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Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan
on OSCE co-operation

MAGA

Interview with the OSCE Representative
on Freedom of the Media

ZINE

Max van der Stoel – 1924-2011



OSCE Ambassadors in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

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Editor: Ursula Froese

Designer: Nona Reuter

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Please send comments and contributions to:
oscemagazine@osce.org

Press and Public Information Section

OSCE Secretariat

Wallnerstrasse 6

A-1010 Vienna, Austria

Tel.: (+43-1) 514 36-6267

Fax: (+43-1) 514 36-6105

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In this issue

OSCE AMBASSADORS IN TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

- 3 Tajikistan, 4-6 April 2011
 - 6 Tajikistan as part of the OSCE's regional security system
Khamrohon Zarifi
 - 8 Kyrgyzstan, 7-9 April 2011
 - 10 Events in the Kyrgyz Republic and co-operation with the OSCE in 2010
Ruslan Kazakbayev
 - 12 Guarding the gateway where the world begins and ends
Rodolfe Oberle
 - 13 The OSCE promotes access to INTERPOL databases
Christopher Hornek
 - 14 Voices of courage in the eye of the storm: mediators in southern Kyrgyzstan
Makhamadzhon Khamidov
 - 16 Q and A with Zuhra Ahmedova: "We have to overcome the lack of trust"
Svetlana Levina
 - 18 A day in the life of an OSCE Community Security Initiative Officer in Osh, Kyrgyzstan
Allison Chapman
- ## MEDIA FREEDOM
- 20 Allergic to balance: interview with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović
Frane Maroević
 - 23 Tajikistan's Media Council
Ursula Froese
 - 25 To blog or to block
Bermet Mambetshaeva
 - 27 The 15th anniversary of the Arms Control Agreement in South-Eastern Europe
Brigadier General Costanzo Periotto
 - 29 Max van der Stoep, 1924-2011
Walter Kemp
 - 31 Appointments

ON THE COVER: OSCE Ambassadors in front of the Presidential Residence in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 8 April 2011 (OSCE/Ursula Froese)



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Norwegian Ambassador Guttorm Vik takes a moment to reflect during the OSCE Ambassadors' visit to Dushanbe, 4 April 2011. (OSCE/Ursula Froese)

OSCE Ambassadors in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

Trafficking in drugs and human beings, violent extremism that leads to terrorism: these threats affect all participating States, but not all alike. Sixteen Vienna-based OSCE Ambassadors — from Germany, United States, Belgium, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and the European Union — and one Ambassador-at-Large from Lithuania — exchanged their briefcases for travel bags in the week from 4 to 9 April 2011, to take a closer look at how the OSCE is countering transnational threats in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The visit was initiated by Ambassador Heiner Horsten of Germany, the Chairman of the Permanent Council's Security Committee, and led by Ambassador Renatas Norkus of Lithuania, which hold this year's OSCE Chairmanship.

Tajikistan, 4-6 April 2011

Arrival in Dushanbe

Just hours after a 3:20 arrival, dawn reveals the stunning contours of mountains against a rosy sky. Ninety-three per cent of Tajikistan's territory is mountainous and its glaciers feed the crops of its Central Asian neighbours. Yet, as the night-time blackout — only for a few minutes until the hotel generator kicked in — has reminded us, much of the population has electricity only two hours a day. This is the time of the spring runoff, but we learn that water levels are low. Managing water resources may well become the major transnational security challenge of the future for Tajikistan; the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has been addressing the matter since 2009. This trip, however, focuses on what in the OSCE are known as first dimension issues, military and political security.

"You would have to stay longer than three days to see the full range of our response to transboundary threats," says Ambassador Vikki, Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, at the morning briefing. "Our work reflects a strong and deep partnership, both with the government of Tajikistan and its structures and with its civil society, as well as with international organizations here and embassies." [Note: Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, the Secretary General of the OSCE, and Khamrohon Zarifi, the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Vienna on 8 June conferring legal status on the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and defining the privileges and immunities enjoyed by its staff.]



Meeting with President Rahmon, 4 April 2011
(BBC/Zarina Khoshtbakht)

Meeting with the President and the Foreign Minister

In meetings with President Emomali Rahmon and Foreign Minister Khamrohon Zarifi, the message is clear: Tajikistan values its partnership with the OSCE and attaches special importance to co-operation in combating violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings. The President presents the Tajikistan Drug Control Agency report for 2010. He outlines Tajikistan's co-operation with Afghanistan, stressing the importance of social and economic rehabilitation.

National passport office

The so-called national passport issued by the Ministry of Interior at police stations throughout the country is accepted without a visa for entry into the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and, for limited traffic up to 50 kilometres, Uzbekistan. Used by migrant workers, it is in fact a national identity card. All records are entered manually, so there is no data exchange. Tajikistan also issues international passports and, since 2010, electronic international passports. Only the latter comply with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. The OSCE is helping the country to streamline its identity management. [Note: On 8 April the Office in Tajikistan and the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on police reform.]



OSCE/URSULA FROESE

Workshop on Transnational Threats

"You will never come across such a difficult and complicated border." Tajikistan's long border with Afghanistan was the focus of a full day of discussions with top officials of the State Committee on National Security and representatives of other international organizations. Mountainous terrain, 72 kilometres of border inaccessible by road and a common language on both sides make the effective control of illegal movement of persons and goods a challenge. Does the complexity of the problem require a complex response? or rather a holistic approach?

Following the withdrawal of the Russian Border

Service from the former external borders of the Soviet Union in 2005, Tajikistan had extensive new borders to manage. The OSCE helped the government to develop a National Border Management Strategy, adopted by Presidential Decree in 2010. Other elements of OSCE assistance: the Patrol and Leadership Programme, the Murgab customs project and the Border Management Staff College (BMSC), which is hosting this workshop. The BMSC is the first international centre for specialist training of senior border officials, also from Afghanistan. It has been operating for two years, and is one of the projects developed by the OSCE following the 2007 Ministerial Council decision to increase engagement with Afghanistan.

Trip to the border with Afghanistan

Driving south from Dushanbe, past family compounds, fields of wheat, villages, the white housing units built by the government for the relocated victims of last year's Kulyob flash floods, through Kurgan-Tyube, we reach the border at Pyanj and follow the no-man's zone to the de-mining site at the border.

The OSCE provides funding for the Ministry of Defence team that is working here to make the area safe and accessible for border patrolling. Mines were laid in Tajikistan during the civil war and, later, along its borders in the north and south. We witness a detonation by the state-of-the-art Minewolf system with global position mapping — a show. However, in a small forest nearby, real mines were discovered the other day. The danger, as too many victims are still learning each year, is real.



Nizhny Pyanj

The bridge linking Tajikistan and Afghanistan at Nizhny Pyanj has two wide lanes in anticipation of future commerce. Today we walk unobstructed to mid-point, where the heads of the Tajikistan and Afghanistan border crossing points shake hands. Back on the Tajikistan side, we are shown the border checkpoint, the border troops compound and the stark living conditions in a typical front-line garrison. Border guards lay their lives on the line: just this week, a guard was lost; in September 2010 a former OSCE trainee was killed in action.

Launched in December 2008, the OSCE Border Patrol and Leadership Programme has helped to strengthen the operational patrol and surveillance capacities of the Tajik Department of Border Troops and enabled them to increase the number of cross border movement detections and seizures of illegal commodities.

Pyanj Free Economic Zone

The OSCE has been assisting Tajikistan with the development of free economic zones, state-defined areas with reduced barriers for entrepreneurship and cross-border trade, since 2008. The free economic zone at Nizhny Pyanj, is still just a container on a vast empty field. But if the OSCE-supported free economic zone in Soghd, close to the Uzbekistan border in Northern Tajikistan, is any example, businesses from Tajikistan and abroad could soon be building factories here. The first private investors were registered in the Soghd in September 2010. As of March 2011, private investment in the zone amounted to USD 37 million, by 12 investors. One Tajikistan-Cyprus joint venture, for instance, manufactures plastic water pipes, required for the renovation of the Khujand city water supply.



Tajikistan as part of the OSCE's regional security system

by Khamrohon Zarifi



OSCE/ANDREY SERENKOV

This year, Tajikistan marks not only the 20th anniversary of gaining state independence but also the 19th anniversary of its co-operation with the OSCE. During this relatively short historical period, the foundation has been laid for a notably rich and multifaceted co-operation between the Republic of Tajikistan, the OSCE and its institutions. Permanent contacts and intense consultations on a regular basis are evidence of an increasing co-operation between our country and the OSCE. Establishing strong links and developing co-operation with various international security structures, including the OSCE, corresponds to the goals and objectives identified by the Government of Tajikistan, and is in line with national interests and the political course pursued under the leadership of Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon.

Tajikistan highly appreciates the role of the OSCE as an important regional mechanism for ensuring security and stability. The Republic of Tajikistan signed the *Helsinki Final Act* in February 1992 and the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan (now the Office in Tajikistan) was opened in Dushanbe the following year. Tajikistan's aspiration to join the OSCE was based on the need to use its expertise and authority in maintaining and enhancing security at the national, regional and international levels, in implementing democratic reforms and establishing a secular democratic society based on the principles of market economy.

We support the agenda of the OSCE in 2011 announced by the Lithuanian Chairmanship and together with our partners stand ready to contribute to the transformation of our region into a more secure and stable part of the world.

