



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSCE Office in Yerevan

Yerevan, January 2007

Overview of the Office activities in 2006

Within its broad mandate, the Office continued to assist the Armenian authorities and civil society in promoting key OSCE principles and values. It provided legal and policy expertise on elections, anti-trafficking, migration, media and SME development, capacity building in the fields of human rights, media freedom, gender equality, environmental protection and youth leadership. The Office intensified its anti-corruption efforts and helped the authorities in fighting cyber crime. It also continued to chair working groups on elections, anti-corruption, Ombudsman issues, media legislation and cyber security.

The Office widened the scope of its activities through the establishment of the first economic and environmental programmatic presence in the Syunik province and by expanding the 'Aarhus' public environmental information centres' network to the regions. Two major ongoing projects - recycling of rocket fuel component (Melange) and promoting trust between police and population - entered an intensive implementation stage.

Politico/Military Dimension

Police Assistance Program. The Police Assistance Program, which forms a significant part of the Office's activities in the politico-military dimension, aims to build up trust and confidence between the police and society and contribute to the development of modern community-oriented model policing. Under the Program several activities were implemented in 2006. The renovation of the Centre for Induction Training of the Police was completed and a follow-up activity was started that includes the provision of modern teaching equipment and the development of a new training curriculum that is in line with international standards. As well, a project to introduce a community policing model in the Arabkir District Police Department commenced. The opening seminar for this project was held on October 31st after which international experts started a variety of trainings and seminars on community based and problem solving policing for officers of the Arabkir Police as well as other departments that have direct contact with the population.

Strengthening Cyber Security and Fighting Cyber Crime. The Office in 2006 continued to support the Cyber Security Task Force (CTF) that includes representatives from the National Security Service, Police, National Assembly and Presidential Administration. It works to strengthen legislation and information safety procedures and bolster the governments' capabilities to combat cyber crime on the basis of the European Convention against Cyber Crime. In March 2006 a round table on cyber security was held to raise awareness, which coincided with the ratification by Armenia of the Convention. Also, the concept of a "Law on Information Technologies and Information Protection" has been elaborated and presented, together with the published materials of the March roundtable, at a presentation in December.

Connecting the Ministry of Defence to the OSCE Communications Network. The OSCE Communications Network is a secure computer network and a Confidence- and Security-Building Measure used for the exchange of military information under the Vienna Document 1999, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the Treaty on Open Skies, and other OSCE official documents. Helping implement CSBMs is one of the core tasks of the Political-Military Dimension of the OSCE. In 2006 the Office, with support from the OSCE Secretariat, has assisted the Ministry of Defence in obtaining the necessary equipment, technical assistance and training to connect itself to the Network.

Economic/Environmental Dimension

Elimination of Rocket Fuel Component (Mélange) in the Republic of Armenia. On 12 May 2006 the OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, at the invitation of the Armenian Defence Minister Serge Sargsyan, took part in the inauguration of the Rocket Fuel Component (Melange) Disposal Facility at Kaltakhchi in the north of Armenia.

It takes into consideration the infrastructure and climate at hand as well as location, quantity and condition of the Melange, thereby ensuring the

- environmentally sound processing on the storage site;
- construction of the installation using existing materials;
- comprehensive monitoring of the entire process;
- hiring of adequately trained manpower in the region

The goal of the ongoing cross-dimensional Economic-Environmental and Politico-Military project is to recycle the existing amount of 872 tons of the highly toxic and volatile substance in a environmentally-friendly way, turning it into mineral dressing to be distributed over pH poor agricultural plots. As of 1 November 454 tons of the total stock (equalling 52%) have been eliminated before the upcoming winter break. It is expected to start production again in April 2007 in order to finalize the recycling of mélange in Armenia in August 2007, as planned.

Background. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Red Army left behind on the territory of the Republic of Armenia 872 tons of rocket fuel components, a liquid oxidizer nicknamed *Melange*. It is a highly toxic and aggressive substance, hazardous for population and environment.

On 22 April 2004 an official request has been made by the Armenian Minister of Defence to the Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan to provide both technical and financial assistance to dispose the Melange. The OSCE expressed its readiness to support in a phase by phase approach starting with a feasibility study by an independent group of international experts.

