

Distinguished Vice Prime Minister, Mr Mukashev, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the OSCE, I am pleased together with our partners to have this opportunity to support and participate in this Conference. My remarks will be brief.

**Like all here, OSCE roundly condemns domestic violence.** There are no mitigating circumstances or excuses for such acts. The OSCE Centre in Bishkek is strongly committed to contributing to the prevention of domestic violence. We have supported many initiatives in Kyrgyzstan over recent years through for example raising gender sensitivity and through police awareness programmes, as well as supporting Parliamentary hearings on gender and legislation to curb bride kidnapping.

**Domestic violence carries costs**, not only in terms of considerable individual human and emotional damage but also significant economic consequences for both the State and individuals, given the potential demands made upon the justice, health, housing, social, civil and legal services. Prevention is the best form of cure.

**Domestic violence is a crime.** This message must be communicated clearly and widely, not only to the perpetrators but also to the wider society. Perpetrators must be held to account for their behaviour by the judicial system.

**The victims of domestic violence** deserve help and support. They should feel safe to seek assistance. The conditions should be created by the Authorities and “an understanding public” to make it as easy as possible for victims to find help and report what they are suffering. They should be confident that qualified, social services are available from the State, at either Central or Municipal level. In Kyrgyzstan OSCE currently supports this role of providing refuge for victims in a number of the less economically-advantaged provinces. *OSCE is keen to work towards this role being assumed fully by the Authorities.*

To conclude, I hope this Conference, by comparing and contrasting approaches in diverse national jurisdictions, will **shed new light** and give impetus to strengthening legislation, enforcement, public awareness and statistical data analysis regarding domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. The OSCE stands ready where it can to work alongside its partners to support **follow-up action** to this Conference.