

## OSCE Office supports efforts to reduce environmental threat posed by chemical waste site

*The OSCE Office in Yerevan has mobilized the international donor community to assist Armenia in addressing an acute environmental threat posed by a chemical waste site near Yerevan.*

The Nubarashen chemical waste dump, which stems from the 1980s, originally contained more than 500 tonnes of obsolete pesticides, mainly DDT. The site, which covers an area of more than 3,000 square metres, also has contaminated the soil near the site and threatens several nearby villages. Recently, the site's cover was illicitly removed, creating an acute threat by exposing the dump's contents to rains. In addition, there is a risk of landslides at the site.

The Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, discussed joint actions at his meeting with Armenia's Minister of Nature Protection Aram Harutyunyan on 20 April.

On April 30, an OSCE-supported plan to handle the problem was presented at a joint news conference held by the OSCE Office in Yerevan and the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

"This situation poses both an emergency and an opportunity to not only address this particular site but comprehensively address all chemical waste sites in Armenia," Carel Hofstra, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan,

said. "It is vital that the government and the international community act in a coordinated way and that civil society be involved, for example by raising awareness of local residents."

Col. Hovhannes Yemishyan of the Armenian Rescue Service added that there was an urgent need to analyse the composition of the waste site's contents, to assess the threats posed by it, and to remove and dispose of the pesticides.

The OSCE Office support is part of the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) initiative for the South Caucasus region, which aims to provide a framework for co-operation on environmental issues across borders and promote peace and stability through environmental co-operation and sustainable development.

ENVSEC provided the expert who developed an emergency action plan to contain the immediate threat. Once the acute threat has been dealt with, a long-term plan to dispose of the waste will be drafted with further OSCE assistance in co-ordination with authorities and other international actors.



Experts in protective clothing visit the site of the Nubarashen chemical waste dump near Yerevan, Armenia. (OSCE)

## OSCE Media Freedom Representative visits Armenia

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), Dunja Mijatovic, paid a visit to Armenia on 17-19 May. During her visit Mijatovic discussed media reforms with the country's leadership, including the transformation from an analogue to a digital broadcasting system. She also met representatives of the civil society and the international community. On 18 May, Mijatovic took part in a public discussion on Armenia's digital switchover, organized by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The event brought together government officials, parliamentarians, as well as broadcasters, media NGOs and international organizations. An expert review on Armenia's Concept Paper on Migrating to Digital Radio and TV Broadcasting System, commissioned by the Office of the



RFOM was presented at the conference. The expert review provides a set of recommendations to assist the Armenian government develop policies that would promote a smooth transition from analogue to

digital broadcasting in the country.

"The digital strategy of Armenia will define the broadcasting landscape for many years to come. It is essential that the legislation to be adopted grants access to diverse

information and high quality programmes", Mijatovic said in her address to the conference participants. "New technologies, including digital broadcasting, should be used by governments to strengthen media pluralism. These technologies can improve access to information and enable the public to seek, access and impart information."

Mijatovic emphasized that her office is ready to continue its support to the authorities in any and all legislative reforms related to media freedom.

Following the visit, the Office of the RFOM provided a legal review on the amendments to Armenia's broadcasting legislation. The full text of the legal review in Armenian and English is available at: [www.osce.org/fom](http://www.osce.org/fom).

## Police reform initiatives in Armenia discussed at OSCE Office meeting

A co-ordination meeting hosted by the OSCE Office in Yerevan on 14 May brought together the Deputy Head of the Armenian Police, Artur Osikyan, representatives of state and international bodies and experts to discuss police reform proposals and possible areas for co-operation.

The participants of the event discussed improving police services, co-operation with civil society on draft legislative initiatives and ways to make international assistance for police reforms more effective.

Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, said that the Office aims to contribute to the process of police reform in the country to further develop modern democratic policing practices.

"We look forward to assisting in addressing structural challenges as well as continuing to help build public trust," he said.

