

Dear OSCE colleagues, officials from the Presidential Administration, Osh and Jalal-Abad Provincial Administrations, the Osh City Mayor's Office, and representatives from mediator teams and civil society,

It is with great pleasure that we are gathered here today to mark the official launch of a joint initiative between the OSCE Center in Bishkek and the Presidential Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic.

After the June 2010 events, both the OSCE and the Kyrgyz Government identified a strong need to engage actively in attempts to increase early warning and conflict prevention capacities in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

The consensus reached between the OSCE and the Kyrgyz government was that the best way to prevent the likelihood of the future outbreak of violence in the south was to establish a network of mediator teams that would be based in districts and major localities in Osh and Jalal-Abad Provinces and Osh City.

There are several unique features to this initiative that should be noted. First, the mediator teams will consist of representatives from both civil society as well as various government structures. Furthermore, each team will be carefully selected to ensure gender, ethnic, and age diversity. We believe that such a selection process will lead to more coordinated efforts, better results, and an overall improvement in trust between government bodies and local citizens in addressing potential situations when violence could potentially erupt.

Second, mediator teams will play a key role in the overall Kyrgyz security coordination structure in the event that a conflict should break out anywhere in Jalal-Abad Province, Osh Province, or Osh City. The role of mediators will be to work closely both to calm down residents of their own localities not to engage in any acts of violence and also to neutralize crowd agitators, as well as to be in constant contact with the Presidential Administration and relevant security services to update them on the situation on the ground where they are working.

Third, the work of mediators will not be limited to only dispersing crowds and dealing with agitators in situations where violence may break out; they will also engage in peace building and ethnic tolerance-related activities. This will both in turn lead to a lesser likelihood in and of itself that conflict will break out in the future, as well as resulting in a higher level of visibility and trust that mediator teams will have amongst members of their own communities.

Finally, and not any less important, this initiative is designed to ensure full sustainability. The role of the OSCE is to provide the financial and technical assistance in setting up these teams and the security coordination structures in partnership with the Presidential Administration. However, ultimate supervision of these teams will lie with the Presidential Administration as well as regional and local authorities, both during and after cooperation on with the OSCE on this initiative is over.

Today, during the round table that is shortly to follow, you will all have the opportunity to talk with project participants and learn more about why they feel this project is very much needed in the south of Kyrgyzstan. At 4 p.m. today, after the round table concludes and the OSCE ambassadors leave, there will be an official press conference and signing of the MoU between the OSCE Center in Bishkek and the Presidential Administration.

On behalf of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, I would like to thank both all of the ambassadors from Vienna who came today to attend this round table, and also especially also the members of the Presidential Administration, provincial and city government bodies, members from the NGOs "Iret" and "Aimira," and mediators themselves who are also in

attendance today and will be discussing this project in more detail. It is all of you, and not the OSCE, that will ultimately make this project a success.