

“Taza Koom” High-Level Forum 11 June 2017
Speech Ambassador Pierre von Arx

Note: short version (underlined text) has been delivered

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General,

Ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel extremely delighted and privileged to attend this very important event today. I would also like to express my gratitude to the organizers for offering me the opportunity to address you and present the related work of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek.

But first of all, allow me to commend this exceptional initiative of the Kyrgyz authorities, setting the ambitious and very well-conceived goal to transform the country into a better place for its citizens. I view the today’s high-level forum not as a launching event but as a call for action, issued by the Kyrgyz Government both domestically and to the international partners. “Taza Koom” initiative is an act of national leadership, which is setting the agenda and would effectively direct efforts and resources of all interested actors at home and abroad.

The work of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek over the years reflected our strong commitment to support the Kyrgyz Republic, by engaging in productive partnerships with governmental agencies and civil society actors. We have been and will continue to be a helpful and loyal partner to the Kyrgyz Republic, actively engaging in building a comfortable and secure living for all its citizens.

A general principle guiding our work is the commitment to deliver high quality support, services and expertise to the Kyrgyz Republic, which is based on a strengthened partnership with the host government. This fundamental idea has been re-emphasized in our new mandate, which was elaborated recently through an effective interaction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All our work is planned, delivered and assessed in close co-operation with our governmental beneficiaries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Office has explored a comprehensive approach in providing capacity building and top expertise to our Kyrgyz partners through our three-dimensional framework. Keeping in mind the goal of improving the lives of people of Kyrgyzstan, the Office has been working in the area of economic and environmental support, human security, as well as political-military dimension.

In the next few minutes I intend to share concrete examples of our work in support of Kyrgyz Republic, which captured the spirit of the “Taza Koom” initiative. Following this, I will present to

your attention the avenues that the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek would be able to pursue in partnership with the governmental agencies, in order to further advance the “Taza Koom” goals.

Office’s past and ongoing work

One of our flagship projects has been conducted in close partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office, aiming to improve the business environment in the country. Launched in 2014 as a multi-year initiative, our “Strengthening the Regulatory Governance” project has been operating based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the Kyrgyz Government and the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek.

Its main aims were to assist the Kyrgyz authorities’ efforts in establishing a competitive business environment and strengthen regulatory mechanisms. A key emphasis of the project was placed on the implementation of the regulatory simplification mechanism known as “Regulatory Guillotine”, which identifies duplications and conflicting provisions in the legislative framework. Another emphasis is on integrating the project’s Regulatory Impact Assessment into the policy and decision-making processes.

The underlying logic of this project is that a simplified and streamlined legal framework that regulates economic activities would stimulate market-driven growth, create a favourable investment climate, and reduce opportunities for corruption and conflict of interests. Indeed, the full implementation of the project is expected to reduce compliance costs for business by an estimated \$14 million per year, which is equivalent to two per cent of small and medium enterprises output in 2016. The project would also make significant contributions towards further improving the Kyrgyz Republic’s ranking in the “Ease of doing business” index.

Along with these activities, the Office also made significant contributions to the Kyrgyz authorities’ efforts addressing corruption and financial crime, as well as increasing transparency, effectiveness and accountability in public administration. In particular, I would like to emphasize the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek work in assisting Kyrgyzstan to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism. Following these efforts, the Kyrgyz Republic was removed in 2014 from the Financial Action Task Force “Grey List” and eventually from the “Monitoring List” of the Eurasian Group on Combatting Money Laundering. These improvements kept the country safe against international restrictions to the national financial industry, but also contributed to raising the ease of doing business in Kyrgyzstan.

We all understand that many good initiatives may lose momentum if the facilitating legal framework is unable to function at its maximum efficiency. Our Office has partnered with Kyrgyz Government’s agencies to strengthen the legal framework and the rule of law. In particular, we offered support to the on-going efforts of reforming the criminal justice system at the national level, as part of the wider justice reform. Our contribution included assistance in developing the criminal justice-related legislation and delivering the needed capacity-building to the involved state institutions.

Another venue of effective co-operation with the governmental agencies is our support to the General Prosecutor Office’s efforts to develop an electronic unified registry of crimes and offences. The required system is expected to absorb and contain information about each case, starting from the initiation of criminal proceedings till sentencing, including the monitoring of the investigation. The

availability of complete and accurate information should allow visualizing the real picture in the sphere of criminal justice and explore preventive measures to combat crimes.

