



Making history

First OSCE Junior Professional Officers earn their stripes

BY SUZANNE BLAHA

The six Junior Professional Officers beamed proudly as they received their certificates of service from the OSCE's Director for Human Resources, Sergei Belyaev, at a low-key ceremony in Vienna at the end of June. Two had just flown in from Baku and Osh the day before. The others had arrived slightly earlier from Pristina, Podgorica and Tbilisi.

In a room filled to overflowing, several representatives from participating States and former colleagues in the Secretariat listened intently and asked questions as the "JPOs" took turns recounting their vivid impressions of what it was like to be a staff member in the world's largest regional security organization.

The JPOs — from Albania, Azerbaijan, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Portugal — had good reason to feel special. They were making OSCE history as the first

group of young professionals to take part in a new nine-month programme initiated and administered by the Department of Human Resources.

During the orientation phase, from October to December 2006 at the Secretariat in Vienna, they performed set tasks and assumed assigned responsibilities under the guidance of a supervisor and a mentor. Some became regular observers at the meetings of the Permanent Council. In addition, each JPO benefited from a wide range of training courses.

In January 2007, following the three-month orientation period, the JPOs were deemed ready for deployment to a field operation for the following six months. In taking the decision as to who was going to be assigned where, an attempt was made to balance certain considerations: a sound geographical mix of field missions, the security situation, the missions' willingness and capacity to take part in the programme, and the JPOs' expertise and personal preference.

Our call for candidates had attracted an encouraging 191 nominations from 33 countries. The vacancy notice was aimed at participating States that had low staff representation in the Secretariat and in the field — or none at all. Following a screening of applications, a panel in the Secretariat carried out the final selection, taking great

Xhodi Sakiqi (Albania),
Nuno Luzio (Portugal),
Christina Kipou (Greece),
Chynara Ibraimova
(Kyrgyzstan), Nigar
Huseynova (Azerbaijan) and
Dinmukhamed Jamashev
(Kazakhstan)
Photo: OSCE/Nasi Calentaru

care to balance considerations of nationality, gender, language and expertise.

The term “Junior Professional” aptly describes the six young and talented men and women who were judged to be the cream of the crop. All came from excellent academic backgrounds. They were intellectually curious, possessed strong analytical and interpersonal skills and were open to new and unexpected challenges. Later on, they were to demonstrate the ease with which they could adapt to difficult working circumstances.

As the co-ordinator of this first JPO programme, I was initially apprehensive about this venture into uncharted waters. But as the elements fell into place, my tasks proved both rewarding and pleasurable.

I was impressed by the extent to which the JPOs supported each other during their three months in Vienna — whether it was a matter of carrying out such mundane activities as cooking meals and doing the laundry in their residential quarters on the outskirts of Vienna, or of learning how to confront security challenges in the field at a mock hostage-taking exercise in Germany.

Above all, it was their shared hopes and ambitions, fuelled by the JPO programme, that cemented this bond.

Director Sergei Belyaev and his team agree that, judging from the overwhelmingly positive feedback, the JPO programme, despite its modest scale, holds great promise for both participants and the OSCE alike.

“It’s a vehicle for developing a gender- and geographically-balanced pool of young, qualified candidates for future applications,” Mr. Belyaev says. “While the JPO programme does not guarantee future employment, we believe that it enables participants to gain the skills and abilities needed to give them a competitive edge in case they do consider working for the Organization.”

Suzanne Blaha is a Recruitment Officer in the Department of Human Resources.

Introducing the new Junior Programme Officers for 2007-2008

Henriette Henriksen, Denmark
Jana Kasarova, Belgium
Elsevar Mammadov, Azerbaijan
Ivana Radenković, Serbia
Jelena Semjonova, Latvia
Maria Tsiarta, Cyprus

Capitalizing on young people’s fresh perspectives

The JPO pilot programme made it possible for qualified young people to gain self-confidence through their first international professional experience. And the OSCE’s agenda is so diverse and comprehensive that, within a span of several months, these junior professionals managed to gain exposure to a vast store of knowledge.

