to this challenge, the then Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, now OSCE) in 1992 decided to establish the post of High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). The function of HCNM is to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between the participating OSCE States. The mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities is described as "an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage". In recent decades, Kyrgyzstan has introduced a number of measures aimed at ensuring that persons from differing ethnic communities have equal opportunities to protect and develop their individual and collective cultural and linguistic identities particularly through the medium of education.

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Important Visits

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities presented recommendations of the working group "Integration through Education"



(Ambassador Rolf Ekeus (left) and the Kyrgyz State Secretary Osmonakun Ibraimov participate at the presentation of the Project "Integration through Education" in the Hyatt, Bishkek)

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus visited Kyrgyzstan on 19th and 20th July 2004 and attended a presentation of the Report on Recommendations of the working group "Integration through Education". This working group was established in 2003 with the support of the Kyrgyz Government.

The working group elaborated a set of practical recommendations in the area of education policy for the authorities, national minorities and international agencies in order to assist in fostering social integration of the multi-ethnic society in Kyrgyzstan. "This is a remarkable achievement in producing what is, in many ways, a pioneering effort and in producing a report which will be valuable far beyond Kyrgyzstan", remarked Rolf Ekeus.

Members of the working group underlined that educational reform offers an effective means to redress some of the difficulties that have developed in inter-ethnic relations, and that it helps promote a multi-ethnic society based upon equal opportunity and the rich cultural and linguistic diversity found within the country. The introduction of an integrated educational system would serve the task of building a strong, multi-ethnic Kyrgyz nation and help to provide all citizens, irrespective of ethnic affiliation, with opportunities and skills to enable them to participate in public life.

It has been also pointed out that given the amount of work required to bring about reform, transition to an integrated system of education should take place in stages. Only a gradual and well-planned shift to integrated education would facilitate reform to be undertaken and avoid the risks inherent in the present system.

In Focus

Long-term stability and prosperity in an ethnically diverse Kyrgyzstan is promoted not through appeasing a handful of influential individuals of minority populations. It should be achieved through ensuring full representation of ethnic minorities into the political, economic and social institutions of the country. Such representation - the essence of the much prescribed "Good Governance" agenda - provides a sense of belonging by ethnic minorities to the policies and processes governing their lives. On this front, there remains considerable work to be achieved. Both the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Osh Field Office are working together in assisting national minorities in Kyrgyzstan. This includes: providing information concerning constitutional and human rights to facilitate their understanding of, and participation in, political, judicial, economic and social processes affecting their lives; supporting measures that raise awareness of electoral processes among ethnic minorities and empower them to engage in the election process to vote for candidates they perceive will best represent their interests; promoting improved understanding and tolerance among ethnic groups, and promoting better relations with institutions that exist to protect minority rights.

In Focus

Pressure upon scarce natural resources commonly leads to tension between communities and countries. In the Ferghana Valley a particularly problem exists over irrigation water. The introduction of international borders since the break up of the Soviet Union has physically divided farming communities and introduced major challenges to the management of the many complex irrigation systems feeding the cotton, cereal and vegetable crops of the region. In an attempt to promote improved understanding and co-operation between communities, earlier this year OSCE funded a local NGO to conduct a series of events aimed at bringing together water users and local authorities from both sides of the Kyrgyz/Uzbek border.

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For any information related to activities of the OSCE Osh Field Office, please contact:
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Activities of the OSCE Osh Field Office

Within the framework of the joint project for Aksakals courts (Courts of Elders), the OSCE Field Office in Osh together with a local NGO (Fund for Legal and Economic Reforms) arranged a training seminar on 26th July for Osh province based Aksakal courts. The event was aimed at strengthening the capacities of the courts in the field of conflict prevention and resolution in rural areas, and development of alternative mechanisms of settling disputes. The seminar also allowed Aksakal court representatives to become more familiar with the 2002 Law that outlines and defines their statute and competences. The project also recently conducted a training need assessment of Aksakal Courts in the south of Kyrgyzstan and the courts will subsequently be provided with up to date information on human rights and legal issues which they deal with on a daily basis. An information campaign was also be launched to disseminate information and raise awareness on the existence and role of these institutions in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The project will eventually support the creation of an Aksakal Court Association.



(A simulation of the Election Day is performed by the Youth in Osh)

The OSCE Field Office is continuing the implementation of the project "Youth mobilization in the South of Kyrgyzstan", which was launched in June this year. The main objective is to mobilize young people and encourage their involvement and participation in the upcoming electoral events. Within the framework of this project, an opening ceremony of the "South Centre for Young Voters" was held in Osh on 18 July. The project also recently launched its own election website for youth in the country that will contain project related information, as well as up-to-date electoral rules and procedures. A youth mobilization campaign was also launched by the project in the three southern provinces including the use of radio programmes, banners and televised debates. The project will also be organizing and facilitating a "Youth and Elections Forum" in Osh in August 2004 where youth movements and individuals will meet with other election actors to discuss the upcoming electoral events in Kyrgyzstan.

Activities of the OSCE Osh Field Office

(Representatives from Aravan District of Kyrgyzstan, and Marhamat District of Uzbekistan, formally sign a water use cooperation agreement under an OFO-funded initiative).

(Cont. from column 1)

These communities were dependent upon the same irrigation system and - at the time - both sides were dissatisfied with the quantity and timing of available water. Each community also blamed the other for their difficulties. Under the project farmers and pump station managers received training on local water laws and responsible water usage, and participatory planning meetings were held to encourage the identification of solutions to the difficulties. As a result a water sharing cooperation agreement was signed on 2nd July between representatives from Aravan District of Kyrgyzstan, and Marhamat District of Uzbekistan. It is expected that such an agreement will mutually benefit both communities economically, and will provide a platform for closer future relations in general.