

Regional Conference: Advancing the Rights of Minorities in Central Asia

Special focus: effective participation in public life

Bishkek, June 21, 2011

Opening remarks by Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere,

Dear Rosa Isakovna, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, I would like to welcome you at today's conference, devoted to advancing the rights of minorities in Central Asia.

The conference will once again draw attention to the problems faced by minorities in the region. We all understand that it is impossible to construct a full-fledged modern society in the countries of Central Asia without taking into account the rights of national minorities.

Last year's events in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the south of the country, demonstrate the need of special efforts to solve the problems of interethnic relations and integration of national minorities with a long-term approach. In this regard, we note the recommendations of an international commission, implementation of which can contribute to better integration of minorities into the society in Kyrgyzstan.

The conference will take another look at the existing problems in the field of interethnic relations, as well as to identify possible solutions. We are particularly pleased that the conference will be held in Kyrgyzstan, a country whose authorities have demonstrated a desire to solve existing problems, rather than deny their existence. For example, last year, at the initiative of President of Kyrgyzstan, and with the support of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE Centre in Bishkek a concept of ethnic development and consolidation of society in Kyrgyzstan was developed.

Realizing the importance of such issues, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek for many years has been supporting several projects aimed at solving the problems of ethnic relations and ethnic minorities, conflict prevention and early warning. In past years, the Centre, in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, has supported the development of multilingual and multicultural education in Kyrgyzstan.

Besides, the OSCE Centre supported training for mediators throughout the country. In some cases, the mediators, trained within our project in the south, were able to effectively contribute to combating violence in Jalalabad, Uzgen and even in Osh. In addition, we supported trainings for journalists and human rights activists on responsible coverage of crises and issues of ethnic relations. This year we will continue the same activities.

Also last year, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, was one of the initiators of establishing a coordinating mechanism for reconciliation, conflict prevention and peace building (RECAP), which aims to coordinate the activities of international and nongovernmental organizations re peace building activities in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE is a co-chair of the mechanism, together with UN OHCHR and the mission of the EU.

In this regard, I want to thank everyone for participating in this event and wish you a productive meeting. I hope that this conference will make a significant contribution in addressing issues related to ethnic minorities in Central Asia.

Thank you for your attention