Elchin Huseyinli, Third Secretary,
Delegation of Azerbaijan



Elchin Huseyinli with JPO Nigar Huseynova

It’s a fantastic programme. JPOs capitalize on their youth by bringing a fresh perspective, and often an infectious sense of energy, into their assignments. They also have the academic background and professional experience that add depth, breadth and quality to the Organization’s work. Because they spend three months at the Secretariat, they become familiar with the OSCE and its policies, issues, and yes, bureaucracy. As a result, very little orientation is needed once the JPO arrives, other than the provision of mission-specific information. The JPO fits in immediately and quickly becomes a member of the team.

Jennifer N. Ober, Senior Assembly Adviser, Central Assembly Unit, Department of Good Governance and Democratic Institutions, OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Currently, the preponderance of Western European and North American staff members in the field does not reflect the national diversity of the Organization and detracts from its potential. The JPO experience opens a window, not only on the world of the OSCE, but also on any international environment. Participants are likely to be encouraged to pursue a career in this area, or, at least, to lobby their own authorities to look more favourably on secondment. Certainly, the programme acts as a showcase for some of the outstanding postgraduates from underrepresented participating States.

Robin Seaward, former Deputy Head,
OSCE Office in Baku



In front of "The Dacha", the OSCE Mission to Georgia: Xhodi Sakiqi (centre) with colleagues Matthieu Goodstein, Executive Adviser to the Head of Mission, and Ilona Kazaryan, National Professional in the Press and Public Information Office.

An Albanian in Georgia

An intimate look into that "strange" organization

By Xhodi Sakiqi

I was a 17-year-old high-school student during the politically hot Albanian winter of 1997 when I first heard about the OSCE, the Danish Chairman-in-Office, and his special envoy, former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky. I couldn't fully grasp what the issues were all about. I only knew that my family had to leave Tirana to go to a safer place in the countryside for a few days, and that the OSCE was seeking to negotiate peaceful ways out of the political crisis that had hit Albania at the beginning of the year.

It was only much later that I understood the magnitude of the events that had led to the breakdown in law and order: Simply put, a network of fraudulent pyramid companies had collapsed, wiping out the life savings of thousands of Albanian families who had invested in these get-rich-quick schemes. Some 2,000 people lost their lives in the unrest and anarchy that followed. Thanks to the OSCE's timely mediation and its co-ordination of the international community's response, a civil war that was on the verge of flaring up did not materialize; a national unity government was formed; and parliamentary elections were held.

Ten years after that dramatic chapter in our history, I found myself working for that "strange" organization. As an insider, I began to understand just how the OSCE had been able to mobilize its various mechanisms in support of my country's efforts to recover and strengthen its democratic institutions.

Tbilisi, where I was posted from January to June 2007, presents a different security agenda for the OSCE, driven mainly by the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia. I would often turn over in my mind comparisons between conflicts in the ex-Soviet and ex-Yugoslav areas. And, every step of the way, I sought to identify differences and similarities between the tense situations in Georgia and Kosovo.

It was also tempting to compare press operations in the field with those in the Secretariat. Vienna targets mainly the international media in world capitals, whereas a press release issued in the field at just the right time can have a beneficial impact on the

Mission's position between the parties in conflict. This can contribute towards defusing tension in the area.

Having been exposed to press duties in both Vienna and Tbilisi gave me a better insight into the differences and convinced me that more joint efforts are needed to co-ordinate and satisfy the needs of both the Secretariat and the Mission.

Field work was where the action was. One day I would be assigned to assist in covering activities focusing on dismantling old ammunition stores; the next day it would be anti-trafficking and environmental issues.

The Mission was also seeking to build confidence between journalists based in Tbilisi and their counterparts in Tskhinvali so that their reporting on the protracted conflict in the Tskhinvali region would be fairer and more unbiased. This was one of the areas where I could feel the conflict-related tension on both sides.

Fortunately, most of the local journalists I met were genuinely concerned about providing the widest possible coverage of the mission's different activities. I found most of them quite dynamic and professional, constantly working to improve the freedom of the media in the country.

