

Visits

OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission to Kazakhstan

From 21 to 24 June, the ODIHR/OSCE undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) in anticipation of an upcoming Election Observation Mission (EOM) to parliamentary elections, which are due to take place on 19 September. During the visit the Head of EOM, Ambassador Robert Barry, and Deputy Head of the ODIHR Election Section, Nikolai Vulchanov, met with high-ranking officials from the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Majilis, the Central Election Commission, as well as with political parties, the media, and civil society representatives. The results of the NAM have been finalized in a public report, which has been distributed within the Kazakhstani authorities, OSCE participating State representations in Kazakhstan, and available on the OSCE official website.

Political Dimension

SECURITY MATTERS

Centre Sponsors Conference on Security and Regional Co-operation



From 14 to 15 June, the Centre, together with the Kazakhstani Institute for Strategic Studies (KISI), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Almaty-based Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information, co-sponsored an annual conference on security issues and co-operation, held in Almaty. Leading experts from state institutions and civil society

organizations, renowned international scholars, and diplomats participated in the event. During the conference, perspectives for regional co-operation in the Caspian and Central Asian region, geopolitics of these regional processes, the situation in Afghanistan, and security aspects of energy resource exploitation and transport infrastructure development, were discussed. Conference materials and recommendations elaborated by the experts will be published shortly and widely distributed.

MEDIA ISSUES

Second round of master classes for regional journalists

From 7 to 23 June, the Centre expanded its pilot project on master classes for young journalists to four other regional cities - Aktobe, Kokshetau, Kostanay, and Uralsk. Following the evaluation of its pilot trainings in February this year, the Centre revised its program with more concentration on advanced know-how in information gathering, interview techniques, journalistic ethics, and on codes of conduct. The master classes went with notable success and will continue in other regional cities in October-November.

Centre supports young journalists in the regions

The Centre supported the second regional media forum for young journalists, held in Karaganda from 31 May to 3 June. This year, the forum focused on social journalism and the greater involvement of young journalists in discussions of topical social issues such as unemployment, public health, drug abuse, environmental hazards, and juvenile delinquency. The event involved approximately 100 young journalists, including those from school and university media faculties. Hopefully such event will contribute to the professional development of local media and stimulate greater interest of young people in the journalistic profession.



Economic and Ecological Dimension

Implementation of the Aarhus Convention

A workshop on access to the environmental information was conducted by the Centre on 11 June. This was a follow-up to a discussion held in February on how to improve access to such information. More than 60 participants attended, including Vice-Minister of Environmental protection, representatives of the Supreme Court, legal experts, lawyers, and partners from the non-governmental sector. As a result, a series of recommendations were prepared by national experts and presented for further discussion. Additionally, the Centre has launched a preparation of a manual on how to process public requests for environmental information. The manual, which is to be published in mid-August, will be available to the general public. Further, based on a concept paper, the modalities of establishment of the Aarhus centre will be discussed in September.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Information campaign on the Land Code begins

On 6 June, the Centre, in co-operation with two major farmer organizations (the Union of Farmers of Kazakhstan and the Association of Farmers of Kazakhstan), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and with the support of the Kazakhstani Agency on Management of Land Resources, as well as regional and district administrations, launched an information campaign on the Land Code. This includes a series of workshops and farmers meetings throughout eight regions of the country. These activities constitute the third phase of the Land Code implementation project, which began in April 2004. Its focus is to explain the procedures that need to be followed in order to acquire formerly leased land plots. With this aim, a special brochure has also been worked out and distributed during the meetings.

"The land reform has currently entered an entirely new phase - an introduction of private ownership for agricultural lands. Further development of the country's agricultural sector will depend to a large extent on the success of these initial steps."

From the opening speech of the Head of Centre, Ambassador Vikki, during the seminar in Kazygurt.

Human Dimension

GENDER PROGRAM

On 1 June, the Centre announced a competition among Kazakhstani journalists for the best essay on gender issues within the project "Overcoming gender stereotypes in the media". The aim of the competition is to enhance public awareness of women's rights and the promotion of publications dealing with gender issues. Prior to the start of the competition, the Centre conducted a training session on gender equality for a group of journalists, who are to take part in the competition. The jury, which will also include representatives from the Centre, will announce the results of the competition in October 2004.

PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

Training for defence attorneys

From 24 to 27 June, the Centre in co-operation with the ODIHR/OSCE conducted first training session for 24 Kazakhstani defence attorneys. Practicing attorneys from the Russian Federation acted as instructors in this training. Several further training sessions are anticipated in the autumn. The aim of the programme is to educate a group of local trainers who will be able to conduct further trainings to improve professionalism amongst defence lawyers. The programme is supported by the governments of Austria and Norway.



"With few opportunities currently available for our professional development such trainings help us to obtain necessary training skills for continuing education of attorneys..."

From the opinions of training participants

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Penitentiary / conflict prevention training

From 21 to 26 June, the Centre and the ODIHR/OSCE, in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice and the Almaty-based NGO, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, conducted a six-day training session on conflict prevention in penitentiary institutions. The training included topics such as: 1) conflict prevention and management in general and in prisons in particular, 2) methods for training of adults, and 3) the work of a psychologist in penitentiary institutions. Participants included representatives from Ministry of Justice and its subsidiary body, the Committee on the Execution of Punishment for Kazakhstan (KUIS), prison psychologists, and educators working in prisons. The training was supported by the Government of Switzerland.

Upcoming events of the OSCE Centre in Almaty

- 19 July**, Opening of OSCE Internet Café for the journalists in Taraz within the regional centre of Adil Soz NGO
- 21-23 July**, Central Asia Workshop on "Income Generation through the Promotion of SME Development in the Tourism Sector"
- 27 July**, Round table "Constitutional aspects of the human rights protection of the citizens convicted to death penalty and long term sentences", Astana
- 27 July**, Launch of the project on "Socio-economic adaptation of Oralman women in the new living conditions (creation of a resource centre)", Almaty
- 21 August**, Meeting of the working group within the project "Creation of a Commission on the Chu and Talas rivers between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan", Yssik-Kul, Kyrgyzstan