In the era of globalization, our modern world is characterized by intrinsically linked processes of national development. Only through growing interdependence and political and economic co-operation among the OSCE participating States can we achieve common well-being. Our Organization — within which we are all equal partners and have the same commitments — is striving towards this goal.

When we speak about shaping the architecture of security in the OSCE area, we cannot overlook the fact that Central Asia became an intrinsic part of the OSCE's common space a long time ago. Central Asia is gaining in significance for the OSCE. Present-day challenges and risks in the Central Asian region are increasingly affecting the whole OSCE area. Global stability largely depends on the way the situation in Central Asia will develop in future.

Today, as we face the threats of the modern world, especially terrorism, violent extremism, radicalism, drug trafficking and transnational crime, we must work together more closely than ever and strengthen confidence-building measures between our countries, so that future generations can enjoy a stable, prosperous and happy life in the region. To overcome these threats, we must eliminate their origins, namely poverty, lack of fair conditions and creation of subjective barriers to sustainable development.

Tajikistan continues to position itself as a staunch active supporter of regional co-operation and integration in Central Asia. We are interested in further developing and strengthening good neighbourly relations and mutually beneficial co-operation with all friendly countries, as it is impossible to think of prospects for security and stability in the OSCE area, particularly in Central Asia, without such fruitful interaction.

One of the three areas in which the OSCE takes action is the economic and environmental dimension. The future of the Organization in this field of work largely depends on how the Organization will be able to take into account the real interests of its participating States. Steady support to a constructive and open dialogue on the integrated solution of water, energy and environmental problems in Central Asia should be the task of the OSCE in the coming years.

Tajikistan's geographic location at a strategic crossroads of transport and trade routes opens up great opportunities for close economic ties with European countries. Our country has a huge potential for trade and economic co-operation, especially in areas such as hydropower, engineering, mining, transportation, agriculture and tourism.

Free movement of people, capital, goods and services and the effective functioning of the existing transport corridors in the OSCE region is the basis for the development of economic co-operation and interaction between participating States. The OSCE's assistance in creating transport corridors linking Central Asia with Afghanistan and in simplifying the procedures for cross-border trade will accelerate the economic development of our countries.

We increasingly recognize that the situation in Afghanistan — an OSCE Partner for Co-operation - is inseparably linked to security in Central Asia and the entire OSCE area. Tajikistan, as a state guarding the southern borders of the OSCE area and Central Asia, faces the major challenge of addressing the whole range of threats emanating from Afghanistan. However, we are convinced that taking effective action against the existing threats is only possible with our concerted collective efforts, and with the participation of the people of Afghanistan.

In 2009, together with the OSCE, we initiated the establishment of the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, which offers training and professional development to law enforcement officials from Central Asia and the entire OSCE region, and also from Afghanistan. Within the short period since its opening, this OSCE structure has demonstrated its relevance and effectiveness in improving border security with Afghanistan. We urge the OSCE participating States to further promote the success of this important institution and to continue to provide practical support to the Government of Tajikistan in further strengthening the border with Afghanistan.

Tajikistan has consistently advocated a balanced development of all three OSCE dimensions, the enhancement of the OSCE's effectiveness and its establishment as a fully-fledged international organization endowed with legal personality. We are convinced that it is necessary to further reform the Organization and to adopt the OSCE Charter, which would serve to regulate its work in accordance with accepted international practice.

The Government of Tajikistan attaches special importance to further strengthening democratization, civil society, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, belief and freedom of speech. As a young democratic country, we are making efforts to engage actively with the public, encourage pluralism of opinion and fulfil our commitments in the human dimension. The official activities of the only Islamic-leaning party in the post-Soviet space, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, demonstrates the commitment of our State to the implementation of the goals of the Organization.

We strive to further develop our effective and constructive co-operation with the OSCE. Tajikistan will make its contribution in addressing the challenges that the OSCE faces.

Khamrohon Zarifi is Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The views expressed in this article are strictly those of the author and cannot be taken to reflect the official position of the OSCE.

Kyrgyzstan, 7-9 April 2011

Arrival in Bishkek on the anniversary of the uprising that led to the revolutionary change of government last year. From the television screen in the arrivals hall of Manas International Airport, President Roza Otunbaeva pays a sober tribute to the compatriots who lost their lives. Since that day, the country has been in flux, negotiating a challenging course of parliamentary democracy in which nothing is certain — devastating ethnic violence in the south, yet a successful constitutional referendum, parliamentary elections, and soon, the election of a new president. Later that evening, fireworks rise up from the central Ala-Too Square. "Is this a day of mourning? a day of celebration?" we ask a passer-by. A moment of thought.



Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva (right), Portuguese Ambassador Ana Martinho (left), Lithuanian Ambassador Renatas Norkus (top left).

Visit to the Customs Training Centre

The briefing on the OSCE customs training project in Bishkek takes place at the State Customs Service Training Centre: the OSCE project team has been working in the building side by side with Kyrgyz officials and trainers since September 2009.

An important part of the project is the training of Afghan Customs officers in Bishkek, in a five-week entry level course covering the fight against smuggling, duty collection and broader issues such as the fight against corruption. Sixty-five officers were trained from June 2010 to May 2011. Afghan trainers and Kyrgyz trainers teach the course. When the project concludes at the end of December 2011, the training centre of the Kyrgyz State Customs Service will be able to work on its own and the three Afghan customs trainers will be able to teach the whole entry-level course in Kabul.

Two core objectives guide the OSCE Centre in Bishkek's assistance to the government, says Head of Centre Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere: stabilization and democratization. Stabilization measures include networks of local mediators in the south and also in the north of the country, an early warning mechanism close to southern border crossing points and assistance in drafting a framework document for managing ethnic diversity, the latter in collaboration with the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Support to parliamentary committees and promotion of an independent judicial system, transparent law enforcement and public broadcasting: these are just a few of the democratization activities on which Centre members brief us.

Meeting with the President

"I have a dream. One day, everything will be quiet, we will have found our system of government." In the frank and detailed discussion with President Roza Otunbaeva, the problems described are myriad. Yet her commitment to parliamentary democracy is firm. This is how steering a still volatile country through uncharted ground looks up close: concerns multiply, gain a different urgency. This is also palpable later this day and the next, in discussions with the Chairman of Parliament, the Interior Minister, representatives of political parties, government and law enforcement leaders in Osh. — Yes, we need free movement of people and goods, but the passes are opening, can we guard against drugs, weapons, extremists, this spring for us is quite challenging.

Bishkek Academy, discussion with civil society representatives and students

The road to a free society respectful of human rights is a long one. Civil society representatives' reports, in a meeting at the OSCE Bishkek Academy, dispel any illusions one may have had in this regard. In an adjoining discussion, students from the Academy share their views — on the role of Afghanistan as a Partner for Co-operation, on the value of OSCE field operations, on the importance of affirming the interdependence of participating States for building security. Will these students enter their foreign services, pursue international careers? The OSCE Academy was created in 2002 and offers a one-year Master of Arts programme in Political Science.

Visit to Osh

Driving into the city from the Osh airport, one sees the marks of last year's violence, yet today the streets are alive with commercial bustle. In meetings with law enforcement and provincial government heads, with religious leaders and non-governmental organizations, the same message of personal engagement is heard: the devastation must not be allowed to happen again.

The Osh Field Office mediates a roundtable with the State Commission for Religious Affairs. Leaders of different Islamic and Christian confessions, including women leaders, share examples of how religion can be a uniting factor after a conflict and how religious education can promote reciprocal understanding and help prevent conflict.

Participants from Osh and Jalal-Abad Provinces mobile conflict mediation projects speak about their courageous work during last year's crisis and their engagement in an OSCE project to train an extensive network of mediators that will work together with state structures.

Suleiman-Too

At the police station near Suleiman-Too — Suleiman Mountain — we meet officers of the OSCE's Community Security Initiative (CSI). Markus Mueller, who heads the Initiative, explains the officers' mission to support their Kyrgyz colleagues in addressing the post-conflict security situation.

The visit to Osh ends on Suleiman-Too. From this historic site that carries evidence of thousands of years of human culture, spirit and craftsmanship, one looks down over the city cloaked in evening light.

The close-up view of challenges over the past six days has been enriching and often sobering. Problems are systemic and threats are very near. Now it is time to regain the more distant perspective, identify future steps for the OSCE's co-operation with its participating States Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

OSCE/URSULA FROESE



Events in the Kyrgyz Republic and co-operation with the OSCE in 2010

by Ruslan Kazakbayev



The events of 2010 were a serious test for the durability of the statehood and integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic. The socio-economic policies pursued by the country's previous leadership led to a rise in tension in the society, culminating in the large-scale acts of protest of April 2010. The events of 6 and 7 April 2010 led to the resignation of the former president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

In the light of the worsening socio-economic situation in the country, the Kyrgyz people could not countenance the fact that members of the presidential family and their associates were concentrating political and economic power in their own hands and pursuing an irrational foreign policy. The Kyrgyz public increasingly spoke of flagrant violations of human rights.

Most of the opposition leaders were in custody by the time the unrest started in April 2010. Others had been forced to go into hiding. The people's expectations as regards the authorities'

efforts to find a way out of the political crisis had not been met. Instead, the authorities had resorted to force to resolve the crisis, opening fire on the peaceful population. However, the protest mood within society was decisive in terms of how things were to develop.

During a period of two days, on 6 and 7 April, 87 citizens lost their lives and President Bakiyev was forced to leave the capital, heading for the village of Teyit in the Jalal-Abad Province of the Kyrgyz Republic. At the same time, the opposition leaders who had been freed assumed responsibility for resolving the political crisis in the country and formed the Provisional Government.