All in all, it was a pleasant surprise to discover how much Georgians and Albanians resembled each other in terms of generosity, friendliness, hospitality and pride in their country and their unique heritage.

Xhodi Sakiqi. Born in 1980 in Tirana, Albania. Masters degree in political science, major in international politics, Università degli studi di Roma, "La Sapienza" (2005). Three months in the Secretariat's Press and Public Information Section. Six months in the Press and Public Information Office, OSCE Mission to Georgia. Returned to his post of Desk Officer for Kosovo, Albanian Foreign Ministry, and hopes to be assigned to the Albanian Delegation to the OSCE in the future.

After internships in two international organizations and an international NGO, and a master's degree in Japan, I thought it was time to get out into the real world and try to put academic theory into practice. In August 2006, just as I was starting to lose faith in pursuing a career in my chosen specialization, I got a phone call from the OSCE in Vienna saying that I had been chosen to be a Junior Professional Officer.

I was familiar with the OSCE from my graduate studies, and was thrilled at the thought that I was going to be assigned to the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre — the perfect match for my background, I thought. On my 26th birthday, I boarded a Lufthansa flight from Lisbon to Vienna. My new life was about to unfold.

Still, I had mixed feelings upon arrival. It was not my first time to live abroad, so I was not worried at all about getting along with people from different cultural backgrounds. I realized that what I was anxious about was being able to live up to the responsibilities of a staff member of an international organization.

The other JPOs and I became fast friends. Every morning, we ventured off to the office from our temporary living quarters. We would take the bus, then the train, and finally the subway, and return home together at the end of the day. Most Saturdays nights were spent "clubbing". The most enjoyable part, though, was whipping up a meal and sitting down to dinner, when we would share dreams and frustrations and discuss everything from history and politics to art, which provided insights into our native roots.

At work, I had to absorb masses of information within a short time. Fortunately, I was taken seriously and was also able to build friendships with colleagues. But I knew that the real challenge was still to come: mission time!

Destiny was leading me on in a strange way: Having lived in Strasbourg, Tokyo and Vienna, I would now have Pristina as my new address. It was the last place I had imagined as my first field assignment and as the source of so much learning.

I arrived in Kosovo on a cold and dark afternoon in January. The road from the airport to the city was depressing, with a strange fog veiling Pristina. I was completely lost for the first few days. I had to search for a desk, a computer and a phone. People in the Mission, especially national staff, were incredibly friendly. I immediately sensed that it was difficult for them to foster relationships with "internationals" because of the constant comings and goings in such a large operation.

I found it amazing that a place that was struggling with so many difficulties could have such a wide variety of restaurants and bars. I would soon discover that, in the middle of seemingly insurmountable problems, food and fun were, in fact, often at the core of everyday life in the Balkans.

As time passed, my professional assignments became more interesting. One of my main achievements was writing an article for a publication on Kosovo's Anti-Discrimination Law, which is considered by experts to be one of the most progressive pieces of European legislation of its kind. The initiative had followed a round-table meeting in April 2007 which had attracted some 70 participants. I felt privileged to serve as the moderator of the first panel, but it also felt a bit daunting to direct the flow of discussions among leading experts.

I was responsible for co-ordinating the production of the 50-page publication and for launching its three versions — Albanian, Serbian and English. For the first time, I had to manage a project and find

my way through the bureaucracy of a huge mission. It was well worth it, and extremely satisfying to be part of a clear-cut effort: to raise official and public awareness of the individual rights set out under a crucial law that, since its adoption in 2004, had been poorly implemented.

I was also able to forge friendships with people from the Albanian and the Serbian communities — the most challenging aspect of my stay in Kosovo in terms of human relationships. Both shared their reflections on the events of the recent past and their hopes for the future. It may sound paradoxical, but I felt that each one was right and wrong at the same time.

I found it unfortunate that, in more ways than one, the members of the two communities actually didn't know each other. Expressing my views was a delicate balancing act, as I didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings.

