

Visits

Visit of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office



On 6 April, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Dr. Solomon Passy, visited Kazakhstan during his trip to Central Asia. The CiO was received by President Nursultan Nazarbayev and met with Deputy Foreign Minister Khairat Abuseitov, Senate Speaker Nurtai Abykaev, and Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairperson, Mrs. Zagipa Baliyeva. At the OSCE Centre, Dr. Passy also met with representatives of political parties and organizations as well as with Kazakhstani journalists, editors, and leading domestic media NGOs. During the meetings, a wide range of issues were discussed. The parties underlined the importance of a dialogue in the process of further democratization and state reforms.

OSCE Secretary General attends Eurasian Media Forum

The Centre accompanied the OSCE Secretary General, Ambassador Ján Kubiš, to the Third Eurasian Media Forum, which was held in Almaty from 22 to 24 April. In his opening statement, Ambassador Kubiš noted the crucial importance of independent mass media for the development of democratic societies and commended the President on his decision to reject the draft media law.

Political Dimension

SECURITY MATTERS

Developments of the police project

In the course of its pilot police project, the Centre sponsored a study trip of two police officials to Madrid, Spain from 18 to 24 April to improve information systems and analysis capacity. The police officials met with high-ranking civil servants in the Spanish Ministry of Interior, the Department of External Affairs, and the Toledo City Police Department. This trip is the last of three study visits; the previous two being to the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. It is anticipated that the concrete implementation of this pilot project, together with the Kazakhstani authorities, will begin in the coming months. The police project is run in co-operation with the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit in Vienna.

Training on community policing

With the aim of developing other significant component of a comprehensive police project, such as community policing, the Centre facilitated participation of Kazakhstani police officials in a three-week community police training in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from 26 April to 14 May. During this training, participants, among others, explored the role of police in democratic societies, learned conflict resolution and mediation skills, and built partnership and communication techniques. Following the participants' return, a more wide-ranging community policing programme may be developed for Kazakhstan with input anticipated from both the state and NGO sectors.

Economic and Ecological Dimension

OPEN BUDGET INITIATIVE

On 13 April, the Centre together with the Eurasia Foundation, the British Embassy and Urban Institute/USAID, announced six grants in launch of the second phase of the joint program: Open Budget Initiative. The grants will assist national NGOs to work with local governments and administrations to develop transparent budgets. The one-year program is financially supported by the Centre, the Eurasia Foundation, the British and Norwegian Governments.

Project has the following components:

- training on strengthening local NGO capacity in working with state budget;
- dissemination of best practices;
- Conference on public participation in the budgeting process;
- creation of a group of experts to do budget-related research.

LAND CODE IMPLEMENTATION

On 23 April, the Centre in co-operation with the Agency on Management of Land Resources and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) conducted a workshop on elaboration of recommendations for implementation of the Land Code adopted in 2003. The workshop focused on the new procedures applicable to formerly leased land plots under Article 170. Government officials, parliamentarians, farmer organizations and individual farmers participated in the discussion of implementation guidelines during the workshop. As a result, a brochure with elaborated guidelines will be published in Kazakh and Russian and distributed throughout Kazakhstan in June 2004.

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 Atyrau 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.

Human Dimension

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 broadcasted 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 Kazakhstani Debate Club, the Centre launched the Kazakhstani segment of the regional project "Central Asia Youth Network" (CAYN). 17 students were selected throughout the country, based on their research proposals. The overall 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.