Faced with an extremely uncertain situation, the Provisional Government accepted the very important and timely proposal made by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Head of State of the country chairing the OSCE, that President Bakiyev should be taken away from the

country, thereby preventing a further escalation of political tension. It is now hard to overestimate the actions of the leader of the Kazakh nation, which is historically bound to the Kyrgyz people by fraternal ties. As is known, this decision was adopted on the basis of joint consultations with the Provisional Government by Kazakhstan, Russia and the United States of America.

To our deep regret, the events of April did not mark the end of the tragic events of last year. In June 2010, a conflict was provoked in the city of Osh and different parts of the Jalal-Abad Province between two fraternal peoples living on the same land. Still, in the face of widespread instability, the Provisional Government localized, without outside help, the flashpoint of the conflict, which could flare up at any time.

In this connection, we should once again like to mention our deep gratitude to the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, for his balanced assessment of what happened in June. We are convinced that thanks to these decisions we can firmly say that our peoples are bound by indissoluble ties.

This being the case, it is a source of concern for us that the calls by the Provisional Government for assistance in resolving the conflict did not find a timely response on the part of the international community.

In this context, the first practical step was a decision by the OSCE Permanent Council to send an OSCE Police Advisory Group (PAG) to the Kyrgyz Republic. That decision was adopted as the active phase of the conflict came to an end. We were, however, grateful to the OSCE for adopting such a decision, and readily worked towards its implementation.

At the same time, as many speakers noted at the OSCE Summit in Astana, among them the President of the European Council, Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, the OSCE's experience in the Kyrgyz Republic showed that the Organization needs to work on improving its decision-making mechanisms in conflict situations and needs to strive not only to prevent conflicts but also to resolve existing ones.

The prospect of the PAG's arrival met with opposition among some sections of the Kyrgyz public. Accordingly, the initial mission mandate and structure were revised. We commend the decision of the OSCE Permanent Council to transform the PAG into the Community Security Initiative. The somewhat protracted process of agreeing on approaches made it possible to find a new format and reconcile the interests of all the parties. We are grateful to all the countries that supported this decision. The Organization demonstrated its flexibility

and ability to carry out its work in line with the expectations of the host country.

Let me repeat that for the Kyrgyz Republic 2010 was a year of dramatic changes and difficult tests for the durability of its unity.

Nevertheless, despite the enormous difficulties that we had to cope with, we have shown that we chose the right path — the path of freedom and democracy. In June 2010, two weeks after the conflict, a constitutional referendum took place, the holding of which was viewed positively by the international community, including the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. In October 2010, free elections were held for the first time in the Kyrgyz Republic, completing the process of legitimization for the government authorities in the country. These elections also drew high praise from international organizations, first and foremost the OSCE, and from countries that had sent their own observers.

We are rightly proud of these achievements. At the same time, we realize that democracy is not just about elections. Democracy means constant development and hard work, and its achievements need to be constantly underpinned by fresh accomplishments. Democracy is impossible without stability and economic development, just as it is impossible for a country to develop without strengthening its democratic institutions.

That is why we are committed to further active political and economic development. That is why we are endeavouring to secure a new experience of parliamentarism in Central Asia, and we believe that the success of the parliamentary form of government will depend, in no small measure, on the Kyrgyz Republic's co-operation with the OSCE and its participating States.

We believe that the OSCE is a unique organization capable of providing tangible assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic as it traverses this new path that has been chosen by its people and recognized by the world community.

Ruslan Kazakbayev is the Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic.

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Guarding the gateway where the world begins and ends

by Rodolphe Oberle



OSCE/RODOLPHE OBERLE



Above: The Kulma Pass on the Tajik-Chinese border, unique point of entry between both countries. Below: Tojiniso Aydimakhmadova, Lieutenant-colonel in the Customs Service of the Republic of Tajikistan

“Murghab with low mountains, where the snow lies — almost all year, where the wind howls, blizzard and storm — grey all around, a deserted place” With these lines, Tojiniso Aydimakhmadova, Lieutenant-colonel in the Customs Service of the Republic of Tajikistan, evokes the stark isolation of this remote region, where the territories of Tajikistan, China and Afghanistan approach each other. The small town of Murghab in the Pamir mountains is the point of customs inspection for the travellers coming into the country.

This is where the OSCE has designed and constructed a modern customs terminal at the junction of the roads coming from Kyrgyzstan to the north and China to the east, in response to a request by the Tajikistan government for help in controlling the contraband coming into the country. At the outskirts of the town, where yaks used to graze, an area of three hectares has been fenced in and three office and technical containers and a water tower have been built. The building of the customs terminal was supported by the Government of Japan. It includes state of the art equipment to detect precursor chemicals used in the production of heroin.

Aydimakhmadova was in Murghab to witness the erection of the first pole of the terminal at a ceremony last July. She had just completed a one-week course conducted for customs officials by the OSCE, on risk management and search and detection skills. The OSCE also offered similar training in Khorog and Dushanbe, to about 100 Tajik officers, and also to about 20 Afghan customs officers.

But much of the year, she spends in a spot higher and more remote still: the border crossing point to China at Kulma, 4,365 metres above sea level. From the plateau where the Murgab customs building stands, at a distance of some 80 kilometres, the snow-capped summit of the 7546-metre Muztagata mountain is visible behind the ridge of the Tajik-Chinese border.

“Here I have spent many years and long nights of service,” recalls Aydimakhmadova, talking with the OSCE officers. She was a teacher in Murgab before she joined the customs service of Tajikistan in 1993. The border crossing point at Kulma was only open six months of the year. For many years, Tojiniso has spent those months posted there as chief customs inspector. “Temperatures often plunge below 50 degrees Celsius, she recounts. My male colleagues and I used to do 15-day shifts, spending the long nights trying to gather some heat around ancient coke stoves which we fitted into old cisterns.”

The OSCE, as part of the Murghab project, has provided equipment for the points of entry at Kulma and also at Kyzlyart at the Kyrgyz border on the Pamir highway to Osh. It has donated escort cars that accompany the trucks coming over the border to Murghab. The cars also take the officers from their shifts to the relative comfort of Murghab, where they enjoy brief respites with their families before returning again to their places on the mountains at these remote gateways at the top of the world.

Rodolphe Oberle is a Border Management Advisor at the OSCE Office in Tajikistan in Dushanbe.

The OSCE promotes access to INTERPOL databases

by Christopher Hornek

In today's interconnected world, border crossing are not so much barriers between countries but rather points at which they can cooperate, for instance in gathering information relevant to law enforcement investigations.

The databases developed by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) make it possible for border officials, in the course of routine passport and vehicle controls, to check for stolen and lost travel documents, wanted individuals and stolen motor vehicles. Thanks to the Fixed Interpol Network Database (FIND), which provides unified access to the various specialized databases, the checks take only a few seconds. "Secure, modern and efficient border control is an essential tool for increasing border security while at the same time enhancing traveller facilitation," Raphael Perl, who heads the Action against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE Secretariat, comments.

The OSCE has been encouraging the use of the INTERPOL databases since 2004, when the Ministerial Council resolved that "participating States should rapidly report all instances of lost and stolen international travel documents to INTERPOL's automated search facility" (Ministerial Council Decision 4/04). In 2006, the participating States decided to "make every effort to provide law enforcement end-users with integrated real-time access to INTERPOL's automated search facility" (Ministerial Council Decision 6/06). This Decision also tasks the Secretary General to facilitate assistance to participating States in this field if required.

In April 2010 the OSCE and INTERPOL concluded a joint project in Moldova that provided real-time access to INTERPOL databases at 16 border control points — on the borders to Romania and Ukraine and at the Chisinau and Iasi international airports — and 11 police stations. The police stations are situated on the boundary to Transdnistria. Here, rather than systematically checking travellers, law enforcement officers query the databases in an investigative, second-line manner.

The OSCE donated more than €201,000 in passport scanners, computers, software development and web services. At the conclusion of the project, OSCE and INTERPOL experts trained more than 30 Moldovan border,



customs and police officials in using the equipment to access the databases.

The systematic and regular use that, as statistics indicate, the Moldovan authorities are making of the INTERPOL databases is impressive. Moldova has also begun sharing its own information on lost or stolen travel documents with INTERPOL, enabling border control officers throughout the world to flag them as documents that criminals may be using illegally.

Building on the success of the project in Moldova, the OSCE has made first steps to provide real-time access to the INTERPOL databases at border crossings in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In an assessment trip to Tajikistan in October 2010, OSCE experts and representatives from INTERPOL and the Norwegian Police visited the airports at Dushanbe, Khujand, Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube, and a number of border crossing points: one between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, two on the border with Uzbekistan and three on train routes coming from Uzbekistan. They assessed technical infrastructure, including access to power and internet sources, and discussed the possibility of providing real-time access for these points to INTERPOL databases with the Tajik authorities.

Christopher Hornek is Assistant Programme Officer in the OSCE Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit, where he manages the travel document security projects.

