

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Chairmanship engages Central Asia in direct dialogue on democratization

Completing a whirlwind trip through Central Asia from 6 to 11 July, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, said that he hoped the personal contacts established with the Presidents and Foreign Ministers of the four countries visited would help translate the Chairmanship's priority focus on Central Asia into intensified activity and co-operation.

The CiO acknowledged that, with no tradition of democratic institutions in these countries, much work was needed to bring about the required reforms and progress was sometimes slow. But, he said, "The OSCE must remain committed, because all the countries have signed up to the same values and principles."

The Central Asian countries were faced with serious problems and challenges not only in the economic and security areas, but also in terms of good governance, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and freedom of the press, Minister de Hoop Scheffer said. "The need to keep up the dialogue on all these issues is beyond doubt. There is no alternative."

The journey took the Foreign Minister to the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and



OSCE/Alexander Nitzsche

The Chairman-in-Office listening to the concerns of a group of citizens in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan for the first time in his capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office. In an earlier visit to Ashgabad, in March, he had held discussions with Turkmenistan's President Saparmurat Niyazov.

The talks focused on stepping up and improving efforts to counter terrorism, organized crime and trafficking. "Fighting an effective battle against the threat of terrorism is of great importance not only for that region but for the OSCE as a whole," the CiO said, stressing, however, that this should not come at the expense of respect for basic democratic and human rights. The Minister also made a plea for a moratorium on the death penalty and the ratification of the

United Nations treaty against torture.

In Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, demonstrators seized the opportunity of the CiO's visit to make known the people's concerns and demands relating to the situation in their countries and the role of the OSCE.

Highlighting the importance of the region's civil society and non-governmental sectors, the CiO said that their sometimes "distinctly critical tone" should be considered a positive sign. "They can make a valuable contribution to the dialogue which is needed for the transition to a pluralist society firmly rooted in the principles of democracy and good governance," he remarked.

A Central Asian chronicle

On the road with the Chairman-in-Office

By Alexander Nitzsche

It is no secret that the official trips of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO) are hardly laid-back affairs. Still, there is nothing like immersing yourself in the gruelling, high-energy pace of these events to appreciate the valuable role of face-to-face diplomacy at the highest political levels. We covered more than 13,000 kms in six days and were airborne for a total of 23 hours, crossing four time zones. Our longest stop was in Kyrgyzstan, where we stayed two nights, and our shortest in Tajikistan, where we arrived and departed on the same day. As we zipped in and out of airports and appointments, I wondered whether my fellow travellers – diplomats and journalists who made up the entourage of the CiO – had known what to expect.

Sunday, 6 July:

The Netherlands to Kazakhstan

10.00 Central European Time (CET in summertime is GMT +2 hrs): The Netherlands

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, arrives at the runway of the Valkenburg military airport, after a 20-minute ride from The Hague. A Fokker 70 is waiting to transport us to four countries in Central Asia. I learn that the Fokker is one of the official planes of the Netherlands Government and is also used by the Royal Family.

The CiO's delegation includes representatives from the European Commission and the incoming Bulgarian chairmanship, Dutch diplomatic staff, a member of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, seven Dutch journalists and several security staff. Information kits on the countries in the itinerary are handed out.

23.50 (CET plus 5 hours): Almaty, Kazakhstan

Nearly nine-and-a-half hours later, including a brief stopover at Moscow's

Sheremetyevo airport for refuelling, the official plane arrives in Almaty – around 20.00 according to my body clock but four hours later, local time. It's a rather rough touchdown, but is followed by a friendly reception by the staff of the OSCE Centre in Almaty.

After stepping onto a small oriental carpet, the delegation is whisked off to the official motorcade: half a dozen black limousines with tinted windows. The journalists join the convoy in an official bus. We are escorted by police cars with flashing lights, sirens and loudspeakers, a scene to be repeated in the other countries. It is not as hot as I expected, but it is already midnight after all.

1.00: Hotel Hyatt Regency, Almaty

At the hotel, a giant structure modelled on the Central Asian *Yurta* (tent), the CiO receives his first briefing by the staff of the OSCE Centre, led by the new Head of Mission, Ambassador Anton Rupnik from Slovenia.



Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan

Monday, 7 July: Kazakhstan

9.15: Almaty

Minister de Hoop Scheffer is briefed on the day's sessions. Meanwhile, the Dutch journalists meet representatives of a local non-governmental organization (NGO), which is seeking to provide legal

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protection to journalists who have found themselves in conflict with the law over their critical reporting – a growing problem in Kazakhstan, according to the NGO.

10.00: Regent Almaty Hotel

The CiO meets Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister, Kasymzhomart Tokayev. Outside the meeting room, security staff speak into their mini-walkie-talkies on their wrists, and some two dozen journalists wait for the two Ministers to emerge from their talks.

11.00: Presidential palace, Almaty

The Netherlands delegation proceeds to a meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the Presidential palace, an imposing white-marble cube set in the middle of a sprawling park. The central hall is dominated by an eye-catching painting of President Nazarbayev striking an equestrian pose.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Priorities of the Netherlands Chairmanship
- ✓ Regional security and the OSCE's role
- ✓ Three new laws being drafted, dealing with the situation of NGOs, the electoral process and mass media
- ✓ Several individual cases of human rights violations. The CiO stresses the importance of fair trial and due process.

12.15

The CiO and the journalists go off to separate working lunches – Minister de Hoop Scheffer with the Ambassadors of participating States in Kazakhstan, the media with some of their local colleagues.

15.00-17.00: OSCE Centre in Almaty

Both groups, the journalists and the Netherlands delegation, meet again at the OSCE Centre, a white match-box building, which is also home to the United Nations in Kazakhstan. In two succeeding meetings, NGO representatives and political parties present their views on the situation in the country. The

meetings get off to a slow start but the debate becomes livelier as a candid exchange of opinions ensues.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Good governance
- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Freedom of the media
- ✓ Legislation dealing with NGOs
- ✓ Human rights cases
- ✓ Economic and environmental dimension. Officials say Kazakhstan would like to open its markets, and stress their country's role as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

17.15: Press Club, Almaty

Minister de Hoop Scheffer and Ambassador Rupnik hold a press conference. The room feels like a sauna, what with the crowd and camera lights. As always during these visits, the media are present in large numbers, despite the long wait.

18.30: Departure for Uzbekistan

18.00 (Almaty time minus 2 hours, equals CET plus 3 hours): Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Due to the clock change, the delegation arrives before its departure time. Despite the evening breeze, it is even hotter than in Almaty.

Tuesday, 8 July:

Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan

9.15: Outside the OSCE Centre in Tashkent

The day is supposed to begin at the OSCE Centre with a briefing for the Dutch journalists by a representative of the local office of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Upon arrival, however, the journalists are quickly distracted by some 30 demonstrators silently holding up banners and pictures of friends and family members, alleged victims of human rights violations.

Minister de Hoop Scheffer arrives just as the journalists are interviewing some of the demonstrators and walks up to the group to find out what their concerns are. The Moscow-based reporter of Dutch national radio translates the Cyril-

lic text on the banners. The Minister listens attentively, saying he will take up their grievances in his meetings with Uzbek officials.

9.45: OSCE Centre in Tashkent

The CiO meets representatives of Uzbekistan's NGOs and political parties. Among the participants are members of the Legal Aid Society, Mothers Against Death Penalty and Torture, and *Istigbolli Avlod* (Generation of the Future).

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Rule of law
- ✓ Trafficking in human beings
- ✓ Human rights cases
- ✓ Moratorium on death penalty

11.00: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tashkent

The delegation leaves the OSCE Centre. The peaceful protest group is still there. The CiO gets into his limousine for a meeting with Uzbek Foreign Minister Sodiq Safayev. Inside the Foreign Ministry, journalists, photographers and camera crews are already waiting.

At their joint press conference, the CiO and the Uzbek Foreign Minister cover the following issues:

- ✓ Combating new threats, such as terrorism and trafficking
- ✓ The need for a balanced approach in all three OSCE dimensions
- ✓ Human rights issues, including:
 - Freedom of religion and ratification of relevant UN instruments
 - A second visit to Uzbekistan by Theo van Boven, United Nations Special Rapporteur Against Torture. The CiO says: "Starting from the idea that all OSCE states have subscribed to OSCE values, and that they share the common OSCE roof, I have made an appeal to both the President and Foreign Minister Safayev to start implementing the recommendations

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of the van Boven report” [issued in December 2002]. Minister de Hoop Scheffer presents Minister Safayev with a list of several individuals alleged to have been subjected to torture, saying that he would await a response from the Government.

- Changes in human rights legislation

12.30: Restaurant in Tashkent

The Dutch journalists meet several local media representatives at La Caravane, which boasts not only excellent local cuisine but also an air conditioner that must have been an aeroplane turbine in a former life. It functions flawlessly – thankfully, as temperatures rise to 40 degrees.

14.30: Hotel Intercontinental, Tashkent

The CiO briefs the Dutch journalists on his discussions with Uzbek officials.

16.00: Hotel Intercontinental

Minister de Hoop Scheffer meets Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Elyor Ganiev, who is also Chairman of the Agency for Foreign Economic Relations.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Uzbekistan’s goal to join the World Trade Organization
- ✓ Regional trade issues and their links to security and stability in Central Asia
- ✓ Further steps to liberalize Uzbekistan’s market

17.00: Presidential palace, Tashkent

As in the other Central Asian states, the Presidential palace in Uzbekistan is shielded by three different security teams, each requiring a thorough check of passports, equipment, clothing, and cross-checking of names of visitors. The cube-shaped (again) building, of grey-white marble, is surrounded by greenery.

A wall with a forest painted on it covers the view of a factory.

The CiO and his team arrive for a meeting with Uzbek President Islam Karimov. Hand-picked photographers and television crews have been waiting for hours in an ante-chamber for the traditional handshake-cum-photo opportunity. The discussions last more than two hours.

The Dutch journalists are rewarded for their patience with a visit to a local artisans market, where they buy Uzbek handicrafts.



With Uzbek President Islam Karimov

19.30: Uzbek Foreign Minister’s guesthouse, Tashkent

The day concludes with a packed press conference and a dinner reception with the key representatives of Uzbekistan’s religious and civilian sectors.

20.00:

Departure for Tashkent airport, where the plane takes off for Kyrgyzstan

23.50: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Tashkent time plus 1 hour, equals CET plus 4 hours)

Touchdown at Manas airport. Temperatures in Bishkek are more moderate, since the city – still often referred to as Frunze – lies 800 metres above sea level.

