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OSCE PA President Bruce George opening the Forum together with Kazakh President Nazarbayev, Speakers of the Kazakh Parliament.

OSCE Parliamentarians focus on Central Asia

The **Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum** held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 7-9 June 2003 gathered more than 90 parliamentarians from 30 OSCE participating States as well as parliamentarians from partner States Japan, Korea and Egypt. The main theme of the OSCE PA Forum was "The Trans-Asian Dimension of the OSCE: A Vital Security Link". Representatives of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the CIS, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Conference Member States as well as the diplomatic corps in Almaty and numerous NGOs also attended the Forum, which was composed of three Sessions: "The Fight against Terrorism: Successes and Lingering Threats to the Region", "The Economy and the Environment: The Link to Long Term Security" and "The Development of Democratic Institutions: Stepping Stone to Regional Security".

The Forum, organized by the OSCE PA with the cooperation of the United Nations Development Program and hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was addressed by prominent officials including Bruce George, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, Oralbai Abdykarimov, Speaker of the Senate, Zhamarkhan Tuyakbai, Speaker of the Majlis, Kasymzhomart Tokaev, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Kairat Kelimbetov, Minister of Economy

and Budget Planning and Lynn Pascoe, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. The Conference was also addressed by Jan Kubis, OSCE Secretary General, Fikret Akcura, UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan, Alexander Veshnyakov, Chair of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and Willem Hendrik de Beaufort, Secretary General of the Dutch House of Representatives.

Closing the Trans-Asian Forum with a Final Statement, President George noted that Central Asia is a region with enormous assets, particularly in its resilient people and natural resources. "Yet it has been bequeathed massive problems that we have been hearing about in detail these last few days. There are formidable obstacles to economic, social and political development, yet they are not insurmountable" said President George. He applauded the overall success of the Conference in reaching its main goal, which was raising awareness and increasing parliamentary dialogue on issues of security in the

trans-Asian dimension of the OSCE.

Prior to the Forum President George held bilateral meetings with President Nazarbayev and Foreign Minister Tokaev. He also paid a visit to the OSCE Centre in Almaty and held meetings with representatives of political parties and NGOs.



Tone Tingsgård chairs the first session with Kazakh Foreign Minister Tokaev, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynn Pascoe, Tajik Chair of the Defense Committee Shavkad Ismoilov and OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Vitaliy Evsyev.