



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media**

12th Central Asia Media Conference

Access to information and new technologies

Dushanbe, Tajikistan

25-26 May 2010

DECLARATION

The Twelfth Central Asia Media Conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in cooperation with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, and with the assistance of the other four OSCE field operations, was held on 25-26 May 2010 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Media professionals and governmental officials from all five Central Asian states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - attended the conference to discuss the latest media developments in Central Asia with international experts. International experts and a journalist from Afghanistan also participated at the conference.

The specific focus of this year's conference was access to information and new technologies, including the international standards on access to information, Internet development and regulation, access to information in Central Asia and particularly the problems that societies in the region are facing in this regard.

The Conference:

1. Welcomes the fact that all Central Asian states sent participants, both civil society activists and government representatives, acknowledging the importance of regional cooperation in the field of media.
2. Reaffirms the importance of the right of all persons to request and receive information that is held by government agencies and calls on the authorities to respect that right. Media representatives exercise the same right as all persons. Collectively, they do so in the public interest.
3. Notes the importance of the right of access to information to ensure public participation in decision-making process and to promote public trust in authorities.
4. Calls on governments to facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information, including through modern information and communication technologies, so as to ensure wide access of the public to government information.

5. Reiterates that access to government-held information should be the rule and limitations to this right the exception. Such limitations shall be clearly defined by law and only as needed to preserve legitimate vital interests such as national security and privacy. The application of restrictions should be on a case-by-case basis subject to both harm and public interest tests and explicitly stipulated in the law.
6. In this respect, urges Governments not to prosecute or imprison journalists for holding or publishing classified information when its publishing is of public interest.
7. Equally, public figures must be ready to be scrutinized by media. Therefore imprisonment for defamation can never be an adequate punishment for media professionals and civil damages should be proportionate. The conference urges Central Asia governments to free journalists currently held in prison on any charges related to their professional activities.
8. Encourages public agencies to make information available proactively and define minimum information that has to be made available by all public agencies on official websites and other means of public communication.
9. Points out that new technologies strengthen democracy by ensuring easy access to information and allowing members of the public actively to seek, access and impart information.
10. Calls upon state institutions with legislative competencies to refrain from adopting new legislation and /or amending legislation to restrict the free flow of information on the Internet.
11. Emphasizes that the Internet offers unique opportunities to foster the free flow of information, which is a basic OSCE commitment, and governments should use the Internet to facilitate wider access to information and promote government services on-line (e-government).

Dushanbe, 25-26 May 2010.