Wednesday, 9 July:

Kyrgyzstan

10.00: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bishkek

The CiO meets Kyrgyzstan’s First Deputy Foreign Minister, Talant Kushchubekov. For ten minutes, the meeting is open to the press, with half a dozen local cameramen and photographers clicking

away. Then, the media, including the Dutch journalists, are ushered out and driven by bus to the Presidential palace.

12.15: Presidential palace

The so-called “White House”, the site of all governmental offices, is right in the city centre, close to the national museum and a grandiose Lenin statue towering over an almost deserted square. The Dutch journalists arrive two hours too early for the meeting of the CiO with Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, but use the time for an interview with his spokesperson. After a five-minute photo shoot, the officials take their seats around a huge oval table garnished with an impressive flower arrangement. The official meeting has started.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Regional security issues
- ✓ Netherlands Chairmanship’s priorities
- ✓ Prolongation of the moratorium on the death penalty
- ✓ Rule of law and the further strengthening of democratic society, including the integration of national minorities and freedom of media
- ✓ OSCE Academy
- ✓ OSCE police training programme



With Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev

13.30

Following their meeting with President Akaev, the Dutch journalists leave for a working lunch with Kyrgyz journalists.

14.15: OSCE Centre in Bishkek

Arriving at the OSCE Centre for a meeting with representatives of Kyrgyz NGOs and political parties, the CiO

encounters a small but vocal group of demonstrators. This time, the group is concerned about some of the OSCE's activities in Kyrgyzstan, specifically the new police training programme.

After several minutes in the OSCE building, Minister de Hoop Scheffer steps out to converse with the demonstrators. When they refuse to join the meeting inside to discuss their criticism in more detail, the Minister expresses his disappointment and starts the scheduled discussions in the Centre without the groups.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ OSCE police reform project. The CiO says: "I am aware that criticism exists about the involvement of the OSCE in this type of activity, but I believe that this is based on the lack of – and incomplete – information about the programme. A democratic society deserves a responsible and responsive police force."
- ✓ New constitution
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Good governance
- ✓ Ombudsman
- ✓ Amendments to media law

16.30: Manas airbase, near Bishkek

The delegation and the Dutch journalists complete the day with a visit to the Manas airbase, where Dutch troops are stationed in support of the Netherlands' military contingent based in Afghanistan. While the Minister is meeting the Dutch officers, an American officer takes the Dutch journalists around the base, ending at "Tent City", the soldiers' quarters. Several F-16 fighter planes gleam in the sun. "They have seen action, you better believe it," the officer explains. At the local hang-out, Pablo's Beach Club, the journalists are joined by the Minister, who goes around shaking hands and accepts a drink in a plastic cup.

Thursday, 10 July: Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan via Uzbekistan

4.30: Hotel Hyatt Regency, Bishkek

The delegation gathers at the hotel lobby, where fresh orange juice and hot coffee are waiting. Luggage piles up on armchairs and sofas. There is yawning all around.

5.00

The convoy of cars arrives at the hotel to bring the delegation back to the Manas airport, where the Fokker crew is doing final checks to make sure that all systems are clear and enough bread rolls are on board. A faint sunrise turns the darkness into a dusty morning grey.

6.00: Manas airport, Bishkek

The plane takes off for Termez, Uzbekistan, from where Jaap Hoop de Scheffer, now in his function as Netherlands Foreign Minister, will board a military plane for a day's visit to Kabul, Afghanistan.

Friday, 11 July: Afghanistan to Tajikistan via Uzbekistan and back to the Netherlands

9.00: Termez airport, Uzbekistan (Bishkek time minus 1 hour, equals CET plus 3 hours)

The Foreign Minister and his delegation arrive back safely from Kabul. The sun has hardly risen, and it is already unbearably hot in Termez, which is only 300 metres above sea level. The tarmac looks as if it is about to melt. The group quickly transfers to the air-conditioned comfort of the official plane, bound for Dushanbe, the Tajik capital.

9.50: Dushanbe, Tajikistan (same time zone as Termez)

After a short flight, the plane touches down in Dushanbe, where the 35-degree weather brings no relief.

A small delegation welcomes the visitors. Tajikistan's Foreign Minister, Talbak Nazarov, walks over to the plane for a hearty handshake with the CiO. The OSCE team is led by the new Head of Mission, Ambassador Yves Bargain from France. A ten-car motorcade drives the guests to the palace of President Emomali Rahmonov.

Topics discussed:

- ✓ Regional co-operation. The CiO says: "The opening of borders is the only way to achieve long-term regional stability, but at the same time, it requires effective instruments to combat terrorism and international crime, such as trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings."
- ✓ Death penalty. Expressing his appreciation to the Tajik authorities for their decision to abolish the death penalty for women, the CiO adds that he has asked the authorities to go further. "Much work remains to be done in the area of rule of law, improving political party registration and establishing an independent judiciary as well as free and objective media," he says.
- ✓ Changes in the constitution
- ✓ De-mining activities

OSCE/Alexander Nitzsche



With Tajik President Emomali Rahmonov

12:00: Dushanbe airport

Departure for the Netherlands

18.15 CET: Schiphol airport, Amsterdam

The Fokker touches down at Schiphol, after a long descent during which the CiO takes over the co-pilot seat. After his farewells to his fellow travellers, he is whisked away again in his car to his next appointment. The sun is breaking through the clouds. At 16 degrees, the temperatures are just about half of what they were in Central Asia – but would soon catch up.

Alexander Nitzsche is a Press and Public Information Officer in the OSCE Secretariat.

OSCE launches police assistance programme in Kyrgyzstan

By Richard Murphy



OSCE Centre in Bishkek/Bolot Djiusunov

Jocelyne Lacourt, Operational Programme Manager, raises the OSCE flag over the new OSCE Police Assistance Programme Office in Bishkek. Joining her are, left to right: Richard Monk, Senior Police Adviser; Shamshybek Mamyrrov, National Programme Officer; General Ushimov, Head of the Kyrgyz Police Academy; and Ambassador Aydin Idil, Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek

BISHKEK

The OSCE launched a comprehensive police assistance programme for Kyrgyzstan in August, the Organization's first such venture in Central Asia after several years of building up its policing expertise in south-eastern Europe.

Ambassador Aydin Idil, Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, and the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Nikolai Tanaev, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 7 August for an eight-point programme ranging from the introduction of community policing to strengthening the emergency response capacity of the police.

"This is a first step in establishing a dynamic and transparent partnership between the OSCE and the police of Kyrgyzstan," Ambassador Idil said.

The programme includes an element

relating to public disorder, which attracted some controversy in Kyrgyzstan because some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) feared it could mean the OSCE would assist the authorities in repressing legitimate dissent.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, acknowledged these concerns when he visited Kyrgyzstan several weeks before the Memorandum of Understanding was signed.

After discussing the concerns of NGO representatives relating solely to that point, the CiO said: "I am aware that criticism exists about the involvement of the OSCE in this type of activity, but I believe that this is based on the lack of, and on incomplete, information about the programme. A democratic society deserves a responsible and responsive

police force. This is a good programme and we're going to back it."

Minister de Hoop Scheffer welcomed the inclusion of NGOs in a council overseeing the programme.

The OSCE's Senior Police Adviser, Richard Monk, who is head of the Strategic Police Matters Unit in Vienna, also met NGOs and gave numerous media interviews to explain that the public order part of the programme is intended to improve police capacity to control crowds peacefully and prevent disorder.

"People have a right to protest peacefully," he said. "We will say to the police, 'This is how we suggest you manage demonstrations to prevent them turning violent. If violence does occur, these are the tactics you should use to quell it, using no more force than is necessary'."

"Reforming police culture is not about police officers from 'west of Vienna' trying to impose our ideas," Mr. Monk said. "It's very much about saying, 'Learn from the mistakes of other countries', and pointing to recognized best practices."

The programme, headed in Bishkek by Jocelyne Lacourt, a French police sergeant, is initially scheduled to run for 18 months but Richard Monk hopes that will be just a prelude to a much longer engagement. "It's a programme of police assistance, not projects," he said. "We want sustainable programmes of development."

Other OSCE participating States, confronting common problems such as terrorism, organized crime, drugs and political and religious extremism, are interested in making use of the OSCE's policing expertise.

The 2001 OSCE Ministerial Council agreed to enhance the OSCE's role in police-related activities in the fields of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Mr. Monk stressed that police assistance to OSCE participating States does not take place in isolation. “We don’t go in alone,” he said. “Judicial reform, penal reform, reform of the prosecution service – all of these are very important too. We also find out who else is doing what and, if possible, join up our own work with theirs. The OSCE also has other strengths on the ground which other organizations just don’t possess.”

A central goal is to create a constructive partnership between the police and the population. The community-policing project, in particular, will lead to the creation of a police/public consultative com-

mittee, involving civil action groups that will jointly define priorities for focusing police resources.

The Government will include two representatives selected by NGOs in the State Commission on Police Reform while the Executive Steering Committee responsible for implementing the Police Assistance Programme will also have two representatives selected by NGOs.

Richard Monk, a former Scotland Yard commander and United Nations Police Commissioner in Bosnia and Herzegovina, says the current focus on combating global terrorism has strengthened the need to improve policing.

Perpetrators of terrorist attacks are often caught by good, painstaking detective work rather than by military action, he says. A police force that is trusted by the community it is supposed to serve receives a much better flow of valuable information from the public, helping it to catch criminals.

“The need for good, professional and skilled policing never goes away,” Mr. Monk said.

Richard Murphy is OSCE Spokesperson/ Head of Press and Public Information in the Secretariat.

Responding to real policing needs

The police assistance programme for Kyrgyzstan was developed at the request of the Government and will be run in co-operation with the Interior Ministry.

It follows a detailed needs assessment during which OSCE police experts held consultations with their counterparts in Kyrgyzstan.

The full programme comprises:

- ✓ introducing community policing methods as a pilot project in the Per-vomaisky police district of Bishkek;
- ✓ strengthening the Kyrgyz Police Academy for police recruits and refresher courses;
- ✓ improving the quality of police investigations;
- ✓ improving police capacity for drug interdiction;

- ✓ setting up the core of a national criminal information analysis system;
- ✓ strengthening police capacity to prevent conflict and manage public disorder;
- ✓ providing a radio-communications system for the criminal police;
- ✓ strengthening the emergency response capacity with a modern and efficient emergency call response centre.