A red flag in the INTERPOL database alerts border officials to a lost or stolen travel document. (OSCE Mission to Moldova)

Voices of courage in the eye of the storm: mediators in southern Kyrgyzstan

by Makhamadzhan Khamidov



Mediator Abdullaeva Zahida (second from the left) conducts a meeting with residents of the Osh neighbourhood Teshik Tash, which was severely affected by the June 2010 violence, to resolve a dispute about distribution of humanitarian aid. (IRET)

In the year since interethnic violence shook Kyrgyzstan's southern part last summer, government authorities, international organizations and civil society have been asking themselves: what can be done to prevent such devastation from happening again? One of the answers can be found by looking back on what happened in the midst of the conflict. Small teams of mediators worked indefatigably before, during and after the violent events to calm people down, defuse tense situations and physically stop mobs from joining the violence. Sometimes, of course, there was no stopping the rioting, looting and killing. But stories are emerging of many instances in which these courageous men and women were able to prevent worse from happening, an outstanding achievement that is particularly admirable given the passive role of the local police during the violence.

The institution of public diplomacy is not new in Central Asian countries. For centuries, community elders have been reconciling quarrelling neighbors or married couples and resolving disputes over land or water. Several years ago, building on this tradition, the non-governmental organization IRET, based in Osh,

began setting up teams of local mediators in southern Kyrgyzstan communities.

The first mediator team was formed in 2007 in Uzgen, the town that suffered the worst atrocities the last time ethnic fighting ravaged the region just over twenty years ago, when the Soviet Union was disintegrating. The Uzgen town council was looking for a way to address frequent skirmishes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz youth. IRET responded with a project to set up a network of public diplomats, respected, approachable and active men and women of all ages and from all walks of life, who could speak with the conflicting sides to instil calm and understanding. The OSCE Field Office in Osh supported the project by providing an impartial platform and funding for activities that were receiving no public funding at that time. It also advised the local partners on how to go about setting up a partnership structure between the local authorities and members of the communities.

"Last year, as soon as the threat of large interethnic clashes became evident, our city decided we would not let the terror of 1990 happen again," recounts the mediator Avazbek Tursunbaev. He and his colleagues

negotiated with the various groups passing through on their way to Osh, calling for peace and appealing to reason. They worked with the residents of the town and kept close contact with the neighbouring Kyrgyz villages. Eventually, they were able to convince the youth of both ethnic groups not to believe hearsay and to maintain peace in Uzgen town and Uzgen district.

DEFUSING TENSION IN JALAL-ABAD

In Jalal-Abad province, where tensions were especially high in the weeks preceding the June events, local authorities claim that mediator groups contributed to preventing the conflict from reaching the disastrous scale it did in Osh. These groups were established by IRET in 2009, also supported by the OSCE.

“Already in April one could feel that something bad was brewing; extreme tension was in the air,” recall Kaldar Azhykulov and Shabdanbek Ermatov, both mediators in the Atabek village area in the Suzak district, to the west of the city of Jalal-Abad. “In May, we mediators of the district’s five villages got together to discuss the situation and developed an action plan. We established a close communication network, exchanging office and mobile phone numbers and addresses.” These efforts were funded from the OSCE Centre in Bishkek’s Contingency Fund approved by the Permanent Council in late April 2010.

“That helped a lot to prevent panic,” says Erkin Sultanov, a mediator from Tashbulak village. “For example, when rumours started to spread in our village that horsemen were coming down from the mountains, I called my colleague mediator. He informed me that there were no horsemen, and I was able to calm people down.”

On another occasion, a few thousand Kyrgyz village youth, incited by rumors, were bursting to descend upon Suzak village, the district centre populated predominantly by ethnic Uzbeks. If the armed crowd had spilled onto the Suzak streets, a disaster would have ensued. Mediators were able to talk the infuriated youth out of their plan.

“The fact that in our province we managed to prevent major bloodshed gave us the opportunity to proceed more quickly to the stage of reconciliation,” says Akmal Mamadaliev, a young mediator from Jalal-Abad city. During the dark days of violence, Akmal himself saved several women and children whose lives were in danger and whose casualties could have sparked more violence. Later, he managed to convince local Uzbeks from Suzak village to remove logjams they had erected on the streets as barriers against potential attackers.

BRAVING DANGER IN OSH

In Osh city, at the epicenter of the June inter-ethnic clashes, mediator groups within the official Public Prevention Centres operated under extremely difficult conditions. Just going outside into the streets full of uncontrolled crowds and criminal groups from all over the region was dangerous.

“Nevertheless, we approached people and tried

to dissuade them from taking rash actions, recounts Rasima Osmonbekova from the Osh district Manas-Ata. “A few days after the fighting subsided, we gathered respected people and went in two buses to the neighbouring residential district, telling people that there was nothing worse than hostility and that we all had to live on this land.”

EXTENDING THE NETWORK

The lesson of the June events was a bitter one for the mediators in southern Kyrgyzstan, in spite of the successes recounted here. Their efforts were impressive but too localized to have a wider effect. To really prevent the violence from gaining momentum and be able to stem it once it had, they would have had to work on a much larger scale. This is a lesson the OSCE Osh Field Office has been quick to grasp. Together with IRET and AIMIRA, a Jalal-Abad based NGO, it has launched an ambitious project to build a mediator network that will encompass all of Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces, as well as Osh city.

In building this network, the Office is also drawing on a second important lesson learned from the June events. If state law enforcement bodies had been able to apply the conciliatory approach of mediators, they would have had a much better chance of earning the trust of the population and to resolutely act. Reciprocally, if mediators had been assured of government support, they could have worked much more effectively in the midst of danger. That is why the OSCE is working together with the Osh City Mayor’s Office and the Osh and Jalal-Abad Provincial Administrations to create a private-public mediator network that will work very closely with the security services to prevent large-scale conflicts from breaking out. According to Ross Brown, the Political Officer in the Osh Field Office overseeing network’s implementation, “the innovation of this project is not only that each team will have an ethnic, gender and age balance in addition to having citizens both from the government and civil society on each team, but also that the network as a whole will be sustainable and fully integrated into the overall Kyrgyz government security system.”

Makhamadzhan Khamidov is a journalist in Osh, Kyrgyzstan.

“We have to overcome the lack of trust”



OSCE/URSULA FROESE

Zuhra Ahmedova, the head of the NGO New-Vita, is a mediator from Suzak, Jalal-Abad Province. She is a participant in the OSCE-supported project to develop a network of mediators in southern Kyrgyzstan. On 24 April 2011, she spoke with Svetlana Levina, the Spokesperson of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

Svetlana Levina: How did you get involved in mediation work?

Zuhra Ahmedova: I am a member of the Suzak district Kenesh (Parliament) and also the Chairperson of the Women’s Committee. But it was my feelings as a woman, as a mother, that led me to act. Anyone in my place would have done the same.

Two or three weeks after the tragic events, on a hot July day, I was in Jalal-Abad on some business, when I was informed that there was a rally some five or six kilometres outside the city that threatened to develop into a serious conflict. I rushed there and saw a big crowd of women blocking the highway leading from

Bishkek to Osh, just in front of the guard post. The women were very agitated. They were protesting the arrests of their husbands and sons. The law enforcement officers began to intervene; the women were incensed; I could see that there was about to be an ugly clash.

I am an obstetrician. Our district is small, but we have a rapidly growing population, and I realized that the majority of these women knew me — either because of my job or because of my position in the Women’s Committee. We used to organize dinners in *mahallas*, celebrations. These were the same women, mothers — young, middle-aged, old — and all of them were Uzbeks. Even now, as

I recount the situation, I can hardly repress my emotions. I went into the crowd and I said: "Women, haven't we seen enough blood? Let's go home, there is much left to do there. Our religion teaches us to be peaceful and tolerant." The police officers began to help to clear the road. The women didn't obey, many of them were clearly desperate. Different words were exchanged — both violent and peaceful. I kept repeating the same thing: "We women are for peace!" The policemen removed the women from the road in a respectful manner.

Afterwards we gathered in the club of the nearby kolkhoz. I urged everyone to act calmly and politely. They agreed and we started talking. Right then and there, we created the "Women's Co-ordination Council". We decided that we women should follow the example of the groups of men who were volunteering to act as police helpers. We should start monitoring our districts like "public patrols", and if we found someone spreading rumours or provoking unrest we should address the problem together.

That is how our work started. We work in Jalal-Abad province and in Jalal-Abad town.

Do you work together with others?

We basically work within the NGO New-Vita. We like the title, to me it evokes the birth of a child, it is encouraging. We are also co-operating with the NGOs Bakyt Astanasie and AIMIRA. I learned about a project on conflict prevention supported by the OSCE Osh Field Office, and now we are participating in that. The Presidential Administration also supports it, and we are very grateful to them and to the OSCE. The head of AIMIRA is a very courageous woman; I am amazed at the work this NGO is doing; in addition to mediation they conduct training and support small businesses. Currently, we are working together with law enforcement structures and things are starting to move in the right direction. We are starting to see results - slowly, but they are there. The level of emotional tension has decreased considerably among the population. The relationship between law enforcement and the people has improved. Our co-operation has become more constructive — together with the police we rely on facts instead of gossip.

There are Kyrgyz and Uzbek women among us; there is a Russian, a Tajik, a Tatar – woman of seven or eight ethnicities. We all have the same purpose — friendship, harmony and, God be willing, peace.

Recently I participated in a roundtable with OSCE Ambassadors [note: during the visit of the OSCE Ambassadors to Kyrgyzstan in April 2011]. We need to intensify the training

of mediators. Police officers should learn mediation skills already during their education under the Ministry of the Interior. Lawyers also require training in the area of psychology. Mediators need expert literature, manuals. We need help in organizing study groups, the sooner the better. Also it is important to introduce topics such as inter-ethnic tolerance and peaceful co-existence into school curricula. We are convinced that the OSCE can help us with this. It is something we could hardly do on our own.

