OSCE FIELD OPERATIONS 2003
OSCE Presence in Albania

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF PRESENCE

The year 2003 has been marked by a restructuring of the Presence, a refocusing of its activities, and a new mandate adopted on 24 December. These changes have helped to maintain the Presence’s role as a moderator and facilitator on important political issues.

With the Albanian partners and the OSCE/ODIHR, the Presence made an important contribution to electoral reform and the adoption of the new Electoral Code in June.

The OSCE-led Technical Expert Group gathered key national and international experts who drafted a new property restitution and compensation law in October – a law which is expected to resolve the long standing property issue in Albania. The draft successfully made its way through the parliamentary committees and its adoption is expected in 2004.

In all areas of its work, the Presence has continued to co-operate actively with the Albanian Government, other state institutions, civil society and the international community in promoting democratization, human rights and rule of law.

Head of Presence, Osmo Lipponen

Human Dimension Activities

ELECTORAL REFORM AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The Bipartisan Committee and the new Electoral Code

The Presence facilitated and supported the work of the Bipartisan Committee for Electoral Reform. With the consensus of the two main parties and contribution from the smaller ones, by April the Committee had addressed most of the recommendations contained in the OSCE/ODIHR Final Report on the 2001 elections. Bilateral discussions between the two main parties resulted in additional amendments on other issues such as electoral administration. The resulting new Electoral Code was agreed by the Assembly in June, ending a decade of opposition-majority disagreement over the legal framework for elections. The two largest parties have committed themselves to a second phase of discussions on outstanding issues identified to take place after the local government elections held in October.

In the context of its electoral assistance project, the Presence funded local expertise on key sections of the Code and organised training for the media on the new provisions governing its role in the campaign and journalistic ethics in elections.

Local government elections took place in Albania on 12 October under the new Code in 384 municipalities and communes. The Presence assisted the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission in its work and also continued to follow a number of re-run elections throughout the country.

Developing national election observation capacities

Through a capacity-building project, the Presence facilitated the establishment of a Forum of Domestic Observers for the local government elections, which resulted in 18 organisations adopting standardised election observation methodology and issuing a joint preliminary report. In co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presence has also developed a pool of Albanian nationals for deployment as short- and long-term election observation missions.

Local self-government

The Presence has continued to support the implementation of the government’s decentralisation strategy, and has been invited to assist with facilitation and expertise in the field of territorial reform.

Supporting Parliament

The Presence’s parliamentary support project on modernising the capacity of the Albanian Assembly focused on two priorities in 2003: working with the Committee on Economy, Finance and Privatisation to expand and strengthen their participation in and oversight of the annual budget process; and continuing the parliamentary administration staff training begun at the end of 2002.

Head of Presence: Ambassador Osmo Lipponen | Revised budget: € 3,949,200
With the Committee, the project organised a series of seminars on aspects of the annual budget preparation procedure, and on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (N SSD). In March, the project organised a study visit to the Parliaments of Finland, Sweden and Poland. The conclusions drawn from the study visit provided the committee members with further evidence to support their case for amending the Organic Budget Law in favour of enlarging the Assembly’s role in the budget process.

The project completed an initial cycle of introductory training courses designed to strengthen the professional skills of the parliamentary administration staff. It also collaborated with other OSCE Missions in South-eastern Europe to organise a regional conference on the role of Parliaments in human and economic development in Sarajevo, in October.

Broadening support for civil society
The Civil Society Development Centre (CSDC) project – which was developed in 2001 to deliver a grass-roots development programme to NGOs and community-based groups in five Albanian regions – improved the access of regional civil society to both local government and international organisations. The centres have been increasingly involved in fostering dialogue between civil society and local government and in co-ordinating different local civil society groups.

An external evaluation established the CSDCs to be the only such regional centres to offer different kinds of services and training to civil society groups.