Central Asia’s prison personnel go to summer school

Pilot programme promotes inter-regional co-operation

By Birgit Kainz

“Give me a very modern high-security prison with badly educated staff and we will have an insecure prison,” a former official of Sweden’s prison system once said. “But give me an old prison with outdated security equipment and well-trained and motivated staff and we will have a secure prison.” This was the overarching concept behind a new initiative to upgrade the operational skills of the

region’s prison personnel, with the support of the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Centre in Almaty.

Pavlodar airport, 19 July

Twenty-one prison administrators and three representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) arrive on different flights in this city of 350,000, in

north-eastern Kazakhstan. The 24 visitors have flown in from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to take part in the first Summer School of Pavlodar’s Prison Staff College. The special 10-day programme, supported by the OSCE, has been designed to help the administrators improve the way they manage the facilities under their care.

“Putting us together to upgrade our



Prison administrators from four Central Asian countries map out a strategy for improving their detention facilities

managerial skills is an ideal way of carrying out practical inter-regional co-operation since we all share a similar legacy and face similar challenges,” says a Kyrgyz participant. “We are all struggling with the same issues. Our laws need to be overhauled to allow us to handle criminal offences more effectively. We also rely too much on custody before and after trials. These are just some of the factors that lead to the overcrowding of our prisons.”

Another participant, from Tajikistan, adds: “After the Soviet Union broke up, most countries in Central Asia lost access to the institutions responsible for educating prison staff. Training courses for prison personnel became irregular and could no longer cover the needs of the full range of staff categories.”

The good news is that all the countries represented at the Summer School are in the midst of setting up training centres. This promising development

reflects a more determined political will for genuine prison reform on the part of national and local authorities and a greater wish to understand the impact of prison systems on society.

The Prison Staff College in Pavlodar has had a head start. Since 2001, the ODIHR, the OSCE Centre in Almaty and partner organizations have been joining forces to build up the College into the country’s main education centre for prison specialists.

The sustained series of events and activities has yielded results: the Summer School was an occasion for the College’s committed team of trainers to apply new methods that encourage participants to challenge traditional and ineffective practices and procedures, with human rights considerations and international standards occupying centre stage.

The Summer School is part of a string of initiatives that trace their roots back to 1999, when officials decided to mobilize

efforts to turn Kazakhstan’s penitentiary system around with the help of the ODIHR. A major breakthrough was achieved last year when prison administration was entrusted to civilian hands by transferring it from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Justice Ministry.

But this was far from the only achievement. In a statement issued to the press on 22 May, ODIHR Director Christian Strohal welcomed the country’s commitment to liberalize its criminal policy.

He said that since the adoption of new legislation in December 2002, the country’s prison population – per capita one of the highest in the world – had fallen from 66,000 to 58,000, according to official figures. The legal amendments had decriminalized certain offences, introduced alternatives to custody, reduced prison terms and broadened possibilities for early release. The attitude of personnel towards the inmates had improved,

and upgraded facilities were helping reduce cases of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

[See article in the *OSCE Newsletter*, September, 2002, "Humanizing Kazakhstan's prisons", by Piotr Posmakov, Chairman of the country's Penitentiary Committee, which was responsible for the turnaround in the prison system, with support from the OSCE and NGOs such as Penal Reform International.]

The first Summer School's lectures and discussions covered topics ranging from Europe's penal history and the variety of approaches to penitentiary systems, to psychological sensitivities in prisons. Participants debated the abolition of the death penalty and its implications for prison systems.

The group listened with interest to a representative of a Kazakh NGO who explained how the country's civil society had been brought closer to the penal process in such areas as monitoring prison conditions to guard against human rights abuses.

"It struck me how citizen groups can actually serve as partners of governments," a prison administrator remarked. "They can actually make certain that prisons meet international standards and that they fulfil their function of protecting citizens from criminal elements."

The group visited detention centres in Pavlodar and its surroundings and evaluated conditions on the spot, guided by international norms. The programme concluded with participants comparing

national legislation and day-to-day practices with international standards.

Pavlodor airport, 30 July

As the three sets of passengers board separate flights for home, "See you at the next Summer School!" is heard everywhere. It is obvious that there is nothing like a gathering of specialists who speak a common language to transcend borders.

Birgit Kainz is Rule of Law Co-ordinator for Central Asia in ODIHR, which has been implementing projects on prison reform throughout the OSCE area since the end of the 1990s. She is based in Almaty.

In related news ...

Almaty: Journalists awarded for educating public on death penalty issues

Four Kazakhstani journalists were honoured at a special ceremony in Almaty on 11 August for their outstanding contribution to the public debate on the need for a moratorium on the country's death penalty.

Sergey Ponomarev of the Khabar Agency and satellite TV Channel Caspionet, Evgeniy Cherkashin and Julia Chernyavskaya of the *Ustinka Plus* newspaper, and Alexander Gabchenko of Channel 31 were the winners of a competition for the best journalistic work dealing with the death penalty issue.

The winners and participants received cash awards. The competition was organized by the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Centre in Almaty and the Penal Reform International office in Central Asia. The panel of judges included representatives of the Justice Ministry.

Almaty: Life imprisonment issues examined at international conference

Standards and practices relating to life imprisonment were discussed at a conference in Almaty on 23 and 24 June. Most of the ex-Soviet states have abolished the death penalty, and issues surrounding life imprisonment are currently being widely debated.

Topics included the required legislative amendments,

international standards and practices in the treatment of prisoners for life, psychosocial rehabilitation and security issues.

The event was organized by the OSCE Centre in Almaty, Penal Reform International, Kazakhstan's International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, and the Justice Ministry, with financial support from the Netherlands.

Dushanbe: Roundtable discusses role of NGOs in reforming Tajik prison system

The crucial role of non-governmental organizations in Tajikistan's efforts to reform its prisons was the focus of an OSCE roundtable in Dushanbe on 30 July. The event gathered 90 participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, including experts from the Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The aim was to help NGOs strengthen their activities to ensure that the penal system implements more humane laws according to internationally agreed norms and standards. Several participants welcomed Tajikistan's initiatives to demonstrate greater transparency in this area.

The event was organized by the OSCE/ODIHR, the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe and the Office of Corrective Affairs in the Tajik Justice Ministry.

ODIHR September calendar

2-3 September Expert workshop on *Draft Law on Ombudsman*. Yerevan, Armenia

2-5 September Election Section's working visit to Moscow in view of December elections to Russian Federation's State Duma

6 September Roundtable on *National Action Plan Against Torture*. Tbilisi, Georgia

6 to 7 September OSCE Human Rights Weekend, Tashkent: Reunion of NGOs and Uzbek government officials trained in monitoring and reporting by ODIHR and OSCE Centre in Tashkent to assess needs and plan future activities

9 to 11 September Individual Complaints Training by ODIHR for OSCE personnel in Central Asia. Tashkent, Uzbekistan

16-19 September Working visit to Zagreb to follow up on latest developments in electoral field in view of Croatia's parliamentary elections in April 2004

22 September Joint workshop on international standards for democratic elections and Election Law reform. Minsk, Belarus

22 September Visit to Almaty and Astana, Kazakhstan, on Election Law reform

Netherlands Chairmanship sees "good progress" on OSCE agenda

Expectations were high when the Netherlands took over the OSCE's Chairmanship in January this year. Since then, the pace of the Thursday meetings of the representatives of the 55 participating States, held at the Hofburg, has been brisk and businesslike. Halfway through the Dutch term, the Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Justus J. de Visser, took stock of the full agenda set out by the Foreign Ministers in Porto last year.

OSCE Newsletter: How would you evaluate the first six months and what are your hopes for the second half of the year?

Ambassador de Visser: At a meeting of the Permanent Council on 27 June, the participating States took stock of the progress made so far and gave their views on preparations for the 11th Meeting of the Ministerial Council in Maastricht in December. The general feeling was that, so far, we have made good progress in implementing the tasks given to us in December 2002 by the

Ministerial Council in Porto. As you know, much of the work is being done in informal groups, which are charged with the preparation of texts or, as in the case of anti-terrorism, with the implementation of previous decisions.

Based on the state of play in the respective groups, we are optimistic that in Maastricht we will, for instance, be able to adopt a strategy to address threats to security and stability in the 21st century. This will redefine the OSCE's mission in a rapidly changing international environment. The *Annual Security Review Conference*, the first of which took place in late June, will serve as a forum for the continuous updating of the strategy.

We are seeing a growing intensification of work in Central Asia, such as activities to improve the professionalism of police and border guards. The Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, has been to all five Central Asian republics, in addition to visits made by his personal envoy, former Finnish Pres-

ident Martti Ahtisaari. We are also making special efforts to promote a solution for the frozen conflict in Moldova/Transdnistria.

Mid-way through your term, how would you assess progress in the areas of special importance to the Chairmanship?

Let me start with the fight against trafficking. At the Economic Forum in Prague in May, we had a useful exchange on the many issues that cut across trafficking in people, drugs and small arms and light weapons. It now looks as if follow-up work will concentrate on the first area: just before the summer recess, the Permanent Council adopted the *OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings*. During the second half of the year, we hope to reach agreement on a mechanism for actively tracking the Plan's implementation.

Steady progress is being made in promoting greater balance in the work of the OSCE, with greater prominence being given to the politico-military and

the economic and environmental dimensions. The drafting of a new *Strategy Document* in the economic and environmental dimension is ongoing. Of course, none of this diminishes the importance of the human dimension. Meetings for the rest of 2003 focus heavily on tolerance and anti-discrimination, with a conference on racism, xenophobia and discrimination in September, following a major conference on anti-Semitism this past June.

We are also making satisfactory progress in promoting greater coherence within the OSCE system. A major package of management reform decisions, including the long-awaited *Staff Regulations*, was adopted in June, and there is more to come. Concrete steps are being taken to strengthen co-operation with the European Union, NATO and other international organizations, as exemplified by the *Ohrid Conference on Border Security and Management* in south-eastern Europe, which took place in May.

Working as you do at the heart of the OSCE decision-making process, what do you feel works well in the Organization and what changes would you like to make?

The OSCE's strengths – its flexibility and non-bureaucratic character – sometimes serve as its weaknesses. The rotating Chairmanship and the corresponding lack of institutional memory, the modest size of the Secretariat and the heavy reliance on seconded staff, and the Organization's lack of legal status are cases in point. And, of course, the consensus rule sometimes poses its own limitations.