Of a significant relevance in the presidential elections year, is that the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek made valuable contributions to the host Government's efforts to improve the electoral system, through the introduction of new voting technologies and the improvement of electoral legislation. We also supported the establishment of the electronic learning platform that should allow an effective training of the election commission members at all levels. Electronic training courses on electoral legislation, electoral disputes, learning for voters, and administering local elections have been developed. The Office has been promoting the establishment of an e-training platform at the Central Electoral Commission, which is a supplementary tool representing a very sustainable and cost-effective training method.

Very much in line with the spirit and goals of “Taza Koom”, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek assisted the State Registration Service to transition from a paper-based identification system towards a digital one. This contributes to meeting the respective target of the Sustainable Development Goals that indicates the need to achieve “legal identity for all, including birth registration”. Any new system may bring with its benefits a set of risks – the Office has been working with the State Registration Service to address and mitigate those. In particular, our international experts shared expertise and consulted the governmental beneficiary on the relevant measures in European countries that created proper conditions for the introduction and establishment of an effective electronic passport system.

As a pilot initiative, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek supported in 2016 a project on improving municipal services delivery in the Issyk Kul province. The goal of this work is to contribute towards an increased transparency and accountability in public administration, and facilitate the implementation of the national public service legislation. In addition to this, the project aims at supporting the local authorities in contributing towards the establishment of country-wide e-government facilities.

Ways forward – some examples

These reflections are aimed to give you just a small flavour of the work that our Office has been doing jointly with our governmental and non-governmental partners in Kyrgyzstan. I would now like to share with you our ideas on how the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek could support the goals and aims of the “Taza Koom” initiative.

We will continue our strong interaction with the partner agencies in the Kyrgyz Government to establish an accurate understanding of the existing needs and priorities of the host country's authorities. However, based on our existing communication, we already could see a contour of our potential interaction in support of the “Taza Koom” state project.

We are ready to continue supporting and build upon our work in the area of Regulatory Reform. The project has been delivering considerable added value to the efforts of the Council supervising the regulatory reform under the auspices of the Prime Minister. Considering the aims and approaches of the “Taza Koom” initiative, this regulatory reform work represents a harmonious element that could organically be incorporated into the overall “Taza Koom” strategy.

Taza Koom aspires to be inclusive of all people of Kyrgyzstan, I cannot avoid emphasizing the importance of supporting the Kyrgyz Government's efforts at the level of grass-roots, but also at the local administration level. It is in this spirit of that the Office will be co-ordinating with our governmental partners a set of activities to be conducted in the interest of regional governmental agencies, aimed at promoting economic good governance. The Office will support them in shaping the delivery of public services for the years to come, and in line with the Government's plan to fight corruption by adopting e-governance models. This would be, in our view, another contribution of ours to the "Taza Koom" strategic goal of reducing administrative costs, reducing the bureaucratic barriers, improving the effectiveness of local public administrations, and ensuring an effective centre-periphery synergy.

We stand also ready to support the creation of business centres in cities in the provinces

Our intention is also to continue supporting the State Registration Service in its work of establishing the Unified Population Registry, operating in a transparent manner, and complying with international standards. In particular, I am referring to the imperative of respecting the citizens' privacy rights by securing arrangements for data protection and a strengthened public service delivery.

Continuing our partnership towards developing the Electronic Data Base for Crime Registration is another priority of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek. In strong partnership with the General Prosecutor's Office we will be supporting the establishment of the electronic system, first in a pilot region and then upgrading it. We envisage our additional role in providing specialized trainings for the law enforcement bodies, to be delivered by international experts. Another avenue is making available to the relevant Kyrgyz law enforcement staff the existing best practices in the field, with the support of the developers and advanced users of the explored electronic system.

An additional promising venue of co-operation with the Kyrgyz Government, that the Office envisages exploring is the tackling of cybersecurity challenges. Together with the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, we would be discussing this option with the interested governmental agencies. Along with fighting cybercrime, some other relevant areas of joint work also include contributing to the consolidation of technical capacities of Kyrgyz law enforcement to combat crime, drug trafficking, and countering terrorism. These are areas of critical importance, given that no effective economic and political development can be conducted in an insecure environment.

Finally, one more critical principle guiding our partnership with the Kyrgyz Government is our commitment to a "smart", knowledge-based approach. It is in line with this concept that we envisage to support the establishment and operation of advanced analytic and think-tank capabilities for the Kyrgyz leadership. The OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek has had preliminary discussions with the interested agencies in this regard, and we will continue exploring this venue, under the framework marked by the "Taza Koom" initiative.

Thank you for your kind attention.