Allison Chapman, OSCE Community Security Initiative Officer in Osh, Kyrgyzstan

When I first arrived in Bishkek on a snowy day last January to take up my assignment as an officer in the OSCE Community Security Initiative (CSI), I immediately contracted pneumonia. Perhaps, just for a moment, it may have crossed my mind that I had already completed a long career as a police officer, finishing as a police commander with the rank of Major, and could have been enjoying retirement at home in Pennsylvania, United States. But it wouldn't have been me. In Bishkek, I was overwhelmed by the kindness and care I received from the people to whom I had yet to give anything. I got my administrative paperwork in order, survived language lessons, completed initial training, recovered from pneumonia, and a few weeks later flew to my duty assignment in Osh.

I began work immediately, joining my two colleagues in Osh City Police Headquarters, our assigned area. At present, we are 21 CSI officers in all, divided into four regions: Chui in the north of Kyrgyzstan, Osh City, Osh Region and Jalal-Abad. We are situated within actual police facilities, so we can interact with the police on a daily basis. Each police station with which CSI is working has a team of three or four CSI members and local administrative and language assistants. Our aim is to encourage co-operation between the police and the communities after the events of June 2010. We co-ordinate between members of the police and the Community Safety Working Group, which includes the chairperson of the *aksakals* (elders), the chairperson of the local community Public Prevention Centre, police chiefs and/or deputy chiefs, neighbourhood inspectors and heads of communities and women's and youth groups.

A typical day begins in the office preparing for our weekly meetings with the heads of the police stations and the CSWG. The purpose of these meetings is to prioritize problems, starting with those that affect the most number of people and that we can solve. Those we cannot



solve go to the regional level, and then to the national level steering committees. Most of the police stations and PPCs are in poor condition. Not only computers and printers but even chairs are in short supply. We are always trying to gather the most basic tools for the officers to be able to effectively do their jobs. But providing equipment is not our primary goal; we are here to provide methodological guidance, practice and training. The OSCE has been given a wonderful reception at the local level. Co-operation has been very good within police departments and especially within the communities. My perception is that the younger police officers are like sponges, eager and ready

to learn new modern methods, but remain cautious. The older officers are limited in participation to a system that does not appear to have changed significantly in many years. I believe that an emphasis on leadership and modern management methods, along with the technology to support these new roles, would enhance the effectiveness of their performance. After our morning preparations, it's off we go to meet with our colleagues and counterparts.

We identify a problem and then as a group work on finding the best solution. For example, the PPCs had expressed a concern that the neighbourhood inspectors were not patrolling in concert with the civilian patrol groups (community members patrolling the communities in the evenings), that they didn't know the people and were unaware of the community boundaries. We consulted with the police's Chief of Public Peace and Order, who is present at our meetings, and established a schedule for the neighbourhood inspectors to accompany the civilian patrol groups once a day, between 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., and prepare activity reports. These are small steps that lead to trust between the police and the community and promote positive interaction, thus perhaps also mitigating bigger issues. Another approach we use is to create opportunities for the PPCs and the neighbourhood inspectors of all ethnicities to spend some positive social time together. We are preparing an event where each PPC will organize an activity such as a mini soccer game, chess competition, handicrafts competition or youth performances. Lastly, being a group of experts in our fields, we prepare specific training to enhance our practices.

I personally communicate with the help of a wonderful local language assistant, muddling my way through a combination of Kyrgyz, Russian and Serbian as well as hand gestures and facial expressions; I always said I would win any game of charades with the skills I have learned in non-verbal communication. It is always a challenge to be introduced to men in this field where males predominate, especially in Kyrgyzstan. They initially barely acknowledge me and immediately direct conversation and attention to my male counterparts. But after a few minutes, helped by the wisdom of my colleagues who almost always direct the conversation to me, they begin to listen more carefully. Especially as I always offer my hand to shake theirs, which is not common between men and women in this culture — and I have a strong shake! I use this initial curiosity to my benefit, to get across the message of why we are here, how we can work together. After 30 years in policing, when all else fails, I can always come up with a couple of war stories from my

career in the USA. That usually gets their attention, in some cases their respect, and then we are off and running. I love this job!

I have also met with some of the few women in policing here in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. The women are mostly assigned to daylight hours, some investigations, juvenile delinquency units, and a few in the higher ranks in administration. At one meeting, I asked the women if they choose these positions, as I had been told that women are sacred and the family always comes first so they are not put into danger on the street. To my surprise, they commented this is what the men believe, not they. They do believe the family is very important and is an integral part of their life, but so is their job, and they would like to become more involved in active police work, not just in office and juvenile work.

Kyrgyzstan is a country I find still full of hope, and not despair. The local people with whom I am in most contact are bright, intelligent and not at all uninformed about modern methods of governing. The system appears to hold them back, as well as a lack of practical experience in expressing ideas, delegation, and leadership. This is a breathtakingly beautiful country full of contradictions between the old and the new. There are a million stories waiting to be told.

Major Allison Chapman is a United States police commander with extensive overseas and training experience. She is serving as an officer in the OSCE's Community Security Initiative.

The **OSCE Community Security Initiative** is the international community's primary response to the Kyrgyz Republic's request for assistance after the June 2010 violent incidents. The project to send a Police Advisory Group was authorized by the Permanent Council on 22 July 2010 (PC Decision 947). After further discussions, the Permanent Council, on 18 November 2010 (PC Decision No. 961) "supported the understanding reached between the Kyrgyz Republic and the OSCE Centre in Bishkek to implement PC Decision 947 on the basis of the Concept for the Community Security Initiative, jointly developed with the Ministry of the Interior."

The CSI's main objective is "to support the Kyrgyzstan police in addressing the specific security situation after the June events. It shall contribute to the professionalism of the Kyrgyzstan police in providing human security for all members of Kyrgyzstan's population, irrespective of ethnicity, whilst at the same time contributing to the wider, national police reform programme. The CSI will deploy until the end of 2011, subject to an extension."



INTERVIEW WITH THE OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA, DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ

Allergic to balance

At the OSCE Summit, the participating States affirmed the importance of free media for ensuring “full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections and the rule of law.” Dunja Mijatović, who has been the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media since March 2010, spoke with Frane Maroević, Deputy Spokesperson of the OSCE about her first year and challenges facing journalists in the OSCE area.

Frane Maroević: Most people are aware of your work through public statements, but these are only part of what you do. How do you help to promote media freedom in OSCE participating States?

Dunja Mijatović: My core mandate is to assist the participating States in fulfilling the commitments to media freedom they voluntarily made. When I see shortcomings, I point them out to the delegations in Vienna and directly to the governments. I also commission independent legal analyses, which provide clear recommendations to the governments on how to improve their legislation.

I always try to use quiet diplomacy. But if it does not work, the only other option I have is to raise my voice. Public statements are often a last resort, but when matters are urgent, for example, if journalists are killed or imprisoned because of their work, there is no reason to remain silent. In such a case, I am in direct contact with the respective government. It is important for the government to recognize the wrongdoing and to condemn it publically, so that society is aware that it is working to solve the problem.

Physical threats against journalists and media representatives are unfortunately still commonplace, but not the only threats to free media. In what other ways can media freedom be limited?

There are unfortunately many clever and at the same time dangerous ways of imposing restrictions on the media. One of the most common is creating laws that are vague and give too much power to regulatory authorities. I believe print media should not be subject to any regulation, except that which is doled out fairly by civil courts free from political manipulation.

Censorship is another area of enormous concern. I receive news daily of attempts to undermine media freedom, not only in emerging democracies but also in countries that are considered havens of free media.

There are also positive moves by governments that are listening to and applying the recommendations of this Office. Coming from a country in transition, I have full respect and understanding for the fact that some governments are working under difficult conditions. But a difficult political environment is no excuse for not moving forward, not trying hard to make

society freer. There can be no security without a free flow of information and free media.

How do you try to achieve a balance in your work to ensure that all OSCE States are scrutinized?

I am allergic to balance. During my last report to the OSCE Permanent Council, I said that I objected to calls for a more balanced approach in my work. Of course, I need to be fair and impartial. But what does it mean to be balanced? When a journalist is killed in one country, do I have to look for one killed in another country in order to be balanced? If I say that a law in one country is not good, do I have to search for another country with a similar problem? That's not how I do my job. I point my finger at the problem.

I perceive it as a sign of strength that 56 participating States have not only agreed to uphold media freedom commitments but have also created an instrument to remind themselves of their obligations. However, just having an Office is far from enough. My interventions aim to support reform and to bring national legislation and practices in line with commitments. Their implementation, however, largely remains the responsibility of the participating States.

Do journalists also have a responsibility for ensuring media freedom?

Of course. Professional journalism is a prerequisite for a healthy media environment. Freedom of expression is a right that is hard to acquire, easy to lose and a struggle to maintain, because it touches on competing rights such as individual privacy and is challenged by dogmas, taboos, cultural traditions and also competing security interests.

I often hear that we should teach journalists how to do their jobs. I have openly and frankly explained every time that I do not think governments should be telling journalists what to do. We can help governments to draft laws that facilitate media regulation, self-regulatory bodies and press councils, to create a good legal and regulatory framework for fostering media freedom. This Office works with the OSCE field operations to promote professional journalism, self-regulation and good media laws. I am considering preparing a checklist for the participating States, asking for example: Do you have a law on free access to information? Have you decriminalized defamation? But it is not the role of this Office to teach journalists; we are not a school of journalism.

