ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Master Class on Environmental Journalism
From 29 March to 7 April, the Centre in co-operation with Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation and the NGO Ecological Press Centre, organized a master class for television journalists. Journalists from 10 regions received a training on how to deal with environmental issues. Trainers included experienced journalists, legal advisers as well as experts in the different ecological spheres. The master-class is a part of the Centre’s efforts in promoting implementation of the Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information.

World Earth Day
On 25 April, World Earth Day was celebrated. The Centre marked this occasion together with several environmental NGOs and in co-operation with the administration of the Medeu National Park by organizing an ecological action near the skating rink Medeu. During this action, new trees were planted, and information leaflets on ecology were widely distributed.

Public hearing on Caspian Sea environment
A public hearing on liquidation of oil overflows in the Caspian Sea was held by the Centre from 29 to 30 April in co-operation with the administration of Almaty region and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Representatives of both central and local authorities, petroleum industry, ecological NGOs, scientific institutions, and international organizations were invited for participation. During the hearing, parties commented on the lack of regional co-operation on environmental protection on the Caspian Sea as well as weaknesses of current environmental laws and regulations. The participants developed several recommendations which will constitute a basis for possible follow-up projects to encourage co-operation on environment issues and contribute to a further dialogue on sustainable use and protection of natural resources.

GENDER PROGRAM
As a result of a training course organized by the Centre, local journalists have received an introduction to gender issues. The aim of the two-day seminar held from 26 to 27 April was to increase gender sensitivity and awareness of the rights of women among media professionals. High response rates to the training have indicated a considerable interest among local journalists in gender issues. This seminar is a component of a broader program on promotion of women public participation and was held in conjunction with the Feminist League and Taraz Initiative Centre.

The next stage of this program is a competition among journalists for the best publication on gender issues. The competition will last from June to October 2004. Articles and reports published or broadcast during this period should be sent to the Centre. Afterwards, an expert committee will identify and award the best publications.

CRIMINAL POLICY
From 29 to 30 April, the Centre co-organised an international conference aimed at improving Kazakhstan’s penitentiary system. The conference discussed the experience and perspectives of humanization of criminal policy in Kazakhstan, including practical aspects of expanding alternative sentencing, the role of NGOs, and international standards in the field. The participants among which were penitentiary system representatives from Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Russia, Sweden, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan, have developed a set of recommendations for further action.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES
In partnership with the Civic Education Project and Kazakhstan Debate Club, the Centre launched the Kazakhstan segment of the regional project “Central Asia Youth Network” (CAYN). 17 students were selected throughout the country, based on their research proposals. The main aim of this project is to increase contacts and understanding between youth. In the next stage, students from different Central Asian countries will jointly develop papers on issues pertaining to all three OSCE dimensions.