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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Starting compiling the autumn issue of the *Central Asia and Transcaucasus Newsletter* nearly a month ago we did not have as much information on the events related to the region as we would actually like to introduce to you now. However, it may still happen that some of the events that actually took place in your countries are not covered, due to the lack of information flow from the regions themselves. Considering the nature of our newsletter, we would again strongly recommend to you to submit any news that you might have regarding human rights developments in your countries.

The history of our organisation has been established on the account of challenges provided in the CSCE, and later the OSCE commitments. Responding to the increasing demand for information about the OSCE activities we have decided to announce the most important conferences and summits the OSCE is planning to organise in the nearest future and also to give a brief review of the documents which actually gave the rise to the ODIHR mandates.

This issue also provides a brief outlook on the ODIHR major projects in the field of promoting democracy in Central Asia and Transcaucasus. We try to promote some other initiatives of different international organisations working in the field of human rights.

The section entitled "New Publications" is being compiled accordingly with some occasional Internet information. We would thus be very much grateful if our subscribers inform us about any publications that could be of interest to the C.A.& T. readers.

We wish you pleasant reading!

OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE

Note from the editor: The Secretariat of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) has recently finalised the agenda and modalities for the Review Conference, which will be take place November 4-22, 1996, in Vienna. The conference will precede the OSCE Summit, to be held in Lisbon, December 2-3, 1996. Here we would like to briefly explain the nature and purpose of the Review Conference.

The following points, from the Helsinki Document of the (then) Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, adopted in 1992, state that:

(4) Review conferences will precede the meetings of Heads of State or Government. They will be operational and of short duration. They will:

- review the entire range of activities within the CSCE, including a thorough implementation debate, and consider further steps to strengthen the CSCE process;

- prepare a decision-oriented document to be adopted at the meeting.

(5) Preparation of review conferences, including the agenda and modalities, will be carried out by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), which may decide to organise a special preparatory meeting. [...]

(29) The participating States will be invited to offer contributions on their implementation experience, with particular reference to difficulties encountered, and to provide their views of implementation throughout the CSCE area. Participating States are encouraged to circulate descriptions of contributions in advance of the meeting.

(30) Reviews should offer the opportunity to identify action which may be required to address problems. Meetings at which reviews of implementation take place may draw to the attention of the CSO any suggestions for measures to improve implementation which they deem advisable.

In line with what the Helsinki Document stipulates, the agenda of the upcoming Review Conference provides for two major avenues of discussion. Two working groups have been created; the first will review the implementation of all OSCE Principles and commitments; and the second group will review the OSCE activities, institutions, structures and instruments, and will consider proposals designed to enhance the role of the OSCE and further strengthen its capabilities.

Working Group No. 1 will discuss the implementation of the following commitments: politico-military aspects of security (4 sessions); the economic dimension (5 sessions); and the human dimension (13 sessions).

Working Group No. 2 will discuss: the Pact on Stability in Europe (1 session); Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: lessons to be drawn from this experience and development required (2

sessions); OSCE relations with others: Mediterranean issues, partners for co-operation, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the role of NGOs and contacts with them (2 sessions); administrative, financial and other technical aspects of the Organisation (1 session); the decision-making process, and the role and effectiveness of the institutions: the role and effectiveness of the OSCE structures (3 sessions); and co-operation with other international organisations and institutions (1 session).

ARMENIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - WORK IN PROGRESS

By Simon Osborn

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights received a formal request from Mr Khatchtour Bezirjian, the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), to establish an International Election Observation Mission for the presidential elections scheduled for 22 September 1996. In response, the ODIHR sent a needs assessment team to Armenia in the first two weeks of August. The needs assessment team met with the Chairman of the CEC, prospective presidential candidates and international NGOs working in Armenia. The needs assessment mission concluded that the ODIHR should establish an Observation Mission, and consequently, the ODIHR appointed Simon Osborn (United Kingdom) as Co-ordinator, and Mr Vrej Atabekian as Election Assistant to the Mission.

