

Delegation of Kazakhstan

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In its capacity as the national human rights institution, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights monitors the observance of human rights and also acts as a mediator between State agencies and civil society in this area.

The Ombudsman's priority areas continue to be socially vulnerable groups in the population, children, women, persons with disabilities, pensioners and persons held in penitentiary institutions. We ensure the protection of all rights falling within the scope of the two international covenants.

In implementing these priority areas, the institution develops practical working methods, such as the Ombudsman's conceptual proposals for solving a number of human rights issues that were submitted to the Government at the end of last year. These include the employment of prisoners as a way of alleviating tensions in places of deprivation of liberty and reducing the level of recidivism, the integration of persons with disabilities and persons with limited opportunities into the social and political life of the nation as well as the resolution of social and labour conflicts.

To implement these proposals, a working group on monitoring the social and labour areas has been set up within the Office of the Commissioner with the task of preventing social and labour conflict at the earliest possible stage.

The working group comprises high-level representatives from State agencies, non-governmental organizations and well-known academics specializing in labour and constitutional law.

This year, the working group began by studying a labour dispute at the largest enterprise in Kazakhstan.

A specific example of the co-operation between the Commissioner and civil society is its working group on examining the use of torture and other forms of cruel treatment and punishment. It comprises high-level representatives of law enforcement and other State agencies as well as a number of well-known human rights activists.

Our work protecting the rights of children continues to be very productive. We are carrying it out systematically in close co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Astana and the Norwegian Embassy in Kazakhstan.

The following studies have been carried out: "Violence against children in State-run children's residential institutions in Kazakhstan" in 2010, "An assessment of children's vulnerability to risky behaviour, sexual exploitation and child trafficking in Kazakhstan" in 2011 and "An assessment of violence against children in schools in Kazakhstan" in 2012.

The studies on violence against children testify to the existence of violence both in residential institutions such as boarding schools and in regular schools. It goes without saying that this confirms the need to develop a systematic policy to prevent violence among and against children.

Effective co-operation has been established with the OSCE Centre in Astana regarding the people's access to the Ombudsman and outreach activities. The projects conducted together with the OSCE have been effective and have led to the significant strengthening of the Ombudsman's position as an institution in the regions.

With regard to co-operation with national human rights institutions of the countries in the OSCE region, we note that this has been developed with many of them. Furthermore, I believe that in view of the further integration processes in the OSCE area, the expansion of co-operation in various spheres of the economy and politics, and the movement of significant flows of people and the consequent growing number of human rights violations, it is necessary to:

- Direct further efforts at improving the work of the national human rights institutions and their co-operation on human rights issues. I believe there is a need for deeper study of the experience of national human rights institutions with a long history, not only in terms of their existence, but also because of the vast practical experience they have accumulated in human rights activities.
- Step up the exchange of experience on the implementation of the commitments adopted by participating States, both within the framework of United Nations conventions, the Universal Periodic Review process and Special Procedures. Like the other countries in the OSCE region, Kazakhstan has received dozens of recommendations, so the issue of implementing and developing them or searching for the appropriate mechanisms is quite acute.
- In view of globalization, the expansion of transnational companies and the intensification of migration processes, unfortunately human rights are frequently not considered paramount.

Transnational companies do not take proper account of human rights issues in their work plans, and the people who come under the sphere of influence of these companies are

also not fully aware of their rights and how to exercise them. It is thus extremely important and necessary for the OSCE countries to co-operate on developing and implementing joint educational and outreach programmes.

Kazakhstan is counting on specific practical support from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in creating a systematic approach to working on developing human rights education in our country, since there is an obvious need for the society to be educated in human rights standards.