As already mentioned, there is clearly scope for increasing the cohesion within the OSCE system, within the Secretariat where there is a proliferation of units, between the institutions, and between institutions and field operations. Overall, however, our ability to act quickly is clearly an asset.

How did you find the switch from being one of 55 Heads of Delegation to being Chairman of the Permanent Council? Were there any surprises?

The first year in which we took part



OSCE

Ambassador Justus de Visser was appointed Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OSCE in December 2001. Prior to this appointment, from 1999 to 2001, he was Ambassador to Poland and Belarus. Other major assignments included serving as his country's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO from 1994 to 1998 and Director of the European Integration Department of the Netherlands' Foreign Ministry from 1990 to 1994. In the mid-1980s, he was Deputy Head of the Dutch Mission in Moscow. Ambassador de Visser is a law graduate from the University of Utrecht.

in the Troika, in 2002, definitely helped us in our preparations, including very concrete talks with the OSCE Secretariat. And, of course, we also tried to learn from some of our predecessors, such as the Norwegians in 1999. I had the opportunity to visit all the field operations. Indeed, I'd like to convey my sincere appreciation to the field missions for their work in arranging these trips. On balance, there have been remarkably few surprises, which is just as well given the workload.

How would you define your style of leadership and how has it been received by other participating States?

We made it clear at the outset that we wished to serve the participating States and that our primary task was to search for consensus in implementing the tasks agreed in Porto. Through our indicative work schedule, we try to create a transparent and orderly process, including assigning the chairpersons of the informal groups with crucial

responsibilities. We have also set up a rather intensive system of weekly bilateral and group consultations. I have the impression that our colleagues appreciate this inclusive working method, even if it places a heavy workload on their shoulders.

How do you find the physical demands of the job?

The job is as physically demanding as I had anticipated: non-stop consultations at meetings, on the telephone and via e-mail during the day, some reading in the evening. It's not a pace you would want to continue for more than one year.

What do you do to relax and unwind?

As there is hardly any time left for leisure, I try to create some relaxation during the course of the working day, with a joke here and there. We have an excellent team of people who carry out their work with great enthusiasm. That makes all the difference.

OSCE adopts Action Plan to combat human trafficking

The OSCE Permanent Council has approved a comprehensive *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings* that envisages new measures against this modern form of slavery at national and international level.

The decision, approved on 24 July, sets out a range of recommendations for national action such as making trafficking a criminal offence, providing protection and shelter for victims, and establishing special anti-trafficking units to fight trafficking in both countries of origin and destination.

“Despite all efforts, the last decade has seen a tremendous increase both in incidents of trafficking in human beings and in the number of victims,” the preamble to the Permanent Council Decision states. “Prosecution of perpetrators remains unsatisfactory and organized criminal groups have recourse to ever more sophisticated techniques, increasing financial resources and growing networks, and benefit from corruption or lack of

awareness of this crime and of its heinous nature among some relevant officials, the media and the public at large.”

The *Action Plan* recommends that all participating States adopt laws making trafficking a criminal offence and ensure that victims are not subject to criminal proceedings solely because they have been trafficked.

States are urged to take appropriate measures to protect victims or witnesses who testify in criminal proceedings, as well as their relatives, from potential retaliation or intimidation. Information exchanges between law enforcement bodies are also seen as critical.

The *Action Plan* recommends the establishment of shelters for victims and says they should be assisted with repatriation – preferably voluntary – to their home countries. Governments should consider providing social and economic benefits to victims and ensure that anti-trafficking measures

do not hinder the right of victims to apply for asylum in accordance with international refugee law.

Recommendations for countries of origin include improving access to education and vocational opportunities for children, especially for girls and minority groups, and enhancing job opportunities for women by encouraging the development of small businesses.

As for countries of destination, they are urged to consider liberalizing their labour markets to increase employment opportunities and to address “the problem of unprotected, informal and often illegal labour with a view to seeking a balance between the demand for inexpensive labour and the possibilities of regular migration”.

In the months leading up to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht in December, the Permanent Council will discuss ways of strengthening the OSCE’s operational instruments to implement the *Action Plan*.

OSCE holds first conference on ways to combat anti-Semitism

Next meeting to focus on other forms of racism

By Keith Jinks

More than 400 delegates from OSCE participating States and a number of non-governmental organizations took part in the first human rights conference held by the Organization devoted specially to the issue of anti-Semitism.

Opening the event on 19 June, Daan Everts, who heads the OSCE Task Force of the current Netherlands Chairmanship, offered the Organization’s assis-

tance in promoting a change of thinking that would help stamp out anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia.

“The fact that such a meeting is necessary is in itself deplorable,” he said. “But we would be remiss not to recognize that this need still exists ... It is shocking to have to acknowledge that anti-Semitism has shamelessly recurred after the Holocaust and may even be on

the rise, as witnessed by recent instances.”

The event stemmed from a decision by the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE, taken at their Porto meeting in December 2002, to examine the role of governments and civil society in promoting greater tolerance and equality. The Organization had resolved to convene a conference to address shared concerns on racism, xenophobia and discrimina-

tion in Europe, Eurasia and North America.

The anti-Semitism conference was the first result of that resolution. It was being followed by a second conference on 4 and 5 September, this time focusing on combating other forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

Ambassador Everts said the sort of anti-Semitic incidents occurring today might range from slogans uttered on the football field, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and memorials, and attacks on synagogues, to hate mail disseminated via the Internet, “the latest cross-border manifestation of anti-Semitism”.

“All this is occurring in the year 2003 in various parts of the OSCE area,” he said. “It would be a grave mistake to ignore or belittle this in the hope that it will prove ephemeral. We have seen what that – ultimately – might lead to.”

Former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Head of the United States Delegation, noted the short distance from the conference room in the Hofburg to the Heldenplatz, the Vienna square where crowds hailed Adolf Hitler as he celebrated Nazi Germany’s 1938 annexation of Austria.

“So many lessons of history have not been learned,” he said. “If action had been taken in the 1930s, then millions of people would have lived.”

Anti-Semitism, he said, was “a burden that has held Europe back for two millennia” but was closely linked to the same hatred that led to the attacks on Washington and New York in September 2001 by Islamic terrorists.

Mr. Giuliani also urged all OSCE countries to “keep accurate statistics for hate crimes” in order to be able to assess them at a follow-up conference. The call was particularly directed at countries that do not keep data based on race, ethnicity and religion.

Another speaker was Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, whose country will take up the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2004. In his speech, the Minister pointed to the salutary fact that, during World War II, Bulgaria was the only European state that saved its



Former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani headed the United States Delegation

Jews while keeping them in their own native land.

“It is also noteworthy that Bulgaria is also the only European country that could register an increase in its Jewish population in the years of World War II ... this conduct was not accidental, it was not a fortuitous coincidence of circumstances, but the result of ethnic and religious tolerance cultivated among the Bulgarians for centuries,” he said. “We understand that ‘zero tolerance’ for any form of intolerance, including anti-Semitism, is a key part of our role in international relations and of our share in the integration processes.”

He added that international institutions such as the OSCE should bring an end, once and for all, to the tragic and painful legacy of the Second World War and of the Cold War.

“This common commitment is the basis of integration in the Euro-Atlantic area and its only possible future. Anti-Semitism is not a part of this future. That is why this conference is so important and I believe will have a strong follow-up.”

The final keynote speaker, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, the former Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, suggested that the reason why anti-Semitism reappeared every epoch in a new form

was its ability to change continuously. “Thus, anti-Semitism is sometimes masked as ‘anti-Zionism’, enabling base instincts to be manipulated and resentments to be revived,” he said.

“From burning books to burning humans, there is only a small step,” he said. “This is why ‘no tolerance for intolerance’ should hold the first place among the methods to fight against anti-Semitism.”

The conference took place over two days with special sessions on legislative, institutional mechanisms and governmental action, including law enforcement; the role of governments and civil society in promoting tolerance, education and information; and the role of the media in conveying and countering prejudice.

Germany’s Delegation made an offer at the conference to try to seek agreement among the other States on holding a follow-up OSCE conference on anti-Semitism next year in Berlin.

A final report with a set of recommendations is on the OSCE website at: www.osce.org/documents/cio/2003/08/565_en.pdf

Keith Jinks is Deputy Head of the Secretariat’s Press and Public Information Section.

OSCE inaugurates Annual Security Review Conference

By Keith Jinks

OSCE/Christian Dematte



Ambassador Dieter Boden of Germany, former Chair of the Forum for Security Co-operation

The OSCE's first-ever Annual Security Review Conference, held on 25 and 26 June, successfully met its initial modest aim: identifying a range of practical options for the Organization in addressing the new threats and challenges to the collective security of its 55 participating States.

The Head of the Dutch OSCE Task Force, Ambassador Daan Everts, said the task of the political and military experts gathered in Vienna was clear: "What do we think of the way the OSCE has been dealing with its security-related tasks, and in which way – given an enlarging European Union and NATO – should the OSCE adjust to these changing threats and challenges to security?"

He was delivering the keynote speech on behalf of the Chairman-in-Office, the Netherlands Foreign Minister, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

After discussions in closed working groups, some 350 participants reviewed a number of options that will now receive closer study. Some of these will eventually feature in a strategy document on the agenda of the OSCE Foreign Ministers' meeting in Maastricht, to be held in December.

The proposals included adopting OSCE-backed common security fea-

tures on travel documentation, tighter controls on MANPADS (man-portable air defence systems) and a bigger role for the OSCE in improving border security and policing methods.

The Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Justus de Visser of the Netherlands, said the OSCE had to continue to adapt to new risks and challenges in a flexible way: "By redefining its role in ever more rapidly changing international surroundings, the OSCE can continue to fulfil its unique role based on the notion of comprehensive security ... The discussion has clearly underlined that the multi-dimensional character of threats and security can only be handled through co-operation with other international organizations."

Ambassador Dieter Boden of Germany, the outgoing Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation, described how the FSC was adapting its role to the new challenges and carrying out an intense review of all existing commitments and instruments relating to the OSCE's "first dimension" – politico-military security. The FSC is the OSCE's main regular body dealing with this area.

He cited as one instance the *Handbook of Best Practice Guides* which has recently been produced by the FSC to aid the implementation of the OSCE's *Small Arms and Light Weapons Document*. This unique accord, adopted in 2000, deals with limiting the illicit flow of arms from the OSCE region into actual or potential conflict areas.