Upon arrival in Armenia, the team established contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CEC, the presidential candidates and their campaign teams, the embassies of the OSCE participating States, the media, and international non-governmental organisations. The Mission's Co-ordinator was joined by two long-term observers - Mr Heikki Happonen (Finland) and Mr Volker Jacoby (Germany), as well as five medium-term observers - Ms Denise Tallota (USA), Ms Colleen Bell (USA), Ms Pamela Gomez (USA) and Mr Michael George (USA).

According to their terms of reference as outlined in the OSCE/ODIHR election observation framework document, the ODIHR representatives monitored the pre-election period and facilitated the accreditation and deployment of 89 short-term observers.

The short-term observers represented 12 OSCE participating States, including Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America. These observers arrived 3-7 days before election day, and were briefed and deployed by the Mission almost immediately. Observers from the OSCE member states' embassies - UK, USA, and Germany - were deployed following the national briefing on 20 September.

Throughout the week preceding polling day, ODIHR representatives organised a series of rolling briefings for short-term observers, as well as one large national briefing for observers on Friday, 20 September, prior to their deployment across the eleven regions of Armenia. Short-term observers were given copies of the OSCE/ODIHR International Observer Pack, which included an Observer Guide, a Deployment Guide, and a booklet of Observation Forms (copies of which have been deposited with ODIHR).

The 89 international observers under the OSCE/ODIHR umbrella (a further five observers were deployed by their own organisations) were deployed across all eleven regions of Armenia. The observers, usually in teams of two, made 456 visits to polling stations on election day, covering 28.5% of the 1.596 Precinct Electoral Commission (PEC).

Thirty-seven observer teams monitored the counting of votes immediately after the close of polls in the PECs. These teams then accompanied the ballot papers and other official material to the Community Electoral Commissions (CoEC). The 390 CoECs in Armenia are responsible for counting the tear-off voter coupons (see Annex 2 for a copy of the ballot paper with an English language translation attached). In regions where more than one team had been deployed, the mission encouraged one team to visit the largest CoEC in the region, whilst the other visited the Regional Electoral Commission (REC).

There are a total of 11 RECs in the country. The Mission deployed four teams at the REC level in the city of Yerevan, and in Armavir, Kotayk, and Gegharkunik regions. These REC Observer Teams sat with the RECs throughout the night, monitoring the results as they were brought in from the lower (CoEC) electoral commissions.

Observer teams completed an Observation Form for each polling station visited during the hours of voting, as well as during the count. A separate Tabulation of the Votes Tally sheet was supplied to all observer teams. These forms were inputted and analysed by the Mission.

All observation teams returned to Yerevan to participate in the debriefing session organised by the Mission in the late afternoon on Monday, 23 September.

A preliminary post election statement was published by the Mission, after first having spoken to the ODIHR in Warsaw. This statement covered the legislative framework of the elections, the pre-election period and the observation of voting. It was clarified at the time of issuance (15:30, September, 1996) that it was a preliminary statement, and that a further statement would follow the announcement of the official results.

SEMINAR ON NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Tashkent, 11 -13 September 1996

Jacek Paliszewski

The seminar on national human rights institutions was another event dedicated to human dimension issues within the Programme of Co-ordinated Support for Recently Admitted Participating States and the OSCE's work in Central Asia. The seminar agenda was prepared after broad consultations with several participating States in the region, whose recommendations were included in the program.

Different forms of human rights institutions, i.e., the office of ombudsman, the national human rights commission, and the parliamentary commissioner were evaluated, and their significant role in the promotion and practical implementation of universal human rights standards and legislation was commonly acknowledged. The importance of human rights education was also pinpointed, as was the role of the media and non-governmental organisations as both the building blocks of civil society and examples of functioning democratic institutions.

Participants formulated several proposals and recommendations regarding the future work of human rights institutions in Central Asia. Governments from that region were invited to thoroughly examine the experience of existing human rights institutions in the OSCE area, and to decide on their application to their respective national legislations. The media and non-governmental organisations should be important partners in such a process.