The project is operational since 7 November 2005 based on the official request from the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia.

The Ministry of Nature Protection is closely co-operating in the execution of the project and is providing environmental expertise and monitoring.

Opening of a presence in Syunik province. On 30 June 2006 the Office opened a program implementation presence in Kapan, the main city of Syunik province, to support local

stakeholders in promoting economic development by attracting domestic and foreign investors to the region. It also focuses on environmental risks in the region, which besides being famous for its beauty, is also the location of a significant mining industry. The initiative is based on an additional protocol to the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE and the Republic of Armenia which creates the legal basis for establishing presences to implement OSCE programmes in regions of Armenia. This has been signed by Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, Head of the OSCE Office, and Mr. Vartan Oskanian, the Armenian Foreign Minister.

Supporting SME Development. The Office closely co-operated with the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development and the SME Development National Centre on development, implementation and monitoring of SME development state policy and respective programmes. The Office also supported elaboration of the “SME Statistical Guidebook 2004-2005” – a comprehensive statistical toolkit for policy makers, domestic and international business community and think tanks. The Office initiated and commissioned the development of an Indicators’ System aimed at measuring effectiveness of government funded SME support. The latter, along with the respective methodological reference guidebook explaining how to use the Indicators’ System for internal and external evaluations, was presented at the two-day regional workshop held in 22 November 2006 in Kiev. The Office also initiated the translation of the OSCE "Best-Practice Guide for a Positive Business and Investment Climate" into Armenian as well as its dissemination among stakeholders, who welcomed the publication as a useful tool for further improvement of business environment and reducing administrative barriers for domestic and foreign investments.

Promoting principles of the Aarhus Convention. The Office continued to assist the Armenian Government in promoting public access to environmental information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters -- the three main pillars of the Aarhus Convention ratified by Armenia in 2001. New Aarhus Centres started their operation with the Office’s support in Syunik, Tavush and Lori provinces. Serving as a unique link between governmental authorities and non-governmental organizations in the field of environmental policy-making and awareness raising, the Centres help create a climate of transparency in environmental affairs and contribute to the democratization and good governance in the region.

Human Rights Activities

Assistance to the Ombudsman institution (human rights defender). The Office promoted and rendered support to the Ombudsman institution, assisted in the capacity building through staff training and exchange programs, and continued to chair the international working group on Ombudsman institution, which is attended by the Ombudsman, representatives from Embassies of OSCE member states and international organizations. Jointly with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights the Office contributed to the strengthening of the Armenian Ombudsman Office capacity through organizing a visit of the Armenian Ombudsman to the Lithuanian (Seimas) Ombudsman institution.

Assistance to the Prosecutor's Office. The Office and the ODIHR launched an assistance program to the Prosecutor’s Office of Armenia, aiming to support prosecutors and investigators in better complying with international human rights and fair trial standards. Within the framework of the programme training on investigation of cases of domestic violence and sex crimes was organized for prosecutors and investigators at the Training

Centre of the Prosecutor's Office. The Office together with the ODIHR supported the publication of a book on "Judicial Systems of Europe and USA" in Armenian, compiled by the Prosecutor's Training Centre.

Support to the Chamber of Advocates. The Office continued to closely follow the implementation of the Law on Advocacy. The Office supported launching of the official website of the Chamber and in co-operation with the Council of Europe organized trainings on European Human Rights standards for defence lawyers and public defenders of Yerevan and regions.

Monitoring Penitentiary Institutions. The Office continued to support activities of the Public Monitoring Group for Penitentiary Institutions under the Ministry of Justice. The group performs public oversight through observing and monitoring protection of rights of persons taken into custody at criminal executive institutions. The Office organized two more trainings for the group and supported publication of their annual report on activities in Armenian and English languages. The 2006 report was of consistently higher standard and included constructive comments from the Criminal-Executive Department of the Ministry of Justice. The Office intends to continue further support to the group.