Several delegations backed the idea of the OSCE's exploiting its standards-setting role by proposing common security features on the travel documentation that participating States issue to their citizens. Some felt this work could make a significant contribution not only to the fight against terrorism, but also to efforts against organized crime and illegal immigration.

Concerns were also raised about the threat posed by the easily deployed MANPADS, weapons that can be used by terrorists for launching concealed attacks on civil aircraft. While this issue has been addressed by other international organizations, it was suggested that the OSCE could use its *Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons* as the springboard for additional steps against illicit trade in MANPADS.

Participants cited other areas which could be assisted by the OSCE, using its experience and access to expertise. The OSCE has both a Strategic Police Matters Unit and an Anti-Terrorism Unit which work in training and capacity-building to help participating States boost their own abilities to improve border control and policing and other anti-terrorism measures.

It was also felt the international community could make more use of the Organization's experience in arms control. In several regions, the OSCE has facilitated the destruction of stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, preventing them from falling into the hands of terrorists. However, the existence of stockpiles elsewhere remains a potent security threat, one that the OSCE could help to reduce. A mechanism for this is under development.

Key speakers included Adam Rotfeld, Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland; Cofer Black, Co-ordinator for Counter-Terrorism in the U.S. State Department; Alexander Grushko, Director of the Department for European Co-operation in the Russian Foreign Ministry; and Gilles Adreani, Director of the Policy Planning Unit of the French Foreign Ministry.

Background material and speeches are available on a special conference website: www.osce.org/events/conferences/annual_security_review

Blitz visit to OSCE provides news break for Albanian journalists

By Anila Basha and Anita Hoxha

On 30 May, representatives of Albania's two national broadcasters and four leading dailies gathered at the head office of the OSCE Presence in downtown Tirana. There was a feeling of anticipation in the air. Although every one who was there had made it to the shortlist of excellent candidates for a visit to Vienna under the sponsorship of the Presence and the Netherlands Chairmanship, they knew that only two journalists would take part in the novel scheme. Anita Hoxha and Anila Basha recall what it was like to be the fortunate duo.

In Albania, all eyes are on the OSCE as it continues to fulfil the crucial role it has been playing in the country's modernization since 1997 – in the development of democracy, in strengthening institutions and in mediating a variety of political conflicts. Whether it is helping resolve the long-standing issue of property restitution and compensation, undertaking electoral reform, taking action against trafficking in human beings, or promoting freedom of the media, the OSCE Presence is guided by a sense of fairness and equal opportunities for all parties.

It was in this spirit that we ended up boarding an Austrian Airlines flight bound for Vienna on 4 June. Our names had emerged after a drawing of lots among six equally qualified media professionals. Obviously, we thought that the final results, though left to chance, turned out for the best. We represent the Albanian Public Radio-Television (RTSH), the country's only public broadcaster, with the best coverage of the Albanian territory, and *Koha Jone*, a leading national daily and the country's first independent newspaper.

For us, covering the OSCE Permanent Council's session represented an opportunity of a lifetime. Simply put, the Albanian media do not have the



OSCE Presence in Albania/Joana Kurapatoci

Anila (left) and Anita in Tirana, reflecting on their Vienna visit for the OSCE Newsletter

resources to send their journalists abroad to file eyewitness reports. Both of us have been following OSCE activities in our country with keen interest, reporting extensively on the regular briefings of the Presence to the Organization's participating States.

To supplement our coverage, we rely on old footage, archive material and second-hand information. Of course we do our best to report as accurately as we can, harnessing our several years' worth of journalistic experience and training. But we would be the first to admit that there is always room for improvement – and what could give us a better edge than going right to the source of news?

We could hardly contain our curiosity and excitement as we walked through the historic conference facilities at the Hofburg and the OSCE Secretariat offices. Having access to high-level OSCE officials and getting direct quotes made us feel that we were an intimate part of an important process. Reading the state-

ments of Heads of Delegation to the OSCE's participating States, we were struck by the openness and transparency of the debate.

Ambassador Osmo Lipponen had given the Tirana-based press a briefing on 3 June shortly before he flew off to Vienna. Still, there was nothing like seeing and hearing for ourselves how he analyzed details of our country's current political, economic and social issues for participating States, and how he drew the linkages with the municipal elections in October. Back in Tirana, digging up information can take time. Being on the spot, it was a breeze getting hold of the information we needed, not only from the OSCE staff, but also from the Albanian delegation.

Before the start of the session, we were fortunate to be in the same briefing with a group of visiting students from the University of North Carolina. Together, we listened attentively to Gunther Neumann, Deputy Director for Conference

Services, explaining how the Permanent Council, with its unique culture of consensus decision-making, functions.

One of the most interesting meetings we had later in the day was with Alexander Ivanko, Senior Adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. He spoke about how the Institution, headed by Freimut Duve, operates independently within the OSCE. He touched on some delicate media issues in countries undergoing transition, which we found of great relevance to us. Looking through the different country reports that Alex shared with us (such as *The Media Situation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan*), we could not help but empathize with our colleagues in many parts of the OSCE area of responsibility.

We asked Alex to share his thoughts about the working conditions of the media in Albania in light of the coming local elections. “Pre-election periods are almost always characterized by media censorship,” he said. “This happens everywhere.” He was referring to countries with no opposition media at all, a continuing concern of the OSCE.

This sparked a discussion with him on the difficulties of being a journalist in Albania at a time when the country is in the midst of building up its institutions after the post-communist era. We lack a professional, influential association of journalists to safeguard our rights and promote and uphold professional standards. Neither do we have a union of journalists to guarantee workers’ rights. Media legislation is still not complete.

More than half of us work without contracts, and job security and stability are strange concepts to us.

On our return home, on 6 June, we were greeted with smiles of approval in our newsrooms. Our editors knew we had fresh and exclusive material: footage of representatives of OSCE’s participating States exchanging views, transcripts of speeches and a wealth of information from various interviews.

It was one of those rare moments when we had all the ingredients that go into the making of a good story at our fingertips. And we hope it is not the last.

Anila Basha, 27, is political editor at Koha Jone newspaper, and Anita Hoxha, 25, is an international news journalist with Albanian Radio-Television (RTSH).

Albania and freedom of the media

The approaching municipal elections on 12 October have fuelled the debate on freedom of the media in Albania among journalists, media proprietors and politicians. Particularly worrying are the overlapping interests of the media and politicians, some of whom are media owners themselves, and the degree to which influence is being exerted on the media for political advantage. Here are excerpts from Ambassador Osmo Lipponen’s remarks to participating States on 5 June:

Albania’s underdeveloped radio and television market does not guarantee a sound financial basis for the survival of an exaggerated number of operators (an estimated 60 television stations for a population of 3 million), whose main source of income is advertising revenue. Operators have to rely on income from other business endeavours to support their media activities and are forced to seek assistance from lawmakers, to the detriment of their impartiality.

Consequently, politicians’ interests infringe upon the authority of the National Council of Radio and Television

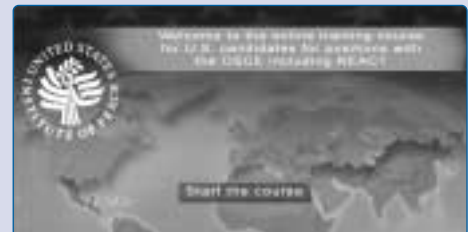
(NCRT), the state regulatory body for broadcasting, by encouraging politically protected operators to ignore the standards set by law. With some 60 per cent of media advertising paid for by budget-financed or state institutions, government-sponsored advertising has become the most efficient means to exert pressure on the media. As a result, most of the reporting has become openly pro-government.

This situation has been highlighted in reports issued by the Presence last autumn and, more recently, by the U.S. State Department and the International Crisis Group, which also note that private businesses are increasingly fearful of advertising with anti-government media groups, lest they risk financial inspections.

The Presence is actively exploring ways and means to assure the active and proper role of the media during the coming electoral campaign. The Presence’s principal involvement in media development over the past year has been to help strengthen the NCRT, which remains a weak entity.

REACT and the United States: <http://react.usip.org>

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has developed a website featuring its innovative approach to pre-mission training: an on-line course to prepare U.S. candidates for OSCE assignments as part of REACT’s implementation. The course contents are also accessible to the general public. Topics include the OSCE and its field activities, conflict-management skills and the countries currently hosting an OSCE operation.



Georgian journalists get a taste of the OSCE

By Michail Vignansky

In the heart of Tbilisi, on Krtsanisi Dacha No. 5, is a small two-storey building. If you go up the steep staircase to the second floor, you will find yourself in the press office of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, where information converges from every geographic point of OSCE engagement in the country.

It might be the country's northern border with Russia, where OSCE observers have been involved in monitoring activities since 1999, in connection with the second Chechen campaign.

Or it could be the unrecognized "Republic of South Ossetia", where, 11 years ago, a successful end was put to the blood-letting between Georgians and Ossetians. In that hot spot, the OSCE has been actively mediating in the reconciliation process and has been carrying out projects to help restore confidence – encouraging the population to hand over their weapons, for example, or helping in the reconstruction of the water supply system destroyed during the armed conflict.

Soon, the OSCE will be one of the movers and shakers in yet another crucial area, where, thankfully, there is no shooting, but where emotions are running high: the Central Election Commission. In line with the staffing scheme for the Commission suggested by the United States, its chairman will be proposed by the OSCE. Influential political circles in Georgia have agreed to this arrangement, further evidence of the deep level of confidence that Tbilisi has in the Organization. [See related story, page 24.]

White vehicles with the OSCE logo have become a common sight around

Georgia. But to be able to grasp what this organization is really all about, and to be able to talk about it authoritatively in one's wire service reports or television features, one has to be allowed into the inner sanctum in Vienna – the Secretariat headquarters and the Hofburg Congress Centre.

As editor-in-chief of *Prime-News*, which is Georgia's independent news agency and the leader in its field, and as a journalist who writes almost daily about problems whose solutions are linked to the OSCE, you could say I drew a lucky card. In mid-July, along with a representative of State Television and the political writer of the newspaper,



Mikhail Vignansky, 36, is editor-in-chief of the Prime-News Agency, which has a staff of 20. He also writes for the weekly Moscow newspaper, Vremia Novostey, and is a correspondent of EFE, the Spanish news agency. This contribution was translated from Russian.

Svobodnaia Gruzia, I arrived in Vienna to get a taste of the largest security organization in Europe.

