

11<sup>th</sup> Central Asian Media Conference, Bishkek : 15 October 2009

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

Distinguished Deputy Ministers, distinguished Conference guests and participants,

In opening the OSCE Annual Central Asian Regional Conference, may I warmly welcome you all to Bishkek – and with a special welcome to the OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media, Miklos Harasti, who will attend this annual conference for the last time in his current capacity after x years distinguished service with the OSCE.

Allow me to continue in English, the language in which I drafted this address. Russian can be found on channel X,

The **context** of our annual Conference this year is an interesting one. The challenge of preserving and indeed improving standards of accurate and ethical journalism looms large as journalism increasingly shifts, both globally and regionally in Central Asia, from traditional media forms to attracting readers and listeners through the internet and other communication forms such as blogging, facebook and twitter. This shifting pattern makes the central theme of this year's regional conference, journalism education, all the more pertinent - indeed as much for the public and media watchdogs as for journalists.

Our Conference provides an excellent opportunity to learn about media developments in the individual Central Asian nations and to pool our experience and opinions. Inevitably - and this is life - we shall not always agree with all of each others views. But the great strength of OSCE is its capacity to debate constructively with a view to realizing common ground, expressed in shared values and commitments enshrined in Ministerial decisions.

I therefore eagerly look forward to the discussion and findings of this year's Conference.

From my own Mission's perspective, there are **4 priorities** we are focused on and looking to this Conference to guide us in.

Firstly, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek seeks to support Kyrgyzstan in its compliance with its OSCE and other international commitments regarding **media freedom and self-regulation responsibilities**. New information technologies raise fresh questions of legislation and responsibilities, which I hope will be fully aired during this Conference. At this point, may I welcome all the national Media Commissioners present today as well as those from the Media Complaints Committees. They play a vital role in safeguarding media freedom and upholding journalism ethics.

Secondly, the Centre in Bishkek seeks to support Kyrgyzstan in providing conducive conditions for journalists to work in **safety and without intimidation or unnecessary constraint**. OSCE participating States have recently and consistently expressed their deep concerns about the growing incidence of reported attacks and acts of intimidation against journalists within the OSCE region, including Central Asia.

Thirdly, the Centre in Bishkek has and continues to support Kyrgyzstan in drafting its **media-related legislation** in accordance with its wider international commitments and best practice within OSCE. Currently Kyrgyzstan is working on a draft Media Law, which has been presented to OSCE for expert opinion. In the opinion of the OSCE, the existing Law on TV and Radio also bears further review and OSCE remains engaged in re-examining how it can be aligned with broad OSCE standards.

Fourthly, and not least, the central theme of this Conference – journalism education. The OSCE Centre has since 2004 sought to build and enrich the nation's **media capacity through the training and development of journalists** in Kyrgyzstan. The Centre has funded and supported 4 regional Media Centres across Kyrgyzstan (in Naryn, Karakol, Talas and Batken). However, we have reached the point where we wish to see these centres operate on a more sustainable, commercial basis with funding from in-country, non-OSCE sources, be that national or international media outlets or business and advertising revenue. The OSCE Centre has begun the process to make these media centres commercially-viable. But this is proving no easy challenge. We would welcome any suggestions inside or in the margins of this Conference, particularly from the significant participation of University professors and media NGOs in this Conference, on how Kyrgyzstan can, journalistically, capitalize on these regional media satellite hubs.

In closing, I wish the Conference full success and once again, thank you for this opportunity and your attention.