Capacity-building for the penitentiary/Alternative Sentencing. In July 2006 two workshops on alternative sentencing were organized, together with ODIHR, for staff and experts of the Ministry of Justice in the renovated prison training centre for the Ministry of Justice employees. The Office also supported publication of a handbook for the staff of Penitentiary Institutions and the division of Alternative Sentencing. The Office will continue its cooperation with the Ministry of Justice in this respect.

Public Monitoring Group for Police Detention Centres. The Office assisted the establishment of the Public Monitoring Group on Police Detention Centres, which implemented a three-month pilot project in 2006. The Office supported activities of the monitoring group through organizing trainings for group members and providing assistance for publishing their reports.

Human rights situation in the army. In 2004-2005 the Office implemented a project on monitoring human rights in the Armenian Armed Forces and presented the monitoring results and recommendations to the Ministry of Defence in 2006. A follow-up discussion on human rights and the army was organized by the Office with participation of the Ministry of Defence, other governmental bodies and civil society organizations to identify possible areas of systematic civilian oversight of the armed forces. The Office follows the implementation of recommendations elaborated by roundtable participants.

Introduction of Alternatives to Military Service. The Office closely followed the implementation of the Law on Alternative Service, particularly regarding conscientious objectors. In November 2006 the Office organized a roundtable on the situation of alternative service and conscientious objectors in Armenia to discuss with the authorities possible improvements of the law.

Freedom of Conscience, Religion and Belief. A new Law on Religious Freedom is being elaborated and the Office has agreed to support the initiative of the Government Department on National Minorities and Religious Affairs to institute governmental and nongovernmental co-operation through organizing round table discussions on the new concept of the law.

The Office also observed the development of the Law on National Minorities, followed the implementation of the European Convention on Minorities and the Charter on Languages.

Human Rights Public Awareness. The Office supported a number of thematic conferences, workshops, students' awareness raising seminars and human rights publications. In 2006, the Office assisted the production of public service announcements, including three video clips on the topics of tolerance, fair trial and against torture, aimed at public awareness raising and enhancement of understanding of basic human rights among Armenian citizens. The clips were broadcast through the Armenian Public Television. The Office also continued to produce DVD editions, the second part of the 2005 project "Through Culture to Tolerance."

Democratization Activities

Supporting freedom of the media and freedom of information. In 2006 the Office stepped up its efforts in initiating public discussions about media freedom and freedom of information related issues and providing capacity building support to relevant stakeholders representing the Government and civil society. Jointly with its key partners in this field, the Office organized a number of events, among them a seminar on media accountability and best international practices regarding media self-regulation mechanisms; a conference to discuss the implementation of the law on freedom of information in Armenia; and an event to present OSCE Expert Review on Armenia's Digital TV and Radio Broadcasting Draft Implementation Plan, which was provided by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media at the request of the Armenian Government.

The Media Legislation Working Group, an informal forum consisting of national and international organizations active in the media field and chaired by the Office, continued to provide recommendations for improving the regulatory framework in the field of media and supporting dialogue between the national authorities and civil society actors. This included both lobbying for various media law reform initiatives and facilitation of expertise on media related legislation. On behalf of the Working Group the Office sent letters to the Armenian authorities expressing concern over shortfalls of Armenian media- and freedom of information- related legislation and violence against journalists.

In June the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media paid an official visit to Armenia at the invitation of the Armenian Government. The aim of the visit was to assess the state of freedom of the media, giving special attention to the upcoming changes in the legal framework, required by amendments to the Constitution adopted in November 2005. The Report on the State of Media Freedom in Armenia issued by the Representative in July included an analysis of the media situation and offered practical recommendations for improving the freedom of the media in the country. From mid year, the Office advocated for and followed up on the implementation of recommendations presented in the Report, in co-operation with the Government and civil society.

Fight against trafficking in human beings. In 2006 the Office provided expertise and technical assistance to the Governmental Inter-Agency Commission in developing and revising the national policy and second generation National Plan of Action (NPA) on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. In June the Office, in co-operation with the US State Department and Armenia's Anti-Trafficking Inter-Agency Commission, organized a roundtable on the implementation of the current and elaboration of a new NPA to Combat

Trafficking, which would focus on participatory assessment of the trafficking situation in the country and clearly defining responsibilities of various implementing agencies in cooperation with civil society. The Office invited international experts from OSCE Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit (ATAU) and the Czech Ministry of Interior to share their knowledge on anti-trafficking strategy and NPA development.