The initiative spawned excellent results. What more could a journalist want? We saw and experienced the OSCE from the inside, which was a beehive of activity. The Press and Public

Information Office gave us a profile of the Organization (and invited us to evaluate the visit when it was over). The Conflict Prevention Centre described for us how the OSCE operates at "flashpoints", tracing the beginning of its involvement through to its activities in the field, as in the Balkans and the Caucasus. The Strategic Police Matters Unit briefed us on plans for Georgia, focusing on the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict.

We had an interesting exchange of views with officials on why the OSCE was devoting a great deal of attention to the Georgian parliamentary elections on 2 November. And we had the opportunity to ask questions about the Permanent Council, whose meetings and vital decisions we hear so much about, including those affecting Georgia.

We also met a staff member of the office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Few Georgian journalists are aware that such an institution exists, which is ironic, as it serves to protect their rights by combining, in a sense, the functions of a press ombudsman with those of a commissioner for journalists' rights. One would have thought that its role and significance would be studied in greater depth and given wider publicity.

Having been a journalist half of my life with a keen interest in politics and conflict, I have covered a lot of ground. But I will remember the series of meetings in Vienna as some of the most fascinating, informative and useful I have ever had. Now, everytime I see the logo of the OSCE, I find myself feeling somehow a part of it. We tried on the OSCE for size, and it fit us perfectly.

Our job now is to bring it closer to our readers and viewers.

High Commissioner seeks closure on Hungary's "Preference Law"

Two years after its adoption, the *Act on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries* has been significantly amended to take into account most of the criticisms raised by neighbouring States and the international community. The High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Rolf Ekeus, had been insisting on the changes through his correspondence and discussions with senior Hungarian officials since the summer of 2001.

He told the Permanent Council on 1 July that the amended version of the law, adopted on 23 June, was a "substantial revision" of the June 2001 law and was "close to meeting the relevant minimum international standards". He noted that now, "the law appears to focus only on culture and education, and – with one possible exception – does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity".

The so-called "Status" or "Preference" Law had been a bone of contention between Hungary and some of its neighbours, particularly Slovakia and Romania, which objected to what they considered as Hungary's unilateral and discriminatory support to Hungarian minorities. The law had also been criticized by the international community, including the European Commission and the Council of Europe, as well as the HCNM.

Ambassador Ekeus told the Permanent Council that the reason he had been engaged so heavily in the issue was "partly because of the sensitivity of so-called kin-minority issues between Hungary and its neighbours, but also because of the precedent that this Act creates". His concern was not that violent conflict would erupt as a result of the *Hungarian Status Law* but that "the precedent could have a negative effect on inter-state relations in the OSCE area". He had repeatedly stressed that the protection of minority rights was the

obligation of the State where the minority resides, and that the obligation of good-neighbourly relations was a cornerstone of international law.

The High Commissioner had contributed substantially to the process of revising the law. Even in its amended form, however, the law still raised some concerns among neighbouring States. To narrow the remaining differences, he met Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy and Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs in Budapest on 30 June, followed by a meeting with Slovakian Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda in Bratislava on 1 July. He urged both parties to use existing bilateral arrangements to accommodate the types of assistance foreseen by the *Preference Law*. Subsequently, Hungary held bilateral meetings with Slovakia and Romania to explore how to further assist members of the Hungarian community in these two countries.

After a long and often complicated process, the High Commissioner now hopes that the issues raised by the *Law on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries* can finally be addressed to the satisfaction of all sides without violating minimum international standards.

Ambassador Ekeus makes first trip to Tajikistan

On his first visit to Tajikistan, on 22 and 23 July, the High Commissioner met President Emomali Rahmonov and other senior government officials, representatives of the country's Uzbek, Turkmen, Krygyz and Russian communities, and non-governmental organizations dealing with minority issues in the country.

In his meeting with the President, the High Commissioner noted the significant progress made by Tajikistan since the signing of the 1997 Peace Accord between the Government and the opposition. He said that the agreement had laid the basis for promoting civil harmony in the country, including the integration of

national minorities into society.

However, Ambassador Ekeus said, the conflict had weakened relations between the central authorities and some regions in the country, including those with a high concentration of national minorities. The High Commissioner welcomed the Government's initiative to develop a State programme for the support and development of national minorities in Tajikistan and said that he looked forward to assisting in the reform process.

Regional co-operation was another topic of discussion, including the establishment of open and secure borders. The High Commissioner noted the potential role of the OSCE in this important issue.

The subject of ethnic Tajiks living in neighbouring states was also raised, especially ensuring their access to appropriate educational facilities and other services. The High Commissioner stressed that the protection of minority rights was the obligation of the State where the minority resides. He underlined his engagement in all the countries of Central Asia, which comprised both projects and an ongoing dialogue designed to promote integration and harmonious inter-ethnic relations.

On his return trip, the High Commissioner stopped briefly in Almaty where he met representatives of several minority groups in the country, two deputy chairmen of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, and government officials responsible for minority issues.

HCNM examines international conflict and majorities

In a speech to the Swiss Institute for Foreign Affairs at the University of Zurich on 2 July, Ambassador Ekeus traced the evolution of conflict – from the Peace of Westphalia to the present – and its effects on minority-majority relations. The full text of the speech is available on www.osce.org/hcnm

Update

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



OSCE PA President Bruce George opens the 12th Annual Session. Left to right: Frans Weisglas, President of the Dutch House of Representatives; Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, OSCE Chairman-in-Office; PA President Bruce George; Gerrit Zalm, Dutch Vice-Prime Minister; and Yvonne Timmerman-Buck, President of the Dutch Senate

OSCE PA adopts Rotterdam Declaration

Some 300 parliamentarians adopted the *Rotterdam Declaration*, focusing on the political, economic and human rights aspects of “The Role of the OSCE in the New Architecture of Europe”, the theme of the 12th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), which took place in Rotterdam from 5 to 9 July.

The opening remarks were delivered by Bruce George, President of the OSCE PA, followed by key officials from the Netherlands: Yvonne Timmerman-Buck, Speaker of the Senate; Frans Weisglas, Speaker of the House of Representatives; and Gerrit Zalm, Vice-Prime Minister. Addressing the parliamentarians, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Netherlands Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, stressed that the theme of the Annual Session was well chosen as it touched on two developments that required the repositioning of the OSCE: the enlargement of the European Union and NATO and the new threats confronting the OSCE, including terrorism, organized crime, trafficking and illegal migration.

The CiO reported on the situation in Moldova and the current efforts of Moldovan and Transnistrian negotiators to draft, before the end of the year, a new constitution for a reunified Moldova based on a federal model. “The PA seminar in Moldova [last May] was of utmost importance to this process, and was an excellent illustration of how your Assembly and other OSCE institutions can complement and support each other,” the CiO said.

The parliamentarians were also briefed by an OSCE panel of senior officials. The address of the CiO and the OSCE panel’s presentations were both followed by a question-and-answer session.

Debates and special meetings

During the following three days, the Assembly’s three General Committees considered reports and draft resolutions dealing with the Annual Session’s theme. The Ad Hoc Committees on Transparency and Accountability, and on Belarus, Moldova and Abkhazia, also held side meetings to discuss current and future activities.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability, chaired by U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer, heard reports by PA President Bruce George and Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Special Representative of the PA in Vienna. In addition, Mr. George chaired a special meeting on the Mediterranean, attended by parliamentarians of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, and Ambassador Ivo Petrov, Chairman of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

Focus on gender issues

A *Gender Balance Report* presented by Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt, Head of the Netherlands Delegation to the OSCE PA, stressed that since 1999, when the OSCE adopted the *Gender Action Plan* calling for a correction of the gender imbalance in senior positions, there had been little or no improvement in the situation. To reach a higher ranking professional grade still seems close to impossible for women – the glass ceiling for female professionals still exists in the OSCE.

Rotterdam Declaration

The Annual Session concluded with the adoption of the *Rotterdam Declaration*, which states that Europe's security structure is undergoing continuous development and that the OSCE's real strength lies in its capacity to respond to security threats and challenges and in its strong field presence. To uphold the credibility of the OSCE, the *Declaration* adds, it is imperative to provide the OSCE field activities with adequate funding and high-quality staff.

The Assembly, the *Declaration* says, recommends that the OSCE Permanent Council be requested to consult the PA prior to making a decision to terminate any OSCE field activity.

The *Rotterdam Declaration* stresses that the further enhancement of the economic and environmental dimension of the OSCE, as an integral part of its comprehensive security approach, is an essential prerequisite for the OSCE's substantial contribution to the new European security architecture.

The *Declaration* also suggests that the OSCE should adopt a more balanced regional approach to promoting the implementation of the participating States' human dimension commitments, and take into account the differences between countries and regions, without neglecting any of them. In this regard, the *Declaration* suggested that the mandate and resources of the High Commissioner on National Minorities be strengthened.

The *Resolution on Combating Anti-Semitism* urges all participating States to ensure effective law enforcement against criminal acts stemming from anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racial or ethnic hatred, whether directed at individuals, communities, or property, including a thorough investigation and prosecution of such acts.

The *Resolution on the International Criminal Court* calls on the OSCE participating States to make their ratifications meaningful through effective national implementation law that enables them to meet their principal obligations under the Rome Statute

The *Resolution on prisoners at the Guantanamo Base* urges the United

States to immediately present the prisoners before a "competent tribunal" to have their status determined, to secure their rights by letting them be represented by legal counsel of their own choice and to refrain from the use of the death penalty.

The *Resolution on Belarus* criticizes the social, political and humanitarian situation in Belarus, which has worsened considerably, and declares support for civic and democratic forces in the country.

The *Resolution on Moldova* appeals to all parties concerned, in particular to the Parliament and the Government of Moldova as well as to the Supreme Soviet and authorities in Transdnistria, to continue negotiating in good faith in order to find a solution to the problems.

The *Resolution on combating trafficking* urges all participating States to sign and ratify the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*.

The Assembly also adopted a resolution on the parliamentary follow-up of *OSCE Activities at the National Level*. National Parliaments are encouraged to introduce practices whereby annual reports on the activities of the OSCE PA by national OSCE PA delegations are regularly debated in an appropriate manner in national parliaments.

Elections

The Assembly unanimously re-elected Bruce George as its President for a second one-year term, and Treasurer Jerry Grafstein for a second two-year term. The four new Vice Presidents are: Nino Burjanadze (Georgia), Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), and Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey). Ms. Tingsgaard was appointed as the new PA Special Representative on gender issues. Goran Lenmarker (Sweden) and Elena Mizulina (Russia) were re-elected as Chairs of the First and Third Committees respectively. Congressman Ben Cardin (USA) was elected as Chair of the Second Committee.