How helpful is it that the 56 participating States confirmed their strong support for your mandate at the Astana Summit and that the 2011 Lithuanian Chairmanship has made media freedom and safety of journalists a priority?

I am very pleased that the Lithuanian Chairmanship has given priority to media freedom and safety of journalists. This is already a very busy and demanding year — threats to free media still abound in too many of our participating States. The Chairmanship's focus will allow me to do more to assist the OSCE participating States in fulfilling their commitments. As always I will

“It is unacceptable that in the OSCE region and in the twenty-first century, we call ourselves an international club of democracies but still put people behind bars or in prison for their written or spoken words.”

continue working with the delegations here in Vienna and the governments to point out what I see as burning problems.

I am grateful that the Chairmanship has decided to focus so specifically on the issue of violence against journalists. Indeed, The Chairmanship has organized a two-day conference dedicated to the safety of journalists in the OSCE region, in Vilnius in early June. I hope the conference highlights the need for urgent action to improve the environment for journalists.

As to the Summit, the *Astana Commemorative Declaration* is a strong political document and, in my view, a call to action for the participating States to complete their still unfinished work, to achieve the goals they have proclaimed during the past 35 years. Throughout the declaration, the message rings clear: commitment to and respect for fundamental freedoms guides this Organization today and into the future. The document's strong emphasis on media freedom gives me additional momentum to continue my work. It should also give additional courage to all journalists throughout OSCE area.

What else are you working on?

There are problems throughout the region with protection of sources, access to information and, a most important topic, decriminalization of defamation. I am going to raise this matter constantly, and I plan to increase co-operation with the Council of Europe in this regard. It is absolutely unacceptable that, of the 56 OSCE participating States, only 11 have decriminalized defamation. It is true that many countries, adhering to the European Court of Human Rights decisions that ban criminal libel convictions, do not, in practice, enforce criminal libel laws. But that is no excuse for not taking the steps necessary to wipe these arcane laws off their books.

Why should defamation be decriminalized?

In modern democracies, jail is for serious crimes, not for expressing an opinion on politics or a public figure. It is the media's duty to foster public debate. Libel is a matter best left to civil courts. Libel should never be used to silence media, not through criminalisation nor high fines in civil cases.

No one is saying that information and freedom of expression should be without limitations. But these are clearly defined in Article 10 of the *European Convention on Human Rights* and Article 19 of the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights*. All OSCE participating States have signed one or both.

The Internet has blurred the distinction between different media; print versus electronic, local versus international,

established versus new. How is this reflected in your work?

The world is undergoing momentous changes through the forces of globalization and the emergence of new technologies. Today, we get more and more of our information online. However, when it comes to safety of journalists, to the old problem of attacks on people who have different views, who are critical, who use satire or provocative language, the playing field has not changed. Journalists are threatened regardless of whether they work online or in traditional media.

Internet freedom and access to the Internet is something to which I am very dedicated. Last year we developed a comprehensive survey to assess the degree to which the Internet is regulated, deregulated or co-regulated across the OSCE region. We have received answers from many of the participating States and will have a final report soon. Other international organizations have also expressed interest in using this matrix, and we are most willing to share this model so that it can be used for measuring Internet freedom worldwide.

No one is questioning the legitimate right of a government to tackle the threats of cyber attacks. But we do observe that some governments block websites they consider uncomfortable and regulate the Internet on the pretext of national security or the fight against terrorism. As I stated at the beginning of my term in Office, attempts to suppress, restrict or block websites are a lost battle. Blocking just creates problems. Society is threatened and people live in fear because they cannot share their views.

From a media freedom perspective, what is the difference between a blogger and a journalist, a website manager and a newspaper publisher? Do they deserve the same protection?

Every person whose freedom of expression is restricted deserves this Office's protection. If bloggers are put in prison because of their blogs, I do not ask myself whether or not they are journalists. Today, with the emergence of citizen journalism, this whole area is fluid. If someone is put in prison simply because they post a satirical video clip, of course it's a matter for this Office.

Is Wikileaks a matter for your Office?

I have a slightly different view of Wikileaks as a media-freedom issue. Wikileaks is an information platform that contains an enormous amount of data. Whether this data is legally or illegally obtained is not a question for my Office. But as far as media freedom is concerned — and I limit myself to that — everything on and about Wikileaks is being discussed and written about freely, and I therefore currently do not see a need for this Office to intervene.

There are several angles I have already raised as problematic. I have condemned statements by some politicians calling for the "execution" of Wikileaks' founder. Also, there is the important, yet little discussed, issue of security in the handling of secret documents. There are legitimate reasons why certain documents are secret and practice has developed in rule of law states on this: how secrecy is decided (always set out in law

and proportional). It is thus not a problem for freedom of expression that not all information is in the public domain and each case of leaking secret information must be considered on its merits.

The responsibility for safeguarding classified documents resides with those who have an obligation to do so — civil servants, government employees and politicians. The persons obtaining leaked information can not *per se* be held accountable for not respecting classification rules. In journalism, a vital test for the legitimacy of revealing leaked information to the wider public is the question of whether or not it is in the public interest. In my December 2010 report to the Permanent Council, I appealed to participating States to act and to react to the developments surrounding Wikileaks with these considerations in mind.

These are the core issues. If I observe indications that media freedom is being threatened or someone's creative work is being suppressed, I will of course raise this publicly.

More than a year has passed since you were selected by the 56 OSCE participating States to help them promote free and independent media. What has been the most difficult situation you have faced?

There are many. It is disappointing to see governments trying to silence critical voices — people who try to point out problems or simply have different views. These people are harassed, intimidated, interrogated, put in prison and have their equipment seized. Even fearing for their lives or the lives of their families, they continue to do an enormously important job. On many occasions, I have had to talk to people in confidence because of this fear. In too many countries, it is not easy to be a journalist. Safety of journalists is an issue I will continue raising as long as I do this job, because it is unacceptable that in the OSCE region and in the twenty-first century, we call ourselves an international club of democracies but still put people in prison for their written or spoken words.

What have been the highlights and achievements of your first year?

It has been fascinating to meet people and to gain a deeper understanding of the region and of the specific problems that its people and the countries are facing. I have excellent support from civil society, OSCE delegations and governments. Active involvement by the governments has been at the core of our achievements. It is amazing when you realize that jointly you have managed to make positive steps. I was very pleased when journalist and blogger Eynulla Fatullayev was released from an Azerbaijani prison last month, as I was earlier this year when Adnan Hacizade and Emin Milli were released. These are steps forward. I believe it is important for me to continue to fight for the rights of individual journalists, as well as the profession as a whole. I am hopeful that these men can now return to their important work.



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Tajikistan's Media Council

by Ursula Froese

The basic principles of mass media and journalism in Tajikistan are honesty, objectivity, fairness, pluralism and respect for human rights.

—Article 1, Ethical Norms of Journalistic Activity in Tajikistan (October 2009)

The Media Council of Tajikistan taking a decision on a new chairperson, Dushanbe, 7 April 2011

Support to journalists who are establishing a media-self-regulation body requires sensitivity to history, political and economic context, law governing freedom of expression and association, as well as familiarity with labour relations practice and any safeguards for the security and safety of reporters. It also requires stepping back and leaving the decision-making to the media

community who will articulate the values, design the rules and enforce the self-regulation process that will govern their work.

Journalists in Tajikistan began the process in 1999 and, after ten years of discussions on what it means to be a free and responsible media community, the majority of practicing journalists agreed in October 2009 to abide by the collectively-drafted *Ethical Norms of Journalistic Activity in Tajikistan* and formally to establish a media-self regulation body, the Tajik Media Council. The OSCE helped by providing best practice models from other participating States. The code of ethics sets out rules on accuracy, protection of information sources, integrity regarding commercial interests and respect for privacy and personal dignity — all of these the kinds of issues for which journalists often find themselves summoned to court.

After one and a half years of operation, the Tajik Media Council is still a fledgling institution. It adjudicates violations of the code of ethics and has heard several dozen complaints, making its judgments public and

thus following the procedure laid down in its founding charter. The Tajik Media Council also offers itself as a venue for resolving media disputes out of court.

YEARS OF PREPARATION

Nuriddin Karshiboev, the head of the National Association of Independent Media in Tajikistan and an elected member of the Tajik Media Council board, has been involved in discussions of media ethics in Tajikistan from the beginning. “Our first discussions revolved around an ethical code that Ibragim Usmonov, who is now head of the Tajik Media Council. [note: on 12 April 2011 Usmonov resigned for health reasons], wrote in 1999. Of course, given the extreme conditions under which journalists were working after the civil war, it was not easy to interest them in the ethical problems of accepting money for content. Once the economic situation improved a little, things got better,” he recalls.

Several attempts to draft a code of ethics foundered until journalists themselves felt empowered to define their own standards and agendas. Discussions in 2003 and 2007 opened up areas for heated discussion, including on the role of the state in establishing standards for the journalism profession. “Journalists rightly asked in what capacity a state-affiliated body could propose norms for media self-regulation,” Karshiboev recounted.

The years of deliberation and creative controversy bore fruit. In December 2008, the OSCE, in co-operation with the Deutsche Welle Academy, organized a study trip to Berlin for a group of leading media representatives. It was a chance to see how the German Press Council, an internationally recognized best practice model in Europe, works and to discuss plans for developing an ethical code with German colleagues.