They are not the only communities in Kosovo, but the ones with the highest degree of mutual mistrust. I could feel this especially whenever I crossed the bridge at Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, which divides the city into two different worlds. I would like to see the day when the bridge serves its original purpose of bringing people closer together.

Barely a week after arriving in Portugal after completing the JPO programme, I was packing again to return to Kosovo. I had been offered a contract as a Political Officer the day before my departure. I would like to believe that this was the Organization's way of acknowledging the work achieved by its first generation of JPOs and that each one of us represented a wise investment.

Nuno Luzio. Born in 1980 in Coimbra, Portugal. Bachelor of Laws, University of Coimbra (2003), and master's degree in international studies and peace and conflict studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (2006). Three months in the Conflict Prevention Centre. Six months in the Central Assembly Unit, Department of Good Governance and Democratic Institutions, OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Currently serving as Political Officer, Office of Political Affairs, OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

Nuno Luzio at a panel discussion on Kosovo's Anti-Discrimination Law, with Melissa Stone, Head of the Good Governance Unit, and Head of Mission Werner Wnendt.



To Kosovo and back

A wise investment

By Nuno Luzio

As the 15-seater plane from Bishkek approached Osh one freezing day in January 2007, and later, on the ride to the town centre, I tried hard to take in a vastly different world from my own. I was greeted by stunning snow-covered mountains, colourful women's garb, and an exotic blend of Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek and Russian influences everywhere I looked.

I had come to a special place, and I was determined to surmount every obstacle and inconvenience that might stand in the way of my making the most of this rare experience. I knew my time in Osh was limited, so to make my life simpler, I chose an apartment not too far from the commercial area and arranged for a private driver to transport me to and from the OSCE's field office every day. I wasted no time in immersing myself in Russian-language lessons.

It took me a bit longer to settle in at work, but once I was assigned specific tasks by the Centre in Bishkek, I was ready to take on my role as the contact person of the police reform programme.

I considered myself fortunate: My assignment in the field was a logical continuation of my three months with the Strategic Police Matters Unit in Vienna. How often can one complement work in the Secretariat with practical experience in the OSCE's pioneering and most comprehensive policing scheme?

By the end of the second month, I was sufficiently comfortable with my structured working procedures and had established useful contacts in most of the local police directorates in the South. I kept in touch with key police staff through regular meetings, monitored policing activities and assisted in several police reform projects, usually focusing on community policing. I also worked with the OSCE's implementing partners and helped organize police events and training.

I was always accompanied by an interpreter, and I used a computerized translation programme for drafting e-mail correspondence and documents. Backed up by my Russian lessons, this somehow helped me break through the language barrier.

With the encouragement of Jerome Bouyjou, the Head of the Field Office in Osh, I also contributed to projects with a strong human rights element. This focus, a vital part of our work in South Kyrgyzstan, also underlies many of our reform efforts in policing. Being involved in these key areas was an ideal way of keeping track of current local developments.

Before I knew it, I was responding to a variety of requests from different police directorates in the South, and co-ordinating them with the programme managers in Bishkek. I wrote a report setting out the basic requirements for improved meetings between the police and the public, which was translated into Russian and distributed as guidelines to police stations throughout the country.

I also drew up recommendations on how to involve Osh residents more closely with policing. These, I felt, were received well by the managers in Bishkek, who are thinking of using them as a basis for a project proposal.

At the beginning of every month, I would visit my colleagues in the police reform programme in Bishkek and report on the progress of activities in the South. Although this meant a two-day absence from the office in Osh, it was important for us — both in Bishkek and in Osh — to compare the pace of developments in the capital and in the country's second largest city and be ready to make any necessary adjustments to our strategy.

Perhaps what gave me the greatest satisfaction was being con-

tacted by the different NGOs, heads of police units and residents to seek assistance in policing-related matters.

These requests, I felt, reflected a stark reality, pointing to the significance of the OSCE's long-term efforts to develop the professionalism and the operational capabilities of Kyrgyzstan's police.

In fact, although my role was to liaise between the South of the country and the capital, there were times when I found myself acting as the contact point between the community and the police. There were two issues that had to be reconciled: the public's concern about corruption in the police force, and the police's lack of resources to address people's demands for improved law and order.