Standing Committee

The PA Standing Committee also met to hear reports on upcoming Assem-

bly activities and reports by the Treasurer and the Secretary General. The Treasurer, Senator Jerry Grafstein, reported that the Assembly was again functioning well within the overall guidelines of the budget approved by the Standing Committee. He reported that KPMG, the Assembly's external auditors, had expressed their complete approval of the financial procedures followed by the PA International Secretariat. The Committee unanimously approved the proposed budget for fiscal year 2003/2004, with an increase of 4.75 per cent over last year's expenditures.

PA Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver reported that the International Secretariat continued to function well and efficiently in support of the expanded activities of the Organization and within the budget allocated by the Standing Committee.

PA Vice-Presidents call on parliamentarians to fight anti-Semitism

Vice-President Alcee Hasting represented the OSCE PA at the OSCE's Conference on anti-Semitism, held in Vienna on 19 and 20 June. Sixteen parliamentarians were present at the Conference, including OSCE PA Vice-Presidents Gert Weisskirchen and Barbara Haering and Heads of Delegations to the OSCE PA: Petr Sulak (Czech Republic), Michel Voisin (France) and Chris Smith (USA). The Conference addressed anti-Semitism and its manifestation in Europe, Central Asia and North America, and the role of governments, parliaments and civil society in promoting greater tolerance.

PA President holds talks in Kyrgyzstan

President Bruce George visited Bishkek on 9 and 10 June to express the Assembly's strong interest in the political reforms in Kyrgyzstan. He had an extensive exchange of views with President Askar Akaev and Abdygani Erkebaev and Altai Borubaev, the Speakers of the Kyrgyz Parliament's two chambers, on constitutional and parliamentary reforms as well as on co-operation between the Kyrgyz government and parliament and the OSCE, particularly

with the PA. He emphasized the PA's strong interest in the participation of Central Asian parliamentarians in the work of the Assembly.

Bruce George in Ukraine for dialogue on oversight of armed forces

On a visit to Ukraine from 15 to 17 June, Bruce George met the Speaker of Parliament and parliamentarians from several parties, the Foreign Minister, the Ombudsperson and the OSCE Project

Co-ordinator.

He stressed that Ukraine's further integration into Europe would also depend substantially on the pace of democratization and on the conduct of future elections.

Mr. George participated in an *OSCE Seminar on the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security in Central Eastern Europe*, which took place in the

Ukrainian Parliament on 16 and 17 June. Jointly organized by the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre and the PA, the seminar was aimed at promoting awareness of the parliamentary responsibilities outlined in the *Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security* and at fostering a dialogue between senior military personnel and parliamentarians involved in the oversight of armed forces.



Update

REPRESENTATIVE ON FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Why criticize the U.S. over media freedom?

In one word: precedent

Commentary by Alexander Ivanko

In an interview with a news agency a few months ago, the OSCE Media Representative Freimut Duve expressed concern that he has had to raise freedom of the media issues in the United States on no less than three occasions this year.

Detaining French journalists at the airport – a recent incident in Los Angeles – is not nice. Holding them for hours in handcuffs and then deporting them is even more unpleasant, especially since their only misdeed was honesty: telling immigration authorities that they had come to the United States as journalists and not as tourists (in which case they could have obtained a visa waiver).

Mr. Duve has also zeroed in on problems in Italy, Britain and Spain, countries “to the west of Vienna” which are rarely the focus of attention among human rights organizations, let alone of governmental bodies. As one former Amba-

sador to the OSCE put it: “If we have a watchdog, it has to act like one and bark.”

So, does this mean everything is fine and dandy to the East? Not at all. Civil liberties are being trampled on wholesale in many former Soviet republics and attacks on media freedom are in the forefront.

In the current climate of suspicion towards anything French, the “greeting party” for those French journalists was at least understandable, if unwelcome. If you were being bombarded with anti-French rhetoric on a regular basis, you might tend to grow suspicious not only of the quality of French wine and the smell of their cheese. Funny accents tick you off too.

Nevertheless, the journalists were ultimately allowed to go back home. They were not forced to write an ecstatic biography of George W. Bush as their “get out of jail” card.

But this is exactly what did happen to

OSCE/FOM



Alexander Ivanko

Leonid Komarovskiy. A former Russian journalist and American businessman, he had the misfortune to be arrested last year in Turkmenistan for allegedly taking part in a coup against the head of state of this

Central Asian country.

His ticket to freedom was a manuscript that he was forced to write, praising the accomplishments of the President. His opus was completed in three months, whereupon Komarovsky was pardoned and set free.

We have all heard of “trial by media” but “trial and subsequent release by book” has got to be a first.

In principle, both the United States and Turkmenistan were in violation of the spirit and the letter of their OSCE commitments on freedom of expression. However, the attitudes of the two governments toward these commitments are as different as night and day.

The U.S. is going through a tough period after 9/11, with many of its fundamental freedoms being tested in an undeclared war conducted by an amorphous enemy. However, local civil liberties organizations are keeping a close eye on the government’s activities and are raising the alarm at any legislation with even a hint of authoritarianism. Their work – and the gov-

ernment’s activities – are freely reported and vigorously debated in the media.

Why then worry about the U.S. and a few glitches in its otherwise smoothly functioning system when some other countries seated around the Permanent Council table have all but abandoned the pretence of having free media?

One word: precedent. The U.S. and other Western democracies may be angry when the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media criticizes them. They miss the point. Any measures which infringe on media freedom provide a very ominous precedent for certain other participating States that do not have decades – let alone centuries – of democratic development behind them. They are taking notes, filing them for further action and reference.

In Turkmenistan, the only civil liberty left is to keep your mouth shut.

I spoke recently to a human rights rapporteur in the Organization of American States. He said several government actions in the U.S. had him worried, but he

felt that American society would be able to deal with its own problems successfully, outgrowing this post-9/11 tendency to clamp down on certain liberties somewhat over-zealously.

“In Latin America we will have bigger problems,” he told me. “The U.S. will live through this difficult period in the end with little effect on its society. We, on the other hand, will have a much tougher time getting back on track.”

The same holds true for the OSCE region. Officials who detain a foreign journalist and deport him for bogus reasons should bear in mind that this may encourage other participating States to feel they have *carte blanche* to lock up journalists for a prolonged period.

And even force them to write a biography of their country’s leader.

Alexander Ivanko is Senior Adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The views expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author.

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FROM THE FIELD

New Heads of Mission in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Georgia

“Working for the OSCE is not only an enriching political job, but much more than that, it’s a moral mission,” said **Anton Rupnik**, who has been **Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty, Kazakhstan**, since 29 June. “You have to strongly believe in the ideals of democracy and human rights. Otherwise, you won’t be successful.”

Following his first assignment with Slovenia’s Foreign Ministry in 1992 as Spokesperson, he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary with the embassy in Moscow and later, State Under-Secretary and Head of the Sector for Neighbouring Countries. He was also Ambassador and First Deputy Director-General in the Central European Initiative’s Executive

Secretariat in Trieste, later becoming its head.

From 1970 to 1992, Ambassador Rupnik worked as a journalist, editor and foreign correspondent. He covered international politics for various media outlets, including the daily *Delo*, the political weekly *Teleks* and Slovenian Radio-Television from Moscow.



Ambassador Anton Rupnik

Ambassador Rupnik is a specialist on Slavic languages and ex-Soviet states and is an author of several political books.

On his new post with the OSCE, Ambassador Rupnik said: "I am pleased at the opportunity to work in a country which is generally seen as an engine of reform processes in the region."

* * *

French diplomat **Yves Bargain** has succeeded Marc Gilbert as **Head of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, Tajikistan**.

"I've been impressed by the welcoming and quiet atmosphere of Dushanbe,



Ambassador Yves Bargain

where the security situation has considerably improved in the past two years," he said, shortly after assuming his post on 7 July. He looked forward to spearheading the Centre's adapted mandate, approved by the Permanent Council in October 2002, which places a strong emphasis on activities in the economic and environmental sphere.

Prior to his appointment, Ambassador Bargain was Deputy Director for Continental Europe and Central Asia at the French Foreign Ministry. He served as *Chargé d'Affaires* and later as Ambassador in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan, between 1994 and 1999.

His other foreign service assignments have included Sofia, Belgrade, Havana, Ankara and Bonn. In 1991, he was a member of the European Union Monitoring Mission of the ceasefire in Yugoslavia.

Ambassador Bargain holds degrees in political science from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, and in Modern Greek and Russian from the Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations.

* * *

"I am delighted to have inherited such a competent and enthusiastic team of national and international staff," **Roy Reeve** of the United Kingdom said, upon being named to succeed Jean-Michel Lacombe as **Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia**, starting 1 August. "It is clear that the Mission is widely known and respected in Georgia and that working

relationships with all our partners are close and effective."

Ambassador Reeve has just completed his assignment as the first Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, which was created in July 1999. "Moving from a small OSCE Office to take over the leadership of the Mission to Georgia is quite a leap," he said. "The range of issues is broader and more complex – but that's the challenge and interest."

The career diplomat served as his country's Ambassador to Ukraine until May 1999. A Soviet specialist, he had two tours of duty in Moscow (1968-71 and 1978-81). Other assignments took him to Northern Ireland, Johannesburg and Sydney, where he was Consul-General.

Ambassador Reeve was a member of the UK Delegation to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, now the OSCE) and the preparatory talks in Dipoli, Finland. He participated throughout the Geneva negotiations, which culminated in the signature of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, and in the CSCE Review Conferences in Belgrade and Madrid.



Ambassador Roy Reeve

“Georgian-OSCE partnership is alive and well”

On a recent visit to Georgia, I had a chance to learn first-hand how the OSCE is deeply involved in meeting the most crucial challenges the country is facing. The contacts I made in the capital, Tbilisi, in Tskhinvali in South Ossetia, where the OSCE Mission has a small field office, and at the Georgian-Russian border were most productive.

The trip, from 6 to 10 July, was part of my regular programme of visits to OSCE field missions, which enable me to gain a better insight into the range of administrative, management and operational issues that the Organization is tackling.