“We did not come to the discussion empty handed, says Karshiboev. “We knew how we wanted to address issues in the Tajikistan context, and we tried to harmonize this with international norms.”

When the group returned, they formed a larger working group, also facilitated by the OSCE. They considered input not only from Germany, but also from Bulgaria and other eastern European countries, and hammered out what is now the *Ethical Norms of Journalistic Activity in Tajikistan*.

OVERCOMING SCEPTICISM

About 60 media representatives attended the founding session of the Tajik Media Council on 30 October 2009. Each of them could propose one person as a candidate for the Council. Twenty candidates were nominated, and out of these, nine were elected as councillors.

One of the most debated questions was how to regulate the councillors’ terms of office. If the Media Council was to attract members, it would have to dispel widespread scepticism in this regard. The matter was sensitive because some considered that a long term of office could make the Media Council appear as an instrument of limitation and censorship.

“At the beginning, we were against the idea of the Media Council,” comments Khurshed Niyosov, chief

editor of the newspaper Farash and General Secretary of the Media Alliance of Tajikistan. “We were inclined to regard any institutionalized code of ethics as an excuse for censorship. Only later, after we had studied the ethical code and the mechanism, did we decide to sign up.”

In the end, a rotation system was adopted, in which three new councillors are elected every year. All elected councils are working voluntarily supported by a small executive body of four members. Only one member gets a full-time salary. The Tajik Media Council, which now works out of an office in the Newspaper and Magazine Publishing Complex in Dushanbe, keeps running costs low. Its long-term goal is that the members of the media self-regulation system will take over the costs. In March, the Tajik Media Council informed members and the public that it would begin the collection of membership fees.

EARLY RESULTS

With OSCE Office support to its first year of formal operation, the Tajik Media Council has been provided with expertise and training opportunities that have enabled it to promote professional ethics in Tajik journalism. In 2010, an additional 15 media outlets signed up to the mechanism and agreed to its code of ethics. More than 230 journalists discussed professional ethics in 13 media self-regulation body open meetings held in Dushanbe, Istaravshan, Khujand, Kanibadam, Isfara, Kurgan-Teppe and Kulyab.

It will take some time for the Media Council to develop the clout to become the main regulation body for media disputes in Tajikistan. Of the first 20 alleged ethics violation cases it received, the Media Council rejected ten as without foundation and ruled on ten others, including on an allegation of violation of personal dignity, in which it called upon the newspaper in question to apologize.

Shahlo Akobirova, a broadcast journalist and the director of the media development organization Khoma, considers the Tajik Media Council and OSCE efforts to support it a success. But she points to important challenges ahead. “The mechanism still faces the major problem that the industry in Tajikistan is weak. Media are lacking in means, and that makes them vulnerable,” she says.

Another problem Akobirova sees is that the Media Council has so far attracted mainly independent media, and not enough state media. More state media among its members would raise its credibility in the eyes of the government. That could lead to more out of court settlements.

Some of the decisions of the Media Council during the last half year elicited very critical reactions. “This may be painful”, says Akobirova, “but, for a discussion of ethical norms, perhaps normal — part of a healthy process, and maybe a sign of change.”

Ursula Froese is the editor of the *OSCE Magazine*.

To blog or to block

Exploring the Internet's potential as a peaceful force for democracy with the Central Asian Youth Network

by Bermet Mambetshaeva



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For me as an aspiring journalist in Kyrgyzstan, posting content on the Internet and reading content posted by others is a part of life I couldn't imagine doing without. But I also know that blogging is relatively new to this part of the world, and user content is sometimes seen by governments as a security threat.

How blogging is perceived in Central Asia and how it relates to security is a question I had the opportunity to explore in depth last summer, when I joined the research programme of the Central Asian Youth Network (CAYN).

Launched in 2004 by the OSCE Centre in Tashkent (now the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan), CAYN's purpose is to foster good relations among young people in the region and

promote conflict prevention and international co-operation. It provides students the opportunity to attend lectures, take part in discussions and conduct research to enhance their understanding of contemporary security threats and the OSCE's role in responding to them. More than 100 students have gone through the programme so far.

In June 2010, I was honoured to join 36 students from all over Central Asia in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to take part in a CAYN conference organized by the OSCE Centre in Astana. Our goal as participants was to get inspiration and guidance for the research papers we would be preparing in small groups over the next few months, on topics relevant to the OSCE. I had

A simulation exercise at the Central Asian Youth Network meeting in Almaty in June 2010.

chosen freedom of the media, and was joined by four other participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Ten professors from universities in Europe, North America and Central Asia were invited as guest speakers to help us get started.

We had come to the meeting knowing very little about the OSCE and what it does, and it was fascinating to learn about its principles, commitments and activities. For most of us, it was our first time interacting with peers from other countries of the region. In one of the simulation games everyone had to become a political representative of another state. The goal was to develop a multilateral migration treaty. Although I found it quite difficult to defend the interests of Tajikistan instead of my home country Kyrgyzstan, it was a great experience to get into someone else's shoes and reflect on their situation.

The summer was busy with research, which turned out to be a bit more daunting than expected. Our review of the literature showed us that the subject of new media in Central Asia has been studied very little. We decided to focus on two questions: "How do blogs contribute to a pluralistic media environment in Central Asia?" and "What is the best way to promote blogging, and thus freedom of speech?" We interviewed bloggers, IT-specialists, journalists and media experts, examined blog platforms, studied Internet statistics and analyzed the content and style of blogs. I should mention that without the new media, our research would not have been possible. We were separated from our group-mates by thousands of kilometres. Luckily, we could talk on Skype and use Google groups.

Our research revealed quite a few interesting facts. I was surprised to learn how big the digital divide between the five Central Asian states actually is. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, new media and citizen journalism have become a real force in society and an alternative to traditional media. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan still remain resistant to new technologies, and blogging is at nascent stages there. Uzbekistan is somewhere in between these two extremes.

We argued that the liberalization of new media technologies is the right way towards building healthy civil societies in the Central Asian region. And we identified four steps necessary for the promotion of blogging: increased Internet access, media education, grant support of web developers and building of local web content.

Three months passed quickly, and at the end of September we again gathered in Almaty to share our research findings. The room was charged with excitement as we presented our



Winners of the CAYN research paper contest pose for a photo during their trip to Vienna, October 2010.

results. Not only was a selection of the most interesting essays to be published and distributed among universities and OSCE field operations and delegations in the region, the authors of the best research paper would go to visit the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, Austria.

In the end, the OSCE Centre in Astana and OSCE Academy in Bishkek staff who adjudicated the papers announced not one but two winning papers. The first was entitled "The European Security Treaty as an initiative to re-vitalize the OSCE" and the second was ours, "To blog or to block: challenges and perspectives for the blogosphere in Central Asia".

How many 20-year-olds from Central Asia can say they have been to the OSCE headquarters in Vienna? At the end of October, we spent three days meeting with OSCE officials and diplomats in the Secretariat and the Vienna Hofburg. We observed a session of the OSCE's Permanent Council and were personally welcomed by the delegation of Kazakhstan, holders of the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship. For me it was particularly interesting to meet with Roland Bless, Principal Advisor to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

My CAYN experience has given me an inside view of how the OSCE and international diplomacy works. And it has reinforced my belief in blogging as a peaceful force for democratic development.

Bermet Mambetshaeva is a student of journalism at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University in Bishkek.



The 15th anniversary of the Arms Control Agreement in South-Eastern Europe

by Brigadier General Costanzo Periotto

On 14 June 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia will mark the 15th anniversary of the successful implementation of the Sub-Regional Arms Control Agreement required by Annex IB of Article IV of the *Dayton Peace Accords*, which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

The *Dayton Accords* mandated the OSCE to help elaborate and implement the Agreement, and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office decided to designate a Personal Representative to assist the parties in negotiating and implementing it, a decision that the OSCE participating States welcomed at their 1995 Ministerial Council in Budapest.

From the very beginning, the OSCE devoted a great deal of attention to the project. It initiated intensive diplomatic negotiations and held

several conferences, in Dayton, Paris, Budapest, Vienna, London, New York and Bonn. Finally, on 14 June 1996, the Agreement was signed in Florence, Italy, under the auspices of the OSCE. It was thanks to their commitment and their express political will to accomplish the goals defined by the Agreement that the Parties were able to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion. These goals were: to establish a stable military balance, at the lowest level of armaments, in order to reduce the risk of a new escalation of the conflict and prevent an arms race in the sub-region. In signing the Agreement, under the auspices of the OSCE, the Parties recognized that the establishment of measures for regional stability and arms control is essential to creating a stable peace in the region.

In the years that followed the signing of the Arms Control Agreement, the OSCE, through

Conference of the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission, the forum governing the Sub-Regional Arms Control Agreement under Article IV of the *Dayton Accords*, Zadar, Croatia, 29-31 March, 2011. (MFA Croatia)

the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Article IV, continued to pay due attention to the Parties' engagement in its implementation, thereby concretely confirming the importance it attached to the region.

The members of the Dayton Contact Group Countries (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France), who witnessed the Article IV Agreement by their signatures in 1996, had been instrumental in assuring the success of its negotiation and continued to provide valuable assistance in this implementation phase.

International military arms-control experts — particularly the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau and the RACVIAC Centre for Security Cooperation in Zagreb — contributed to the education of the International Assistants and the Parties' military experts.