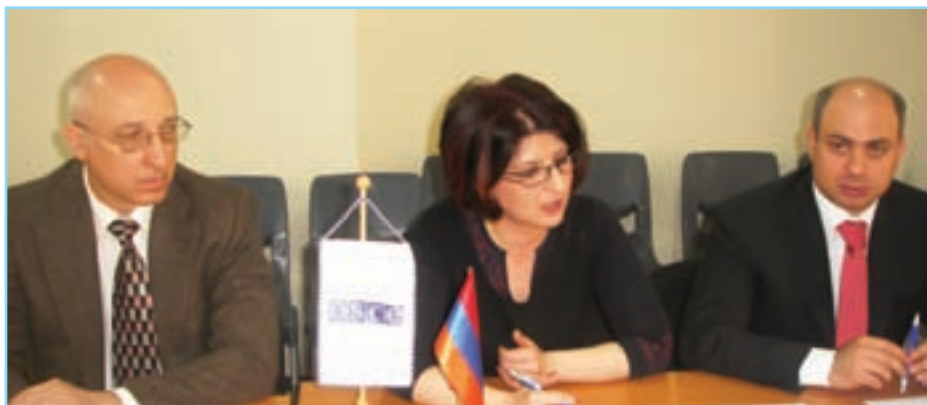
Mr. Osikyan presented a comprehensive package of police reform initiatives in such areas as public order management, police

educational reform, traffic police, visa and passport procedures, combating organized crime and internal oversight and anti-corruption. The proposals incorporate the community based policing approach, which has been put into practice in the Arabkir Police District since 2008.

The OSCE-supported police education reform package was presented at the event for inclusion in the country's reform strategy. The Office also presented its publications on democratic policing practices in Armenia.

Mr. Osikyan and Ambassador Kapinos went on to present Armenia's police reform to the OSCE participating States at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna in the beginning of June.

*In 2003, the OSCE Office in Yerevan initiated a comprehensive police assistance programme aimed at building trust and confidence between the police and the society through introduction of community-oriented policing model and improved training standards.*



Ambassador Kapinos (L) and Armenian Deputy Head of Police Osikyan (R) at the OSCE Office-hosted meeting on police reforms, 14 May 2010 (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

## Head of Office discusses judicial reforms with Justice Minister, Prosecutor-General

At his meeting with Prosecutor General Agvan Hovsepyan on 4 May, the Head of the OSCE Office discussed the implementation of recommendations contained in the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) report on the trials that took place in the aftermath of the March 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan.

Ambassador Kapinos noted the Prosecutor General's constructive approach to the recommendations.

"We were glad to learn that some of the ODIHR recommendations were immediately accepted, and we understand that certain recommendations will need time to be implemented," he said.

He also welcomed the Prosecutor General's pledge to investigate cases of alleged violence against journalists and to boost the Prosecutor's role in police accountability mechanisms, a challenge addressed in a recent report by the OSCE Office.

Hovsepyan, in turn, said that his office highly

appreciates the support from the OSCE to reveal shortcomings and find comprehensive solutions to help advance the rule of law and efficiency of the justice system in Armenia.

ODIHR's trial monitoring report was also brought up at the meeting with Justice Minister Gevorg Danielyan on 1 June.

Ambassador Kapinos commended the Justice Ministry for the co-operation in implementing the recommendations included in the report. He also expressed willingness to contribute further to the ongoing judicial reforms and offered international legal expertise for Armenia's draft Criminal Procedure Code.

The Ambassador and the Minister also discussed the penitentiary reforms, an important topic for both the Ministry and the Office.

Lastly, Ambassador Kapinos noted the importance of ensuring the right to freedom of assembly as that right represents one of the most important human dimension commitments of the OSCE.

### IN BRIEF

#### OSCE Office helps Armenia fight corruption

YEREVAN, 23 April - An OSCE-supported project that aims to address corruption risks related to traffic regulation by monitoring traffic registrations and drivers' license examinations concluded with a presentation in Yerevan.