The visit could scarcely have been better timed, coming in the wake of the second geographical expansion of the Border Monitoring Operation (BMO), which now also covers the border between Georgia and the Dagestan Republic of the Russian Federation. The OSCE Mission, comprising 200 members, was in the midst of transition: Ambassador Jean-Michel Lacombe, who has been heading the Mission since November 1998, was to wind up his assignment at the end of July. He is succeeded by Ambassador Roy Reeve, former Head of the Office in Yerevan.

I had intensive talks on OSCE-related matters with President Eduard Shevardnadze. Every official I met – including Foreign Affairs Minister, Irakli Menagarishvili, the Minister for Special Assignments, Malkhaz Kakabadze, and the Personal Representative of the President on National Security and Conflict Resolution, Irakli Machavariani – underlined the important role the OSCE Mission has been playing in Georgia for more than a decade.

Border monitoring

Tbilisi authorities gave the BMO credit for the improved situation along the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which was now much calmer relative to more than three years ago when the operation was established.

I visited two of the four Patrol Bases and an observation point along the Dagestan segment of the border. It was gratifying to see that the operation, whose expansion was approved by our participating States in December 2002, was well under way.

The observation and reporting on movement across the border’s Chechen, Ingush and Dagestan segments – a 286-kilometre stretch over the Caucasus mountains – continue to pose challenges for the 111 monitors in winter (when there are avalanches) and for the 144 monitors in summer (when there are landslides).

The monitors work in areas as high up as 3,000 metres, often in the middle of fierce winds and freezing temperatures, at times in isolation for a few weeks at a time. Between mid-November and mid-April, the amount of snow is sometimes too much to allow patrolling on foot, but too little for patrolling on skis. Bad weather often disrupts monitoring from helicopters.

I was told that the OSCE monitors also help to promote co-operation between the border services of Georgia and Russia. In fact, representatives of both services were set to meet to discuss interacting more closely, and they had invited the OSCE Mission to take part.

The Georgian Border Guards, who provide indispensable security to the monitors, need continued professional

training. Recent donations from the European Union and the United States of some 2 million euros worth of badly needed equipment – ranging from boots and binoculars to cars and communication gear – are expected to boost the guards’ efficiency.

Conflicts in the regions of Georgia

The OSCE’s efforts over the years to promote the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in the north and to assist the United Nations in solving the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in the west were much appreciated by the Georgian authorities. I heard a similar message from the leadership of South Ossetia in Tskhinvali, including “President” Eduard Kokoity, the Co-Chairs of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and the Command of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF). I was encouraged by the expressions of unconditional resolve by the Georgians and the South Ossetians to settle the conflict through political means.

In Tskhinvali, I saw arms being collected under an innovative JPKF-led programme. The OSCE Mission supports the scheme by initiating projects for the benefit of communities that hand over weapons voluntarily. For example, several villages were helped to clean up a blocked irrigation channel. Some communities received computers. To make it easier for the Mission to co-operate with the JPKF, the OSCE created a Rapid Reaction Programme through which donors can contribute funds for various projects.

When I met the South Ossetian leadership, I said that any solution to the conflict would have to respect the territorial

integrity of Georgia and the full rights of the people living in South Ossetia. I agreed with the need for economic reconstruction in the conflict zone but I stressed that any such programme would have to be part of the overall political settlement.

I unfortunately did not have the chance to visit Abkhazia, but I did hold substantive discussions on the subject. The Georgian authorities were deeply concerned about the conflict settlement process, especially in the light of tensions in the Gali district of Abkhazia, which is mostly populated by ethnic Georgians.



Election-related issues

A possible OSCE role in the parliamentary elections on 2 November received heavy media coverage, especially because prior to my arrival, former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker was in Georgia on behalf of the U.S. Government to discuss the election preparations. The topic dominated the two meetings I had with the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Elisabeth Jones.

In my discussions with the national authorities, I stressed that it was the Chairman-in-Office or the Director of the ODIHR who would be responsible for taking the appropriate decisions about the nature of the OSCE's involvement. I agreed with officials that it would be crucial to involve the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the CoE, as

well as the European Parliament.

But I also made it clear that ultimately, it would be the responsibility of the Georgians to ensure the democratic character of the electoral process, and that the OSCE's engagement should come at the request of the country's political forces. At the same time, I also gave assurances that the OSCE would provide the maximum assistance possible in the election preparations.

[On 1 September, President Shevardnadze appointed Nana Devdariani as the new Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, out of the three candidates proposed by an advisory commission of the OSCE and the CoE. Mrs. Devdariani is currently the Public Defender of Georgia.]

Secretary General Jan Kubis (centre) at a Permanent Observation Point in Akhalsopeli in eastern Georgia (altitude: 1,800 metres), 4 kilometres from the Russian border. With him are Border Monitor Viorel Arsinoao, BMO Head Johannes Rietveld and Senior Security Co-ordinator Declan Greenway, who is looking through binoculars.

Politico-military issues

In addition to the OSCE activities in South Ossetia, the Georgian officials were appreciative of the OSCE Mission's other projects in the politico-military field and made known their additional needs. President Shevardnadze referred specifically to the project that successfully neutralized rocket fuel and transformed it into fertilizer, as well as a recent initiative to dispose of stockpiles of ammunition and bombs.

Overall, morale is high among the staff in the Mission in Tbilisi and in our small office in Tshkinvali, not to mention the border monitors. I would venture to say that our work in Georgia is a model for the rest of our field operations.

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OSCE community grieves for friends who died in Baghdad

“I am utterly appalled at this senseless and cowardly terrorist attack on people whose sole mission is to improve the lives of the people of Iraq,” Secretary General Jan Kubis said in a statement on 19 August, upon learning of the bomb attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

He recalled that UN Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello, who died in the blast, had addressed the OSCE Permanent Council on 21 November 2002, shortly after his appointment as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr. Vieira de Mello had told participating States that both the OSCE and the UNHCHR were guided “by the need for an effective struggle against those forces that attempt to subvert and destroy international and domestic security, while at the same time upholding the benchmarks of commonly held values”.

In a personal letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Ambassador Kubis, said: “Many of those who were killed were also our closest colleagues from places where we worked together, such as Kosovo. We will sorely miss them.”

* * *

The news that 35-year-old Fiona Watson was on the list of victims spread quickly within the OSCE family, bringing sorrow and disbelief. Fiona had served in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) from November 1999 until November 2000 as Reports Writer and Political Officer in the office of the Chief of Staff. In Baghdad, she was on her second month of serving as political officer on the staff of Mr. Vieira de Mello. A native of Pittenweem in Fife, Scotland, she was a graduate of Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and Cambridge, specializing in languages, international relations and ballistic studies.

“Such tragic events are a reminder of the risks faced by many of our colleagues in the OSCE and other international



Czech photographer Lubomir Kotek captured a beaming Fiona Watson outside the OSCE Election Counting Centre in Pristina on 27 October 2000, the eve of Kosovo's first municipal elections. She was on her way to distributing printed ballots to polling precincts.

organizations who work in hazardous areas,” said Sean Hand, Director for Human Resources, in a letter sent to OSCE staff. “May Fiona’s sense of dedication and commitment to humanitarian principles be an inspiration to us all.”

* * *

A Scottish newspaper quoted Fiona Watson's distraught mother as saying: “Fiona had so many friends all over the world whom she met during her work.” One of these friends was Urdur Gunnarsdottir, currently Spokesperson in the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and former Deputy Spokesperson in OMiK. She shares her memories of “Fi” as she was known to everyone:

Fi came to Kosovo during some of its darkest and most challenging hours – in November 1999. She was a breath of fresh air when she arrived, full of energy, smiles and ambitious plans. She soon became the centre of the growing group of international staff in Kosovo. Things just seemed to have a way of revolving around her.

Fi was open and positive and got along with everyone. These qualities, combined with a sharp mind and good analytical skills, made her an excellent reporting officer, a job that can be tedious and difficult when the information is not easily at hand. She had a way of extracting information from people through her charm and her genuine interest. We never really stood a chance when she launched a charm offensive, but we also knew that the information was in safe hands. I don't think that I was alone in admiring and secretly envying her for her skills and wit.

After a year with the OSCE, she moved on to new opportunities with the United Nations. We all knew that she would not leave it at that, for she was fearless and never seemed to stop. What we could not have known was that the Fi whom we loved and admired would become a victim of a senseless crime, bringing her life's journey to a brutal end.

It is sad beyond words.

In memoriam: Premek Hanus



OSCE/Peter Annon

Premek Hanus at the OSCE Istanbul Summit, November 1999

The Secretariat regrets to inform the OSCE community of the sad loss of Premysl Hanus, 43, who passed away after a long illness on 14 July. Premek, as he was known to everybody, was a Senior Information Technology Assistant in the Secretariat's IT Services Section. He was one of the longest-serving employees of the Organization and its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

A Czech national, Premek graduated from the University of Economics

in Prague in 1985 and joined the CSCE in 1992, when the Executive Secretariat was based in Prague. In 1996, he moved to Vienna where the fledgling OSCE head office was in the midst of a rapid period of expansion, led by the creation of new, large missions in the Balkans. He quickly became well-known for his methodical, dedicated approach to duty, as well as his readiness to assist colleagues in the Secretariat, the missions and Delegations to solve a myriad of baffling information

technology problems.

Over the years, he was also responsible for the preparation of IT requirements for the OSCE's major Ministerial Council and Summit meetings and for liaising with a wide range of contacts in the host countries to ensure that everything was in place.

As a colleague, he will always be remembered for his complete unflappability – nothing made him panic, even in the face of a computer network meltdown. He simply deployed a ready smile, a natural friendliness and a calm refusal to be defeated by technical problems that threatened to ruin the best-planned occasions.

A kind, big-hearted man and a devoted husband, Premek Hanus is sorely missed by his friends and colleagues. But most of all by his wife Mila, and their children, Barbora and Filip.



Premek, as sketched by his father on the family's note of appreciation to his colleagues and friends

OSCE Calendar

6 to 17 October, Warsaw, Poland. Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. ODIHR in co-operation with Chairmanship

9 to 12 October, Rome, Italy. Autumn Meeting of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Focus on religious freedom

20 and 21 October, Aqaba, Jordan. Mediterranean Seminar on the comprehensive approach to security: the OSCE experience and its relevance for the Mediterranean region. Organized by the OSCE and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

6 and 7 November, Warsaw, Poland. Special OSCE meeting on prevention of torture. Organized by ODIHR in co-operation with Chairmanship

1 to 2 December, Maastricht, the Netherlands. Eleventh OSCE Ministerial Council





Scenes from Central Asia during the visit of the Chairman-in-Office, July 2003

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