As a follow-up to the Roundtable, in October 2006 the Office initiated a trafficking responses assessment and a 2-day capacity-building Workshop on national anti-trafficking strategy and National Plan of Action (NPA) for members of the Inter-Agency Commission on Anti-Trafficking, as well as for relevant international organizations and national NGOs. Two international experts representing Czech Interior Ministry and International Centre for Migration Policy Development were invited to assess the Armenian trafficking responses and conduct the workshop. The trafficking responses assessment aimed at assessing the capacities of the national structures involved in NPA implementation and new NPA development and the workshop introduced best methods and techniques for developing, implementing and evaluating national strategies and action plans on combating trafficking in human beings.

The Office facilitated legislative expertise on current and draft legislation related to combating trafficking in human beings and protection of victims and witnesses. Two studies on trafficking situation in Armenia, carried out by two national NGOs and supported by the Office were presented. The studies aimed at revealing how different social groups in Armenia understand the phenomenon of trafficking and which are the most vulnerable social groups from the point of view of trafficking.

In July, the Office jointly with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator's Office in Ukraine organized an anti-trafficking Study Tour to Ukraine for Armenian NGO and government representatives. Four members from two key Armenian civil society organizations and two government representatives participated in the Study Tour to exchange experience with NGOs providing assistance to trafficked victims and state units dealing with combating trafficking in Ukraine.

Freedom of Movement/Migration. In response to requests by governmental and civil society actors, the Office continued providing the necessary expertise on migration management focusing on the issue of migrants' rights protection, returnees and reintegration. Roundtable discussions on returnee issues were conducted, jointly with a Swiss NGO CIMERA, in a number of regions of Armenia, as well as in Yerevan. The Office continued its work in the migration legislation field (expertise of draft legislation, drafting of new amendments or legal acts). The Office conducted a survey "Labour Migration from Armenia in 2002-2005" through an implementing national NGO, giving a picture of the labour migration flows and outlining possible directions for further in-depth analysis.

Addressing gender issues. The Office provided support for the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Advancement of Women adopted in 2004 through further assistance for the development of local gender expertise, i.e. by facilitating information and experience sharing among Government officials as well as familiarization of civil society actors, media and governmental bodies with practices from other countries. The Office also supported the implementation of ODIHR projects aimed at promoting women's leadership and mainstreaming gender education into the national educational curricula. The Office implemented a project aimed at promoting gender awareness by outreach to the youth through an essay contest.

Promotion of Democratic Processes. The Office provided training and organized a seminar for the students of the Police Academy and other tertiary education institutions to foster debate on various current issues related to social development, democracy and rule of law. The training was also aimed at helping students build inter-personal and communications skills.

Good Governance

Assistance to Electoral Reform. In light of the upcoming National Assembly elections in Armenia scheduled for May 2007, the Office enhanced its activities in the sphere of election assistance, focusing both on the legislative reform and election administration. In particular, at the request of the Armenian National Assembly, the Office supported the process of Electoral Code reform in line with the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and the CoE Venice Commission. Several written opinions were provided by the international experts to the National Assembly. In addition, the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission experts visited Yerevan in September and discussed their recommendations with the representatives of the parliamentary factions. The newly adopted amendments are hoped to be efficient to improve the conduct of elections in Armenia.

While promoting legislative reform, the Office also focused on improvements in electoral administration. In particular, the Office provided assistance in the field of training of election officials. Manuals on election administration procedures are being prepared with support of the Office. These will serve as training materials for future members of electoral commissions as well as the reference guides for all stakeholders of the electoral process.

The Office also continued facilitating consultations of the civil society and international organizations with the Police/OVIR which is authorized by the Electoral Code to maintain the voter register. It is hoped that 2007 will see further progress towards a register which is more accurate and complete.

A special emphasis in the Office's activities has been made on co-ordination of international activities in the sphere of elections, primarily through the International Working Group on Elections chaired by the Office since 2002. The group comprises international donors involved in provision of election assistance. Its regular meetings serve as a forum for exchange of information/opinions and co-ordination of activities among the members. In particular, the Office aimed at ensuring that before 2007 the planning of election assistance is co-ordinated and duplications and overlaps in activities of international actors are minimized.