The project, implemented by non-governmental organization Achilles with support from the OSCE Office in Yerevan, included monitoring of the testing procedures for obtaining drivers licenses at the Police Registration and Examination Departments. It also included activities to inform drivers about their rights through television and radio programmes and the distribution of information materials as well as legal consultations. Another outcome of the project is a set of recommendations on traffic regulation improvements.

#### OSCE Office assists in experience exchange by the Ombudsman institution

YEREVAN, 27 May - Representatives of Armenia's Human Rights Defender's Office concluded a three-day study visit to Slovenia organized by the OSCE Office in Yerevan to strengthen the institution's capacity to prevent torture and ill-treatment.

The Armenian experts met Slovenia's Deputy Ombudsman and colleagues, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations and visited a police station and a prison in Ljubljana. They discussed the experiences of the Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsman as the country's designated National Preventive Mechanism (NPM).

#### OSCE Office supports Armenia's efforts in fostering competitive business environment

YEREVAN, 2 June - The OSCE Office in Yerevan and the State Commission on Protection of Economic Competition signed a co-operation agreement to strengthen the legal framework and practice in this area and to support sustainable socio-economic development.

Under the agreement, the OSCE Office in Yerevan will support competition strategies in line with international good practice. It will also help develop and introduce a comprehensive system of indicators to foster efficient competition policies, and it will support Armenian partnership with the International Competition Network.



## Environmental challenges discussed at Model OSCE Conference in Kapan



Students take part in a Model OSCE conference in Kapan, 7 May 2010. (OSCE/Gohar Hovsepian)

Applying OSCE mechanisms to solve environmental security problems in the hypothetical countries of Valouchistan, Dakastan and Abrala was the purpose of a student Model OSCE conference held in Kapan, in Syunik region on 7-8 May.

The two-day event brought together 24 students from various cities of the region. The topics on the agenda of the simulated OSCE Permanent Council session included environmental and economic challenges relevant to the situation in Syunik.

"Enabling young people to learn about the OSCE structures and decision-making processes is vital in promoting their awareness on international mechanisms to address security-related problems. Hopefully, this experience will also motivate them to get involved in civic activity in their localities," said Grzegorz Michalski, Politico-Military Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Satenik Baghdasaryan, Political Science student from Yerevan State University who participated in the event said: "The event gave us an opportunity to use our negotiation, problem solving and argumentation skills in situations close to real life. We realized that only by joining efforts and enhanced cross-border co-operation is it possible to counter global environmental challenges in today's interconnected world."

The conference was preceded by lectures on the OSCE structure, a training session on environmental matters, public speaking and negotiation skills, as well as presentations on the OSCE work in the economic-environmental dimension.

The event was the third regional conference of the kind held by the OSCE Office in Yerevan to promote OSCE principles and values among young people in Armenia.

## OSCE supports education for disadvantaged children in Syunik region

An extracurricular education centre for children from socially and economically disadvantaged families, supported by the OSCE Programme Implementation Presence in Syunik was founded in the town of Kapan.

Representatives of local authorities, civil society organizations and educational institutions, as well as the children and their parents attended the opening ceremony held on 19 March.

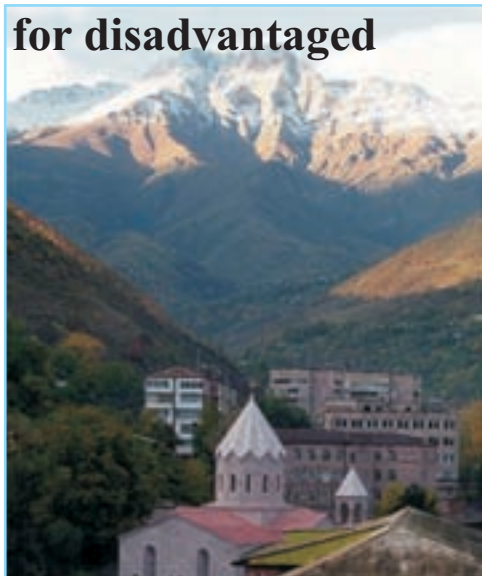
"We hope that the centre will help support better integration of the children and develop their skills and talents to safeguard children's rights," Christoph Opfermann, the OSCE Office Economic and Environmental Officer, said at the ceremony.