This realization led me to invest all my energies in help-

ing the Osh police to create a crime-awareness campaign emphasizing the joint responsibilities of the public and the police and seeking to strengthen their relations. This initiative is expected to be launched soon.

By the time six months had passed, I had become attached to the place and the people and especially to my constant interaction with the local police. I had gained valuable insights into the challenges faced by police forces in countries of the former Soviet Union. I will never forget how positively people would respond to every little measure the Government would take to upgrade the Kyrgyz police into a public service. More than anything else, this convinced me that an engaged citizenry can be the driving force behind many improvements in everyday life.

Christina Kipou. Born in 1978 in Katerini, Greece. Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology, American College of Thessaloniki (2002) and a Master of Science degree in criminology and criminal justice, Cardiff University (2004). Three months in the OSCE Secretariat's Strategic Police Matters Unit and six months in the Osh Field Office of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek. Plans to pursue further work in police reform.

Christina Kipou (centre, right) at a football match between police and students, organized by the NGO, *Every Child*, with the support of the Osh Field Office.



Feeling the pulse of the people and the police in Osh

By Christina Kipou

As a JPO in the Gender Section of the Secretariat, I would often listen to the debates on Kosovo in the Permanent Council. After three months in Vienna, there I was, at the Pristina airport, eager to discover the sights and sounds of one of the most intensively discussed places on earth.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has five regional centres, and I was extremely lucky to have been assigned to the one in the northwestern city of Pejë/Peć, which is the hub of the municipality with the same name. It is one of the most attractive tourist spots in Kosovo, offering a great deal more than views of KFOR vehicles and military checkpoints camouflaged by artificial leaves.

Located at the foothills of the “Accursed Mountains”, this city of 125,000 inhabitants rises above the spectacular Rugova Valley. Just as remarkable was the residents’ joyful nature, despite the tragic legacy of the conflict of 1999. The remains of destroyed houses and monuments still dotted the landscape. Even today, despite the improved security situation, there is still much to be done to reconcile the Albanian and Serb communities.

I remember being inundated with information when I reported for work. A colleague told me: “I start my day by reading the news, and when I am done, I realize that the day is over.” This was precisely how I felt during my first few days.

Eventually, though, I began to learn how to sift through the information, to get a firm grasp of the political issues, to analyze the implications of current events for future developments — and, yes, to perceive a clear role played by the Organization in its biggest field operation.

I was appointed as the fifth member of the Municipal Team of Pejë/Peć, which is one of 33 such teams covering every municipality in Kosovo. Fittingly, we were a model of multi-ethnicity: Two of my colleagues were Kosovar Albanians, one a Kosovar Bosniak and the fourth a Canadian. I was responsible for planning and implementing small-scale projects aimed at promoting standards of good governance.

As a lawyer specializing in human rights, I found it exciting to put my skills to good use at the very basic level of democratic governance, which is where it all begins. We actively monitored meetings of the Municipal Assembly and its committees as well as the municipal working group on returns. We observed developments unfolding at the grass roots. In that way, we were able to act as a primary source of reliable, first-hand information and to serve as a link between the central structures in Pristina and the municipality.

To feel the pulse of our communities, our routine — if it could be called that — included attending monthly meetings of the Municipal Assembly and interacting with representatives of different com-

munities, school administrators, political groups and NGOs.

However, our role was not limited to monitoring and advising; we also implemented practical on-site initiatives to promote good practices within self-governing institutions. For example, we initiated a publication on the cultural and religious sites in the municipality, aimed at fostering the culture of tolerance and understanding among different communities and respect for each other’s cultural and religious heritage.

We had to be aware of the full range of issues — from education to financial accountability. We also had to be thoroughly familiar with relevant legislation since we were there to provide

guidance in the interpretation of laws and decisions.

Without a doubt, this entailed professional expertise and demanded a generous dose of patience and a sound understanding of local issues. It required us to be flexible, too. Measures that worked in another municipality were not necessarily effective in Pejë/Peć. We sometimes had to set our plans aside, and that could be frustrating. For example, we were told by a municipal official that a complaints box, which proved extremely effective elsewhere in Kosovo, would not quite work in Pejë/Peć.