It was recommended that the ODIHR and the relevant UN System bodies take an active role in assisting the functioning of national human rights institutions on a practical level. A "UN Decade for Human Rights Education" was indicated as another possible framework for co-operation.

The seminar was attended by an exceptionally large number of people. The 269 total participants included delegations from: 21 participating States (73 persons); the EBRD, ICRC, UNHCR, UNDP, and World Bank (a total of 12 persons); and 23 non-governmental organisations (49 persons). In addition, seminar guests, representing different relevant institutions and organisations of Uzbekistan, followed all discussions.

ROUND TABLE ON THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Paulina Merino

On 4 and 5 October 1996, a round table on the Role of the Media in the Transition to Democracy took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The seminar was jointly organised by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), and the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the Office of the President and the National Commission of UNESCO. Assistance in the organisational process was also provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan and the OSCE Liaison Office for Central Asia.

Fifty participants - representatives of Uzbekistan's media, as well as government officials responsible for creating and shaping national policy for the media - were present at this round table. Experts from Austria, UK, Bulgaria, and Germany moderated the discussion.

Problems discussed during the round table included: Accessibility of Information as an Important Democratic Principle; Rights and Responsibilities of Journalists; State Policy and Media Law; and Mass Media and Public Opinion in the Transition to Democracy.

During the discussion, it became clear that the transition process indeed is very difficult. There are many questions that society must find an answer to. For example, should criticism of public officials be allowed to a greater extent than criticism of other people? Should journalists be permitted to keep their sources secret, and further, should they have access to all information? The decisions of the European Court for Human Rights could provide some indications with respect to these issues.

The participants agreed that journalists have many responsibilities. They must fully inform the people; separate the reporting of facts from statements of opinion; and interpret and evaluate facts in a critical way in order to report objectively, analyse logically and criticise fairly. In order for the profession to be taken seriously, great importance must be placed on the education of journalists - education that is free from political pressure and concentrates on professional skills and ethics of journalism.

During the discussion, the rights of the journalists were also specified: the right to exercise their profession without fear; the right to refuse to perform any roles that may be suggested by the authorities; the right to be fully informed; the right to protect their sources; the right to form independent journalism associations; and the right to independently create a code of professional conduct without any interference from outside sources.

The participants agreed that a full effort has to be made towards ensuring the journalists their rights, as well as opportunities to fulfill their responsibilities. As the representative of the one government stated, these efforts are made in order for journalists to become the real power in a society. The OSCE ODIHR is willing to provide assistance in this process, since independent and professional media are a fundamental principle of a democratic society.

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE MANAGEMENT OF POPULATION MOVEMENTS

Bishkek, 25 - 26 July 1996

Four of the Central Asian states, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, met in Bishkek at a workshop organised by UNHCR and IOM, with the participation of the OSCE and ICRC. Participants reviewed the results and achievements related to the implementation of the Programme of Action for 1997. In presenting their ideas on how follow-up to the Conference could best be supported, international organisations discussed various strategies, such as establishing an office of national ombudsman on human rights, and adopting the Migration Management Framework proposed by IOM. The proposal to set up a sub-regional centre on migration and refugee issues in Bishkek was reconsidered, and it was decided that the Kyrgyz government would initiate the activities of such a centre in Bishkek. The centre will be open to the participation of all OSCE Central Asian states, and will draw from the considerable experience and expertise gained in the region in dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons. An OSCE representative, Mr John H Sandroock, Acting Head of Mission to Tajikistan, reported that the workshop provided an excellent venue for national delegations to exchange views on specific migration/refugee related problems, as well as on various types of population movements.

COURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS Almaty, October 1996

In October 1996, a course on human rights was initiated by the ODIHR at the State University in Almaty. As follow-up to the visit of the ODIHR Director earlier this year, human rights lecturers were invited by Professor Zharas Atrashev, Director of the Faculty of International Relations. As a result, three experts, representing the Raoul Wallenberg Institute at the Lund University in Sweden, will visit Almaty in the coming months to present lectures and courses on human rights for both students and scientific personnel of that faculty.

HUMAN RIGHTS LIBRARY IN BISHKEK

The Governmental Commission on Religion, associated with the Ministry for the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, has recently expressed its interest in supporting the ODIHR's initiative to organise the Human Rights Library in Bishkek. Specifically, the library will house a selection of documents on human rights issued by different international organisations, and will collect legislation containing references to human rights provisions and freedom of religion in democratically developed countries. It will also collect materials which contain analyses of the theory and practice of the human rights provisions, as well as of the freedom of religious confessions at the international level.

THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE EXPANDS INTO CENTRAL EURASIA

In 1996, the Open Society Institute began to extend its mandate to cover Armenia, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. New foundation offices, opening in all of the countries except Turkmenistan, will offer grants and provide scholarships. The new Project on Open Society in Central Eurasia will make information and funds available to support programs dealing with social, cultural, and legal issues, as well as other activities that support the development of civil societies.

In order to make information about developments in the region available, we have dramatically expanded our web site which covers the six aforementioned countries. The URL address is:

http://www.soros.org/central_eurasia.html

Information about each of the six countries is available at this site. The web site also includes the following topics: "Latest News" (updated daily), "Media", "Human Rights", "Involvement of the United States, United Nations and Other International Bodies", "Doing Business", "Analytical Articles", "Suggested Reading", and many links to other resources. You are welcome to "anchor" to them from your own web site or homepage.

Contact information for each of the new offices is also available at the site for those wishing to communicate with them directly.

Finally, we offer a variety of publications on human rights and other developments in each country, available free through our Publication Order Form. The latest such publication is Olivier Roy's "Islam in Tajikistan," commissioned and published by the Open Society Institute.

Please share this information and use the page.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

FOCUS CENTRAL ASIA, EUROPEAN EDITION

Focus Central Asia (FCA) was founded in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 1992, as an independent English language publication for the foreign business community. FCA quickly established itself as the main source of information for most of the embassies, banks, international organisations and businesses located in Central Asia.

The readers of *Focus Central Asia* benefit from its network of correspondents reporting directly from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. This unique information service is now available on a monthly basis for the European reader as well.

If you are interested in subscribing to *Focus Central Asia*, please address your requests to:

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TWO JOURNALS ON CENTRAL ASIA FROM SOAS

Note from the editor: These journals are published by Central Asia Research Forum, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Dr Shirin Akiner is currently editing both publications

Central Asia Newsfile:

Central Asia Newsfile has been published monthly since November 1992. Since that time, its subscription list has grown to include almost all the major Western companies involved in Central Asia, as well as international organisations, government departments and research institutes in many countries.

Each month, the publication carries 12 to 16 pages of up-to-date news from Central Asia, covering developments in politics, foreign and CIS relations, the economy, finance, trade and industry, energy, agriculture, transport, society, and military affairs.

Labyrinth: The Central Asia Quarterly

Labyrinth: the Central Asia Quarterly has been published quarterly since the beginning of 1994. Its subscribers are principally academics and private individuals with an interest in Central Asia.

Each issue of *Labyrinth* contains comprehensive news and analysis from the three most recent editions of Central Asia Newsfile, thus providing a full digest of news and events in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan over a ninety day period. There are regular sections on politics, foreign and CIS news, economy, finance, trade and industry, energy, agriculture, military, and society.

As well as coverage of current affairs, *Labyrinth* includes more in-depth articles on the social, political, economic and cultural aspects of Central Asia by experts on and from the region. The journal also contains a section of advertisements for publications and notices of conferences, seminars and other events related to Central Asia.

If you would like to receive a sample copy of *Central Asia Newsfile* or *Labyrinth: the Central Asia Quarterly*, please contact:

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