Support to the National Assembly. Building on the successful experience of the previous years, the Office continued its project on Support to the National Assembly aimed at strengthening the professional capacities of the parliamentary professional staff. This activity was carried out in co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The first phase was a three-week comprehensive training course in Yerevan held in June for the professional staff of the parliamentary departments. A second phase was a practical follow-up – visits to the Senate and House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Belgium, as well as a short tour in the European Parliament arranged for selected participants of the training. The Office also donated specialized literature to the departments of the National Assembly.

Capacity Building for the staff of the MFA. A series of lectures was organized by the Office for the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Domestic and international experts were invited to conduct the courses with the aim of strengthening professional and analytical capabilities of the foreign ministry's staff, in particular by expanding their familiarity with established research and analytical tools and methods and providing analysis on modern approaches in the field of international law and security studies.

Anti-Corruption Activities. The Office continued to chair the International Working Group on Anti-Corruption comprising international and bilateral missions engaged in anti-corruption efforts. With the Office's co-ordination, the Working Group closely followed the developments related to fighting corruption, particularly with regard to elaboration of the government's National Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2007-2010.

The Office provided support to the Anti-Corruption Coalition of NGOs to strengthen civil society efforts in the fight against corruption. With the Office's support, the NGOs involved in the Coalition implemented a number of projects in the spheres that were defined in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy as carrying corruption risks, such as the traffic police, healthcare, education, army, judiciary, public services and local self-government.

With the Office's support, a manual on citizen's relations with the local self-government bodies was developed and published. The manual contains practical information on legislation, procedural issues, rights and obligations of local self-government bodies vis-a-vis citizens. The manual was used for conducting trainings for residents of three communities in Gegharkunik region. Selected individuals who have successfully passed the trainings are expected to be involved in the work of public reception centers in the future.

With the Office's support, a public service announcement (PSA) was produced and aired on TV to raise awareness of the population on the work of the Anti-Corruption Coalition and the hotlines operated by the Coalition members.

A series of projects on public anti-corruption reception centres were piloted by the Office to raise public awareness on corruption and fight it by providing practical information and assistance to citizens encountering corruption incidents in particular spheres. Based on the success and lessons learned from this pilot project, the network of reception centers operated by the Anti-Corruption Coalition of NGOs will be strengthened and expanded in 2007.

Other

The international Conference on New Threats and Global Challenges in the 21st century organized on 31 October and 1 November, 2006 was aimed at enhancing co-operation between Armenian scientists and their colleagues abroad. A fundamental goal of this effort was to carry this conference forward and to leverage this event as an impetus for greater and continued co-operation. One specific goal in this regard was to utilize the conference outcome as a capacity-building process bolstered by the formulation and adoption of a final document that evaluates the complex reality facing Armenia and the region. The Conference was attended by participants of scientific society from USA, Europe and Armenia. The proceedings of the conference are being published.

Starting from 2003 the Office has been co-operating with the Voluntary Service of Armenia – Republican Headquarters of Student Brigades (HUI) -- to develop the volunteer movement in

Armenia and facilitate contacts between the youth from different countries. It became already traditional to provide support to Rehabilitation Center for children with disabilities. The patients of this Center are children with motor-system infringement and cardiac-vascular system illnesses. These children need attention and care more than others and the volunteers are doing their best to arrange their stay at the center of full of value. The work camp in 2006 continued the initiative: volunteers from 14 European and Asian countries together with Armenian volunteers did an amazing work for disabled children, organized various workgroups - drawing, sculpture, learning national and foreign songs, intellectual games, English language courses and physical training classes. The volunteers worked also on equipping the territory of the center with beautiful garden, resting area, lakes and sport grounds.

The edited version of the OSCE textbook published by the Office aimed to promote better understanding of OSCE values in Armenia.

Screening of the European Film Festival in Kapan (Syunik) organized by the Office through its new presence in Syunik in co-operation with the European Union aimed at promoting European values and cultural exchanges involving population from the regions of Armenia.