The school was refurbished and equipped by the Syunik Diocese of Armenian Apostolic Church and the local authorities and is run by the OSCE-supported Women Resource Centre in Kapan.

The school is open four days a week to provide support to 65 to 70 disadvantaged children from Kapan and surrounding villages, including child beggars.

The specially designed arts and crafts programme provides children with an opportunity to develop their talents in this area, with the school premises serving as a showroom for the children's artworks.

The Kapan Public Environmental Information



(Aarhus) Centre supports the school with courses and lectures on environment, biodiversity and environmental protection and organizes local tours to nature reserves and places of cultural and historical interest.

The project was financed by contributions from the OSCE participating States at the annual OSCE Charity Ball.

## Diplomatic school established with OSCE support

Armenia's new diplomatic school opened its doors to its first students in February. The school, set up by the Armenian Foreign Ministry with the support of the OSCE and the European Union, is the first initiative in Armenia to provide comprehensive professional training for future diplomats. Targeted at postgraduate students, the 9-month course is taught by prominent local and international trainers. It is expected that the top students will be offered employment by the Armenian Foreign Ministry.

In addition to helping identify trainers for the school and assisting in developing the curriculum, the OSCE Office provided equipment for the computer lab. It also provided support in the process of selecting applicants.

The idea to establish a diplomatic academy in Armenia goes back to 2006 when the OSCE Office organized a targeted training for the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the framework of a training programme for parliamentary staff. The project initially moved forward as periodic short-term training courses for the Ministry's staff. To address the needs of



Students look at documents before a lecture at the newly established diplomatic school in Armenia, Yerevan, 29 March 2010. (OSCE/Ruzanna Baghdasaryan)

the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the Office proposed to institutionalize the training by creating a formal school that would prepare a pool of qualified potential diplomats.

As a next step, in 2008 the Office in Yerevan commissioned a needs assessment which was conducted by a team of scholars from the Hamburg-based research institute CORE (Centre for OSCE Research).

The team came up with a number of recommendations and suggestions, including on the status and functions of the school, identification of the training and professional capacity-building needs, potential courses and management schemes.

The curriculum covers Armenian foreign policy, the theory and history of diplomacy, international law and trade regulations, and concepts of international relations. The course also includes European integration, Armenia's relations with its neighbours, as well as the workings of international organizations. Global challenges, like poverty, ecological threats and terrorism will also be in the focus of discussions in the school.

The second part of the course develops practical skills, and includes simulation exercises on international negotiations, political analysis, diplomatic protocol, public speaking and presentation skills as well as study visits to state institutions and foreign embassies.

## OSCE supported publication highlights violence and legal cases against journalists in Armenia

A compilation of articles discussing violence, intimidation and legal cases against journalists in 2008-2009, published with support of the Office in Yerevan, was presented on 3 March.

The publication was supported by the OSCE and produced by the non-governmental organization Investigative Journalists. It looks at seven cases of violence and intimidation against journalists and analyzes seven libel and slander cases involving journalists, noting that the perpetrators in several of the violent attacks remain unknown. The articles have also been published on the website of Investigative Journalists, [www.hetq.am](http://www.hetq.am).

"Promoting freedom of expression and eliminating harassment of journalists remains a challenge in Armenia. Violence against journalists is inadmissible, and if it goes unpunished it will contribute to a climate of fear and self-censorship," said Carel Hofstra, Acting Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Liana Sayadyan, the editor of the



compilation, added: "It is important to raise awareness about the significance of media freedom. There is no complete data available on violence against journalists and slander, personal insult and defamation cases involving journalists in Armenia, but this compilation should be useful to judges reviewing such cases, to journalists and to those filing lawsuits."

The publication is part of the OSCE Office work to promote freedom of the media in Armenia.

