

Visits

OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Personal Envoy for Central Asia visits Kazakhstan

President Martti Ahtisaari, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Personal Envoy for Central Asia, visited Kazakhstan from 13 to 14 May. In Almaty, President Ahtisaari met with the Chairperson of the Central Election Commission (CEC), Mrs. Zagipa Baliyeva, as well as with representatives from political parties, economic and environmental NGOs, human rights and rule of law organizations, and media NGOs.

Five OSCE Ambassadors visit Kazakhstan



The OSCE Ambassadors are giving a press-conference in Astana

Five Ambassadors to the OSCE from Belgium, Canada, Norway, Portugal, and Slovenia visited Kazakhstan from 16 to 17 May. During the visit, the Ambassadors met with governmental officials, and representatives of civil society, NGOs and the media community. The discussions focused on the new Election Law, recently rejected Media Law, developments within the three OSCE dimensions, and the Kazakhstani bid for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009.

United States Ambassador to the OSCE visits Kazakhstan

In connection with the visit to Kazakhstan of the United States Ambassador to the OSCE, Mr. Stephan Minikes, the Centre facilitated a day of meetings with Centre partners on 26 May. Among others, Ambassador Minikes met with members of political think tanks, civil society NGOs, human rights organisations, gender groups, and media NGOs.

Political Dimension

SECURITY ISSUES

From 17 to 18 May, the Centre sponsored the participation of six Kazakhstani law-enforcement officials in the Regional Workshop on the "Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons" (SALW), which was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. OSCE institutions and several international experts took part in the event. During the proceedings, participants had the opportunity to discuss elements of 1) combating illicit SALW trafficking in Central Asia; 2) issues of manufacturing; 3) record keeping; 4) stockpile security; and 5) programmes of Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration (DD&R).



ELECTIONS AND PARTY SYSTEM

ODIHR election expert visits Kazakhstan

The Deputy Head of the Election Section of the ODIHR visited Kazakhstan in context of a final assessment of the new Kazakhstani Election Law. He discussed the legislation with the CEC Chairperson, Mrs. Zagipa Baliyeva, with representatives of all registered political parties and key civil society NGOs.

Roundtable on political party system

On 25 May, the Centre supported a roundtable organised by the Almaty-based think tank Assessment Risks Group (ARG) and the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) on sociological profiling of the Kazakhstani electorate. Among the issues discussed were the state of the Kazakhstani political party system and preferences of the electorate in light of the upcoming parliamentary election this autumn.

Economic and Ecological Dimension

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Information campaign on the Land Code continued

In May, the Centre continued its efforts on a broad information campaign on the Land Code, which was adopted in 2003 and introduced private ownership of agricultural lands. With its assistance, a working group consisting of the largest farming organizations and international partners developed a project proposal on a series of information meetings to be held from 1 June to 9 July. These meetings will target approximately 4000 farmers and local district administrative personnel throughout eight regions, largely in remote areas. Within this initiative, a specially published brochure on the Land Code will be widely distributed.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Trans-boundary water issues

On 5 May, the Centre hosted an ad-hoc working group meeting as part of the project to establish a bilateral Kazakhstani-Kyrgyz commission on interstate use of water facilities on the Chu and Talas rivers. The participants discussed issues related to public participation in trans-boundary water management with actors such as NGOs, water-users' associations and the mass media. Representatives of the Estonian Peipsi Centre for Trans-boundary Co-operation and a local NGO counterpart, Zhalgas, as well as experts from both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also participated.

Suggestion to establish information Aarhus Centre

On 20 May, the Centre met with high-ranking officials in the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Astana. The Ministry is the focal point on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Kazakhstan. During the meeting, the possibility of establishing an information centre on environmental issues - an Aarhus Centre, was discussed. Such a centre would improve the flow of, and access to environmental information in order to foster public participation in decision-making on environmental matters.

Human Dimension

FIGHT WITH TRAFFICKING

Conference on anti-trafficking

From 18 to 19 May, the Centre in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), organized a conference on further implementation of the National Action Plan on Anti-trafficking. The National Plan, which was adopted in February 2004, highlights the main priorities set by the government for the coming years, in particular work on legislation and on public awareness campaigns. The Centre's involvement in the conference is to support efforts enabling Kazakhstani legislation and practises on anti-trafficking of human beings to come more in line with OSCE recommendations.

ODIHR Expert assessment

An ODIHR expert assessed the possibility for improving OSCE support to anti-trafficking activities in Kazakhstan during his visit from 16 to 20 May. Several meetings were organized by the Centre with both governmental and non-governmental actors as well as international organizations in order to review areas where increased co-operation would be possible. Preliminary findings identified training of civil servants and NGOs, as well as further support on legislative reform as potential areas for co-operation. During the visit, the newly published ODIHR manual on National Referral Mechanisms, which is a manual on how to improve joint efforts of different authorities and NGOs on assisting victims, was presented to key partners.

Upcoming events of the OSCE Centre in Almaty

- 11-23 June**, Master classes for young journalists in Oral, Aktobe, Kokshetau and Kostanay
- 11 June**, Workshop "Mechanisms of Realization of the Aarhus Conventions"
- 14-15 June**, Second Annual Conference on Security Issues and Regional Co-operation (jointly with the Kazakhstani Institute for Strategic Research)
- 21-25 June**, Training of trainers on Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in Penitentiary Institutions
- 24-27 June**, Training of trainers on Fair Trials Promotion in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Within the Centre project on *Civic Lobbying* the local NGO "ECHO" has launched a **website** with the information resources on election issues, civic lobbying and Parliament of Kazakhstan at <http://www.echo.kz>