Although results were not achieved overnight, they were there for all to see and feel. Institutions were functioning better; the security situation was

improving; and more internally displaced people were returning at last.

While getting ready to leave Pejë/Peć, I browsed through my papers and came across a slim brochure, entitled *My Life as a JPO*, which the Secretariat’s Department of Human Resources had included in our “starter kit”. I dipped into it again, and that made me realize how much I had grown personally and professionally over the past nine months.

My parting thoughts, though, revolved around the people of Kosovo. I had arrived in mid-January 2007, when the recommendations of the United Nations, based on the findings of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, were expected to bring clarity to Kosovo’s future status after eight years of international administration. Alas, it was not to be; the people of Kosovo are still anxiously awaiting their fate.

Nigar Huseynova. Born in 1980 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Master of Laws degree from Baku State University. Three months in the Secretariat’s Gender Section and six months in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Pejë/Peć Regional Centre. Returned to post of senior attorney specializing in human rights and gender issues, American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative, in Baku. Hopes to get an assignment in an OSCE field mission.

Nigar Huseynova and colleagues Kendall Palmer (left) and Faik Balic donate Bosnian-language books to a multi-ethnic school in the municipality of Pejë/Peć.



Promoting professional governance in Pejë/Peć

By Nigar Huseynova

"Are you from China?"
"No."
"From Japan?"
"No, I'm from Kazakhstan."

This was how my conversations with people in Vienna usually started. It reminded me of an article I once came across, about most westerners thinking of the "Stans" as one big entity. It seemed to me that, whenever people would hear the last syllable of my country's name, they would look somewhat puzzled, probably confusing it with Afghanistan, which dominates the news every day.

At least I didn't have that problem in the Secretariat, where I spent three months in the Action against Terrorism Unit, and at the Hofburg, where weekly meetings of the ambassadors of OSCE participating States set the stage for my first broad exposure to an international environment.

We JPOs were advised against choosing an assignment in a field mission close to our country of origin, so after some deliberation, I decided on Azerbaijan. I was curious about similarities with my country, but I actually found more differences than likenesses. For example, the kind of Islam that is practised is different — Azerbaijan follows Shia Islam, while Sunni Islam is prevalent in Kazakhstan. Both countries, however, consider themselves secular.

My first task at the OSCE Office in Baku was to collect information about the country's political parties — 48 in all — to provide a sound basis for our efforts to revive contacts with political leaders. Through this assignment, I met key party heads, most of whom were former members of parliament (Milli Mejilis).

We held meetings with parliamentarians and committee chairpersons to explore ways in which the OSCE might become involved in an assistance programme for the parliament. During the discussions, Democratization Officer Ingrid Gossinger asked me to interpret between Russian and English. I must confess that I did not feel up to the task, given my lack of experience in this specialized field. Now I no longer take the challenges faced by interpreters for granted.

In early May, during my fifth month in Baku, I joined the economic and environmental team, and was immediately assigned by Torbjorn Bjorvatn to visit the Guba region in the north. Over two days, I gathered information on 10 out of 24 international organiza-

tions and local NGOs and dropped in on the Anti-Corruption Centre, part of a dynamic countrywide network operating under the auspices of the OSCE and Transparency Azerbaijan.

This was followed by a trip to Mingachevir with a group of experts, journalists and OSCE staff. The area, site of a hydroelectric power station, lies on the banks of the Kura River — the largest and longest one in the South Caucasus — which runs from Georgia through Armenia and Azerbaijan, and flows into the Caspian Sea.

For the past five years, the OSCE, the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme and Norway's StatOil have been carry-

ing out a project to monitor the river, which, along with the Aras River, serves as a major source of water supply. The Baku Office has been deeply involved in helping national experts to standardize water sampling and unify laboratory analysis techniques. This is a vital contribution to the project, as the quality and quantity of these water resources have a huge impact on the region's socio-economic development planning.

