

Distinguished Prime Minister, Minister, Forum participants,

Dear Minister, as you know I welcome the opportunity to speak at this Forum, which is the child of our joint work in the MVD/OSCE Police Steering Committee to strengthen the national public-private partnership of Citizen and State to beat crime.

I believe this Forum will be very important. It will consider and result in practical improvements and suggestions to tackle crime and increase public safety. These are high priorities within President Bakiev's national vision for a well-balanced society.

No-one should be under any illusion. The individual citizen and law-enforcement authorities share the same strong conviction to see crime reduced, night and day, and to provide public reassurance.

In keeping with the successful international practice of **community policing**, Kyrgyzstan has a growing **network of civic groups** to alleviate crime. Kyrgyzstan now has around 500 public prevention centres, about which we shall hear much more during this Forum. They have room for growth. Kyrgyzstan also has a growing network of neighbourhood police inspectors and pilot neighbourhood watch schemes. The groundwork is being laid for good relations and cooperation between citizen and police. But I think, Minister, we acknowledge that - naturally as in most other countries - there is room for improvement. That is what this Forum is focused on. Building public trust and cooperation.

Yet there is another actor in this challenge who has an important and greater potential role to play, namely **Local Government Authorities**. This Forum will examine in an innovative manner the ways in which crime-prevention can be better main-streamed at municipal-level and how citizens, law-enforcement and municipal authorities can act and cooperate together to beat crime. The onus rests with all.

In order for the local authorities to make their *full* contribution, enhancements in legislation and financial resources will be needed. Beyond this, Local Authorities should be further encouraged to take an active part through their designated partners, for example in the local akimiat, in supporting all community groupings in localized crime prevention and problem-solving. These groups will include the Public Prevention Centres and Neighbourhood Watch Centres. Particular attention should be given to the participation of Women and Youth through their respective Councils inside the PPCs.

Equally Local Authorities should be encouraged to consult and benefit from the professionalism of the Police on public safety issues. This closer partnership might be realized through the creation of "**municipal safety councils**". Such Councils might comprise heads of law-enforcement agencies, local self-government, police officials, heads of local parliaments, nongovernmental organizations, educational and social institutions, and business structures that possess decision-making powers and can realistically allocate human, financial and other resources. The leading role in initiating such "municipal safety councils" would be vested in local authorities, who would coordinate and monitor these efforts.

The Police can also play a useful supportive, consultative role in **urban planning** to ensure that public safety standards are taken into proper consideration and are reflected during urban and infrastructure planning. I stress this is not to detract from the primary responsibility and competence of local authorities but to ensure the citizen's safety is put first. Clear examples of where Police advice can help include street lighting and location of traffic signs. It might also include the permit licencing of bars, markets, shops and entertainment/sports clubs in certain areas since these venues can positively or negatively influence neighbourhood safety.

Dear Minister, OSCE remains a solid partner for you and MVD in these deliberations. Together I believe we are *both* looking outwards to embrace more fully the active participation and support of civic society and local authorities in making Kyrgyzstan, to use the phrase, “a place where one would want to bring up one’s child”.