

Interview of the Ambassador Pierre von Arx

4 July 2017

1. The OSCE operates under a new mandate since May 1, 2017. Please, tell about the Mandate and new status of the office?

The new mandate is based on the wish of the Government of Kyrgyzstan to modernize the original mandate of the former OSCE Centre from 1998. The previous mandate was one of the oldest for the OSCE field mission – for example other field presences in Central Asia have revised their mandates three or even four times. Therefore, it was normal that a new mandate was negotiated.

Furthermore, the Kyrgyz Republic has undergone tremendous transformation in the past years. The country has developed into a peaceful and growing democratic society.

The new Mandate is active since 1st May 2017; it is reflecting the political agreement of the 57 participating states of the OSCE, including the Kyrgyz Republic.

I see this mandate as a real opportunity to enhance cooperation between OSCE and Kyrgyzstan: All future projects of the Office will be developed in a close cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic. Our programmatic activities will be compatible with the evolving needs and priorities of the host State. This is an opportunity to set priorities and make our activities more efficient. I want to underline that I attach great importance that all our activities are fully in line with – and also supporting – the strategic documents of the Kyrgyz republic, such as presidential decrees, national strategies, national action plans and the Kyrgyz law; they are also in line with the commitments of the OSCE.

One important point I would like to highlight is that we will rely more on national capacities and ownership. Our Office will agree with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on a strategy to gradually handover managerial positions to competent local staff members.

2. Please, tell about the fields of cooperation between OSCE and Kyrgyzstan?

I believe that we are at the beginning of a new positive and beneficial relationship between host country and the OSCE Programme Office. My goal is to be a helpful and loyal partner to the Kyrgyz Republic and to have a common vision with the host State. Now we are working together with the MFA to define new strategic objectives.

I would like to say that some important activities we implement – flagship projects – have started already several years ago, but we updated them annually by taking into account the new needs as they arise.

Our activities cover a wide range of security issues in the three OSCE dimensions: politico-military security, economic and environmental security as well as human security. Let's me elaborate on them.

The projects of the **politico-military dimension** will be developed and implemented with a focus on transnational threats, the prevention against radicalization and violent extremism, the fight against terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, enhancing law enforcement – I want to stress out the excellent cooperation we have with the Ministry of Interior – Security sector Governance with our support to the KWASS is also part of our activities.

WE have been requested by the Kyrgyz authorities to enhance our work in the economic sphere; I order to respond to this demand, I am currently reallocating resources. The cooperation with Kyrgyzstan on **economic and environment** dimension embraces several areas. Our project on economic regulatory reform is the main important and flagship project of our Office; it is aiming at enhancing business environment. We have also projects on the fight against corruption, on money laundering, public-private partnerships and the development of small/medium sized enterprises. In the environmental sphere I would like to mention natural disaster risk reduction and our support to the Aarhus Centres.

As for the **human security basket** we will develop new projects on social, economic and cultural rights that are new to OSCE activities. We will continue implementing the important multi-years projects on the rule of law, where we currently work on judicial reforms The Kyrgyz Government requested us to work on the fight against human trafficking, strengthening democratic institutions, freedom of expression and civil society development. Last but not least, in this important year of presidential elections, we will continue to support the Central Election Committee.

3. You may know about a new national digital project Taza Koom. Are there any fields for cooperation in line with Taza Koom?

Allow me to commend this exceptional initiative launched by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, President Atambayev, setting ambitious and well-conceived goal to transform the country into a better place for its citizens. "Taza Koom" initiative is an act of national leadership; this ambitious programme is fitting into the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. I am convinced that Taza Koom will set the agenda for national and international actors and can effectively direct efforts and resources.

Our Office is already delivering activities in line with the spirit of the "Taza Koom" initiative. Let's give me concrete examples. One of our flagship projects has been conducted in close partnership with the Prime Minister's Office; it is aiming to improve the business environment in the country. The project called "**Strengthening the Regulatory Governance**" was launched 3 years ago as a multi-year initiative. We are

working at simplifying laws on business facilitation, anti-corruption and anti-money laundering in order to create a competitive business environment.

Another example of effective co-operation with the governmental agencies is our support to the General Prosecutor Office's efforts to develop an **electronic unified registry of crimes and offences**.

The office made also valuable contributions to improve the **electoral system**, through the introduction of **new voting technologies** and the improvement of electoral legislation. We promoted an electronic learning platform that should allow an effective training for the members of the Central Election Committee.

4. What is the mission of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek?

First, I would like to mention that I have a privilege to act as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the OSCE Academy. It is very important to mention that Academy is a tuition-free post-graduate institution for all five Central Asian countries as well as Afghanistan and Mongolia.

The Academy has become a well-known institution for graduate education in Central Asia. Our two flagship programmes are the **master in Politics and Security** and the **master in Economy Governance and Development**. we have more than 1500 application for the two masters, whereas we accept about 50 students. We take the most talented students and provide them with a world-class education. Moreover, the Academy is conducting research, hosting international conferences and connecting the brightest minds of the region.

Out of almost 400 alumni in 2016, 72% live and work in their countries bringing unique expertise and experience. I would like to thank the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic for their full support and cooperation in preparing young and ambitious professionals.

5. Tell about your role as the Head of the Mission?

The first task that the Secretary General, H.E. Lamberto Zannier, gave to me when I enter into function in October last year is to create good and fruitful relations with the Kyrgyz Republic and enhancing the cooperation with the MFA.

I have two line of command if I can tell it so. On the one hand, as Fund Manager, I have to refer directly to the Secretary General; I am responsible for the finances, personal and the respect of rules of procedures for the implementation of our programmatic activities. On the other hand, since my mandate has been approves by a politically-binding decision by all 57 States of the OSCE, I have to report to the Permanent Council.

Presently, my first priority is governing the change from an OSCE Centre into a Programmatic Office and to implement the new mandate. We are still working to transform the former OSCE Centre into a Programme Office. Currently we are developing the most appropriate structure for the coming years, by taking into accounts the needs and priorities of the Kyrgyz Republic and ensuring national ownership.

We have also new mechanisms of cooperation in place, which needs to be tested and improved in close cooperation with the MFA and other ministries, in order to reach the most efficient implementation of our common programmatic activities.

Another important task as Head of Mission is the co-operation with the OSCE participating-States, the donor community and implementing partners. I am responsible for reporting on programmatic activities to the Permanent Council, to prepare the yearly budget of my Office and to defend it in front of the 57 OSCE member States.

Finally, I pay great attention to creating and maintaining of friendly and reliable environment in my Office, despite all the changes. I am always saying to my staff that only together we will succeed in all endeavours, and the new mandate is a great opportunity to ameliorate our work and enhance our capacities.