A noteworthy aspect of the Agreement's implementation is the fact that all the Parties, in addition to fulfilling their commitments on time, have voluntarily continued to reduce the armaments limited by the Agreement and have brought their holdings to a level below the agreed numerical limitations.

THE AGREEMENT'S PRESENT STATE

Fifteen years after the signing of the *Dayton Peace Accords*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to show full compliance with the spirit of the Article IV Agreement and continue to conduct all related activities in an atmosphere of trust, friendship, transparency and co-operation.

To date, 775 inspections have been conducted, 1177 international assistants from 29 OSCE participating States have been employed, and 9722 pieces of heavy weaponry have been eliminated from the region. The manpower of military formations has been drastically reduced, and the number of objects of inspection has been reduced from 244 to 87.

The most recent figures from the military data exchange show that the dimensions of the armed forces of the Parties can no longer be compared to those of 1996.

The Agreement made and continues to make a fundamental contribution towards the integration of the countries of the region into European and/or Euro-Atlantic institutions. In fact, all the countries have signed the Stabilization and Association agreements with the European Union and Croatia and Montenegro have already gained European Union candidate status. All the countries are in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Croatia became a member of NATO in April 2009 and

Montenegro joined the Membership Action Plan in December 2009.

THE WAY AHEAD

Given the good level of co-operation that has developed among the States Parties in the course of the last 15 years, the sustainable implementation of the Article IV Agreement now requires a gradual hand-over of international responsibilities. This is a logical step in a post-conflict scenario and is in line with the trend towards state ownership also in other fields of the international community's activity in the sub-region.

The Article IV ownership process is currently in full swing. It is based on a comprehensive action plan for the gradual transfer to the Parties of the Arms Control Agreement's responsibilities and functions.

The transfer of responsibilities will take place in two phases. The first phase will reduce international assistance to a minimum. It started at the beginning of 2010, is currently progressing very well and will be concluded, as planned, by the end of 2011.

During the second phase, due to be concluded within three years of the end of the first, all the legal, political, technical and organizational measures will be taken that are required for the transfer of full ownership to the Parties.

Once the Parties have assumed full ownership, the OSCE's responsibility will shift from assistance to a supportive role, as it is currently the practice with treaties such as the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe* and the *Open Skies Treaty*. Consequently, the office of the Personal Representative may be closed.

The transfer of ownership is strongly supported by the OSCE community, the European Union and associated countries and the Contact Group countries, who on many occasions have delivered official statements in this regard.

After 2014, the States Parties, as full owners of the Sub-Regional Arms Control Agreement, may continue to implement it — until a political situation has been reached that allows them to individually join a new security system in Europe or until they attain full membership in existing European or Euro-Atlantic structures.

Brigadier General Costanzo Periotto is the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Article IV, Annex 1-B, of the *Dayton Peace Accords*.

Max van der Stoel: 1924-2011

by Walter Kemp



Max van der Stoel in Tetovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, February 2001. (OSCE/Harald Schenker)

At a special meeting of the Permanent Council, held in honour of Max van der Stoel (on 22 June 2001) during his final days as High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kai Eide, then Permanent Representative of Norway, said, “you belong to a generation of giants in international relations.”

Max was certainly a giant within the OSCE. He was one of the founding fathers of the *Helsinki Final Act* in 1975. He championed the Helsinki principles, particularly those relating to human rights. When he visited Czechoslovakia in March 1977, he was one of the first Western officials to meet with dissidents from Charta 77, including Jan Patocka and Vaclav Havel.

Van der Stoel is best known in the OSCE as the first High Commissioner on National

Minorities. The post was created through the Helsinki Decisions of July 1992. It was a reaction to outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia and concerns about tensions in some former Soviet republics. The High Commissioner’s mandate is to be an “instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage”.

Van der Stoel took up his duties on 1 January 1993 in a small office overlooking a canal in The Hague. He was well-qualified for the post, having been twice Minister for Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, a long-serving Member of Parliament, a Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (where he, famously, was Rapporteur on Greece during the so-called colonels crisis, when massive human rights violations followed the establishment of

a military dictatorship in 1967), and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations when they had a seat on the Security Council. He eventually became a Member of the Council of State and was named a Minister of State (an honorific position in service to the Queen of the Netherlands). On the basis of his strong track record on human rights, in 1991 van der Stoel was appointed to the high-profile role of United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Iraq. He carried out this pro bono function for almost a decade, cataloguing Saddam Hussein's systematic violations and crimes against the Iraqi people.

The early days as High Commissioner were characterized by learning by doing. Max (as he was known to most), together with a few seconded advisers and a secretary, started to take the temperature of inter-ethnic relations in the OSCE area, focusing on what he judged to be precarious situations, and where he could make a difference. He travelled extensively, particularly to Latvia and Estonia where tensions were acute.

From the beginning, he stressed the importance of discretion. His meetings were restricted, he seldom talked to the press, his recommendations were kept out of the public domain for some time, and his reports to the Chairperson-in-Office were strictly confidential. This won him the respect of his interlocutors and prevented sensitive issues from becoming sensationalized in the press. And it has become a hallmark of the High Commissioner's approach ever since.

During a visit, Max would talk to all relevant parties. Indeed, he would pack in a full day of meetings, seldom stopping for lunch or other distractions. And then it was back on the plane: he wanted to be the first on and the first off, not to waste a moment. Even on long trips he never checked in his luggage (and had no patience for advisers who did).

Max was stubborn, and he was relentless. If a government was slow to follow up on his recommendations, he would continue to write or visit until he was satisfied that the sources of tensions had been addressed.

Because certain issues like language, education, and participation in public life kept cropping up, he decided to ask groups of internationally-led experts to draft a series of recommendations. These became the *Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities*, the *Oslo Recommendations Regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities* and the *Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life*. Other general recommendations followed, expanding the

normative framework within which such issues could be considered and peacefully managed — across the OSCE area and beyond.

The High Commissioner's mandate says that he should provide "early warning" and, as appropriate, take "early action" in regard to tensions involving national minority issues. Van der Stoel turned this concept on its head: he took early action in order to avoid issuing a formal early warning. Indeed, in his more than eight years as High Commissioner, Van der Stoel only rang the alarm bell once, and that was on 12 May 1999 in relation to the potentially destabilizing influence of a large influx of Kosovar Albanian refugees into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In fact, he visited the country more than fifty times during his term in office, worked hard to reduce tensions, was an architect of the *Ohrid Agreement* that ended the armed conflict in 2001, and was the founding father of the South East European University in Tetovo, which was built in order to promote greater integration and increase opportunities for higher education for the Albanian minority in Macedonia.

Max was recognized for his work with several honorary degrees and high honours, even from countries that didn't enjoy his attentions at the time. The Nobel Peace Prize eluded him — although he was nominated for it several times. One reason, perhaps, is that it was hard to prove his success when nothing happened. But that was the point. As one observer put it, he kept the dogs from barking. And Europe can be grateful for that.

Walter Kemp is Director for Europe and Central Asia at the International Peace Institute in Vienna and author of *Quiet Diplomacy in Action: The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities* (1999).

osce Appointments



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Adam Kobieracki assumed the position of Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre on 1 June 2011, succeeding Herbert Salber. Kobieracki has served in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1982, most recently as the Director for Security Policy. From 2003 to 2007 he was NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations in Brussels. Ambassador Kobieracki headed the Polish delegation to the OSCE in Vienna from 1997 to 2000 and chaired the Permanent Council in 1998. He was involved in negotiations of the OSCE *Vienna Document 1994* and the adaptation of the *Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty* in 1999.



OSCE/SUSANNA LOOF

Sergei Belyaev assumed the position of Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat on 7 April 2011. He previously served as Director of the OSCE Secretariat's Department of Human Resources from 2006 to 2011 and as Deputy Director from 2002. Ambassador Belyaev is a senior diplomat in the Russian Federation's Foreign Service. He served as Ambassador to New Zealand from 1995 to 1999 and was assigned to several postings in Africa, including Angola from 1990 to 1992. High-level positions in the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation have included Deputy Director in the Personnel Department and Deputy Executive Secretary.



OSCE

Ralf Breth assumed the position of Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje on 16 May 2011. A lawyer and career diplomat with the German Foreign Service, Ambassador Breth has served as Consul General in Sibiu, Romania, Consul General in Izmir, Turkey and Ambassador in Skopje. Other postings abroad have been to Mexico, Uganda and Croatia. His assignments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn and Berlin have been in the areas of private, international and criminal law and in the economic department.



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Françoise Nocquet from France assumes the position of Head of Human Resources on 14 June 2011. She returns to the OSCE, where she worked as the first full-time Legal Advisor from November 1999 to May 2003. She then worked at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York, as Senior Legal Advisor, Head of the Human Resources section dealing with legal matters and, from January 2008, Deputy Director of the Office of Human Resources. Prior to working at the OSCE, Nocquet worked for 13 years with Interpol, France, including as Assistant Legal Director from 1993 to 1999.



OSCE/SUSANNA LOOF

Desiree Schweitzer assumed the position of Deputy Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities/Head of Environmental Activities, with responsibility for energy security matters, on 1 March 2011. A career diplomat, she was Deputy Head of the Austrian Permanent Mission to the OSCE as well as Deputy Head of Division in the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs for OSCE and Council of Europe affairs from 2008. Prior to that, she was responsible for European Union (EU) enlargement issues. Her overseas postings have included Washington, D.C., New York and Islamabad.

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