## Commentaries to Armenian Constitution published

A collection of scientific and practical commentaries to the Armenian Constitution was presented at the National Arts Gallery of Armenia on 16 June as this year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Constitution and the Constitutional Court.

The publication, made possible with the support of the OSCE Office in Yerevan and Germany's Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ Armenia), was elaborated by 68 Armenian legal experts, lawyers and scholars. It provides interpretations of the fundamental values of the Armenian Constitution, as well as the constitutional and legal nature of its goals and principles.

The book offers guidance and practical examples of the Constitutional Court rulings that should be applied by the country's state institutions, courts, lawyers and other relevant parties in their daily work; it could be also useful for the public in general.

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan were among those attending the event that brought together representatives from state bodies, scientific institutions, the civil society organizations, foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations.

## Other publications

### *Study on religious tolerance in Armenia*

The study was conducted in 2009 by the Collaboration for Democracy Centre NGO, with the support of the OSCE Office. The report includes interviews, review and analysis of press, reports and studies, analysis of legislation and recommendations to the authorities.

### *Manuals on how to register a business in Armenia and small and medium enterprise (SME) support programmes*

The updated version of a guide on how to register businesses in Armenia and the reference book on support programmes for small and medium enterprises are a part of the Office's attempts to support business owners, policy makers and business associations in expanding the SME sector.

### *A guide and a brochure on the rights of detained, arrested and convicted persons*

These two publications have been elaborated and updated by the Civil Society Institute NGO. The publications aim to serve as a source of reference and guidance for the staff of penitentiary and detention facilities and to provide the persons deprived of their liberty with detailed information on their rights.

### *Manual on combating human trafficking*

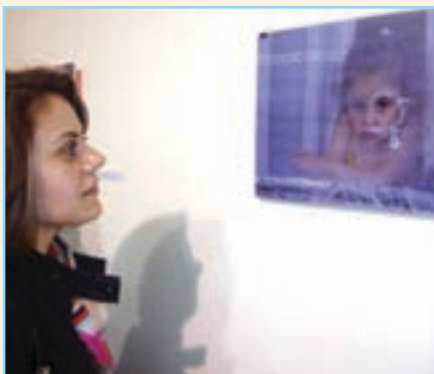
The manual examines international and national legal frameworks, methods of prevention and victim protection, challenges in investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases and is designed to train prosecutors, police, judges, border guards and labour inspectors. The book was developed jointly by the OSCE, the International Labour Organization and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

### *A survey on the awareness of labour rights and the role of trade unions among youth*

The aim of the research is to form a framework for discussion on labour rights and employment issues. It also aims to promote awareness of labour rights among Armenian youth and to increase the role of trade unions in promoting these rights for better working conditions for the Armenian youth.

## EXHIBITIONS/CONTESTS

## Photo exhibition in Yerevan marks World Press Freedom Day



'Freedom of Press: the Right to Know' photo exhibition to mark the World Press Freedom Day opened in Yerevan on 3 May.

The one-week event was organized by the Freedom of Information Centre of Armenia, a non-governmental organization, in co-operation with the OSCE Office in Yerevan and the UN Department of Public Information, and was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The exhibition on free speech and information featured more than 30 photos selected from among 300 submitted.

Free access to information is a key to the respect of human dignity and it enables citizens to take an active part in public life as well as exercise their other human rights. This exhibition is a good opportunity to highlight these issues and stimulate discussion.

Journalists, representatives of state institutions and the civil society attended the opening ceremony.

Shushan Doydoyan of the Freedom of Information Centre said that the exhibition was special since everyone - journalists and professional photographers in particular - were invited to present their work illustrating freedom of information and freedom of expression. "These basic rights are intrinsically linked to freedom of press, which in turn contributes to strengthening democratization, good governance and human development," she added.

### *About the OSCE*

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity** and **democracy** in its 56 participating States through political dialogue on shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan was established in 2000 to assist Armenia in the implementation of its OSCE commitments in all three aspects of security: politico-military, economic and environmental and the human dimension.

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