



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
The Representative on Freedom of the Media**

**Fourth Central Asian Media Conference  
"Freedom of the Media and Corruption"**

27 September 2002

The annual Central Asian Media Conference was held on 26-27 September 2002 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Conference was organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Freimut Duve, and the OSCE Centre in Tashkent in co-operation with the Open Society Institute.

For the fourth time more than 100 journalists from all five Central Asian States came together to discuss the latest developments in the media field. The vivid discussions showed again the need for this regional dialogue, especially in light of the tragic events of 11 September 2001. Many journalists affirmed that their working conditions had been deteriorating in the last year. The tendency towards repression was clear, and many cases of media harassment were reported. The critical importance of freedom of the media and the need of public debate was emphasized - especially in times of anti-terrorist conflict.

The main theme of the Conference was corruption as a challenge for freedom of the media. Furthermore the relationship between religious freedom and freedom of expression was discussed.

The deliberations over the two days showed that many of the problems debated in this forum in the last years remain unresolved and therefore the concerns from the Dushanbe and Almaty Declarations were reiterated.

**Tashkent Declaration on Freedom of the Media and Corruption**

1. The media should be free to play its fundamental role as society's watchdog against corruption, which is a serious obstacle for all countries both East and West.
2. The media should be free to exercise their corrective function towards economic, ecological and military decisions in their countries especially with regard to investigating the growing danger of corruption.
3. Journalists from all five Central Asian States should continue the practice, started in the framework of this Conference, to exchange views and cooperate, in order to better defend their interests. Solidarity among the journalistic community is imperative.
4. The international community should continue to observe closely the situation in the field of freedom of the media and support the journalists in their work.
5. Journalists should be protected while fulfilling their professional tasks, especially when covering controversial topics such as corruption in society.
6. Members of Parliament must assist in the necessary public debate on corruption.
7. Functioning independent courts should ensure that laws related to journalists are being fully and fairly implemented.