

**Round table on torture prevention
Bishkek, 13 December 2011**

**Opening remarks by Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere, the Head of the OSCE Centre
in Bishkek**

Distinguished participants, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you at today's round table to discuss measures to prevent torture and strengthen human rights monitoring. In particular our discussion will benefit from the fact-finding report you have before you, which the OSCE Centre in Bishkek has supported over the past months.

I thank the OHCHR Regional Office for Central Asia for co-organizing this event, as well the national Ombudsman, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the many civil society representatives here today. I am particularly grateful to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Dr. Juan Méndez for joining us.

Let me first put the report in context. The OSCE welcomes the Prosecutor General's public reaffirmation of zero-tolerance on torture in Kyrgyzstan. The recommendations from this collaborative fact-finding report *if implemented* will take us one step nearer to translating intent into practice. In parallel, rule of law and full respect for human rights will be strengthened through the successful reform of both the law enforcement agencies and the judiciary – on which discussions are ongoing and the OSCE closely engaged. I hope that Kyrgyzstan will create in 2012 a national prevention mechanism in accordance with OPCAT, the UN's universal Optional Protocol against Torture. This will better provide for nationally-owned structures to monitor human rights and prevent serious violations.

Turning to the report's contents, they remind us that the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in closed facilities - including police custody and pre-trial detention facilities - continues to be a matter of serious concern in Kyrgyzstan. More must be done to improve the protection of human rights in detention facilities, including victims' access to counsel, the rehabilitation of victims of torture, detention conditions and the obligation on the state authorities to promptly react to allegations of torture and ill treatment. The report's recommendations must be implemented. I hope today's roundtable will help shape the action plan.

In closing, I am encouraged that the report is the result of wide-ranging collaboration between the Ombudsman, NGOs and Government structures. I hope the Memorandum of Understanding, which shaped this cooperation, will be extended in 2012, and joined by other actors here today. The crux of success will be that information collected through unannounced monitoring visits to detention centres will be acted upon by the competent authorities. Actions speak louder than words. I confirm that the OSCE will continue its support for the eradication of torture in line with Kyrgyzstan's international human rights commitments. I wish you all productive discussions.