I also got to know what "Aarhus Centres" were all about. These are meant to promote the Aarhus Convention, which advocates the concept of "environmental democracy" — bringing environmental issues closer to people. The activities of Baku's Aarhus Centre, unfortunately, had slowed down. To help revive its role, an assistant and I met with representatives of environmental NGOs to learn about their activities and their political and social agendas, and to seek advice on how the Centre could be made more useful and interesting to them.

Before I ended my assignment, I took a few days off to visit Georgia and Armenia. It was a fitting conclusion to my JPO experience, as Kazakhstan has strong economic and political

relations with the Caucasus. I discovered that, however small the area is, the countries are completely different from one another. This is a valuable insight that I will always carry with me as a diplomat.

Dinmukhamed Jamashev. Born in 1982 in Shymkent, Kazakhstan. Degree in international relations, Kazakh National University (2004). Three months in the Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit, and six months in the OSCE Office in Baku. Returned to position of Attaché, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan. Plans to carve out a diplomatic career.

Dinmukhamed Jamashev takes water samples from the Kura River.



Gathering insights, from the Milli Mejilis to Mingachevir

By Dinmukhamed Jamashev



Chynara Ibraimova (left) and a colleague, Vukosava Braicic, at a national anti-terrorism workshop organized in Kolasin, by the Mission to Montenegro.

Discovering the role of economic and environmental issues in diplomacy

By Chynara Ibraimova

I couldn't have wished for a more relevant beginning at the OSCE Secretariat. One of my first assignments in the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities was to help organize and prepare an international conference on land degradation and soil contamination held in mid-November 2006 in Bishkek, my home town. The event, which dealt with a worrying set of issues I was thoroughly familiar with, paved the way for the Fifteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in January and May 2007.

I also helped organize an expert workshop examining the transit and transportation problems of land-locked countries, held in Vienna in mid-December 2006. Again, this topic hit close to home: Kyrgyzstan is 3,600 km away from the sea. The meeting was designed to prepare for a high-level conference in Dushanbe, focusing on the development of transit transportation throughout Central Asia.

Listening to the OSCE delegations' deliberations on current global issues in meetings of the Permanent Council provided a perfect opportunity for a young diplomat like myself to gain an understanding of the art of persuasion and negotiation.

I had always wanted to be a witness to the behind-the-scenes negotiations among countries in both the political and the economic spheres — including those relating to my country — and the JPO Programme satisfied this yearning. I did find myself in the unique situation of having to take a more objective position whenever my country was being discussed.

It was also interesting to experience the transition of the OSCE Chairmanship from Belgium to Spain. Obviously, the Organization continues to pursue its basic mission, but I saw, through the prism of the economic and environmental dimension, how activities are strongly influenced by the chosen priorities of each new Chairmanship.

After my time in Vienna, I was assigned to the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, with offices in Podgorica. It was a fascinating time to be there as Montenegro had just declared its independence on 22 June 2006. In fact, the Government had not yet managed to set up a proper visa system.

Each OSCE field operation has a different mandate, and I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I was in a mission whose mandate mirrors the Organization's emphasis on security in all its aspects. The Economic and Environmental Section where I was assigned dealt with poverty reduction, anti-trafficking, prevention of sexual exploitation, corruption, awareness-raising in ecological matters, promotion of the Aarhus Convention and eco-tourism.

Overall, my assignments both in the Secretariat and in the field made me realize how vital the role of economic and ecological matters is in the world of diplomacy and politics.

My fellow JPOs and I all agree that, despite the limited length of our assignments, we felt one with the OSCE community every step of the way. Every member is made to feel very much at home, regardless of cultural and religious background and political views. I have been hearing occasional talk about the OSCE model serving as an inspiration for other areas of the world. I must say the idea is very appealing.

Chynara Ibraimova. Born in 1977 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Bachelor's degree in international economic relations and oriental studies. Three months in the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities. Six months in the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Economic and Environmental Section. Previously Assistant to the Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan; recently appointed Adviser at Bishkek-based International Agency for Development and Policy.