Strengthening civil society’s role in policy-making
The Presence assisted the Government in drafting a National Strategy for People with Disabilities by supporting an inaugural conference on the strategy and initiating an institutionalised exchange among the ministries and civil society organisations dealing with the issue. The Presence has also ensured the contribution of NGOs to a National Monitoring and Reporting Scheme, in cooperation with the Albanian Government and a high-level German expert. A donor conference is envisaged to take place in mid-2004 in Tirana.

Enhancing equal opportunities
The Presence has been assisting the Government’s National Committee for Equal Opportunities to support their efforts in drafting a National Gender Action Plan. The Presence has worked on a Legal Sector Development Project to increase transparency in court practices and to raise trial standards.

Protecting witnesses
Through Presence assistance, a Memorandum of Understanding on Witness Protection was signed between Albanian authorities and international organisations in June. The memorandum formalised the Task Force on Witness Protection, which is chaired by the Presence, and brought new actors into this body. The Task Force has been successful in relocating victims whose testimony has been crucial for the prosecution of traffickers and other dangerous criminals. The Task Force facilitated the finalisation of the Law on Witness Protection which has been submitted by the Government to Parliament for approval.

Human rights
Fighting human trafficking
The Presence signed a Memorandum of Understanding on pre-screening of irregular migrants, with the Ministries of Public Order and of Local Government and Decentralisation, and international partners. It enables referral of the detained foreigners to appropriate procedures for asylum and voluntary repatriation. A new Memorandum is expected to extend the pre-screening to border crossings.
Through the implementation of the Victims Assistance Team project, which ran from October 2002 to September 2003, the Presence provided legal advice to Albanian women repatriated from western European countries. The project assisted the Albanian authorities in identifying victims of trafficking more effectively. It strengthened co-operation between the Albanian Anti-Trafficking Police Teams and other relevant government and non-governmental actors, as well as improved the already existing referral system with the IOM, the Ministry of Public Order and the Prosecutor General’s Office.

Tackling pre-trial detention conditions
The Presence has conducted a survey on respect for human rights in pre-trial detention, which suggested that physical conditions in cells have worsened in recent years.

Working on Romani and minority issues
The Presence assisted the Government in organising the first national roundtable on Roma and in compiling the National Strategy for Improving Roma Living Conditions. The Presence continues to monitor the implementation of this strategy and has begun a survey to assess minority access to education.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA
Supporting regulation of broadcast spectrum
The Presence produced recommendations for the preparation of a frequency plan to the regulatory body, the National Council of Radio and Television (NCRT). An important contribution towards the regulation of the broadcast spectrum, this joint project was built upon established co-operation between the Presence, the International Research and Exchanges Board and the European Radio-communications Office.

Commenting on media legislation
In July, the Presence provided the Albanian Assembly with recommendations on the draft amendments to the electronic media law. A number of suggestions were adopted. The comments were compiled by ARTICLE 19 and were channelled through the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

Boosting the business climate
In co-operation with the Ministry of Economy, the Presence has supported the SME sector in Albania by bringing the Government and private sector closer through a series of nation-wide seminars on Free Trade Agreements (FTA). This project also published background materials on FTAs for the business community. Given the project’s success and continued interest, the Ministry has sought an extension of this co-operation by planning a series of TV broadcasts with business representatives and technical experts on free trade.

Integrating youth into the democratization process
A series of Youth Entrepreneurship Seminars (YES) was organised in Albania. The seminars aimed at stimulating youth participation in society, through enhancing their entrepreneurial spirit and awareness of their role in the democratic process.

Promoting good governance in different stakeholders
The Presence focused on issues of good governance and transparency, to promote actions against corruption, increase the efficiency of public officials and accountability of public and private stakeholders. Technical support and training in analytical skills were provided to the Ministry of Finance, and further activities are foreseen.

A project introducing business ethics in Albanian universities has been undertaken with the aim to enable young people to run businesses without corruption. The project consisted of training seminars for lecturers and students and publication of the teaching book Ethics, Economy and Business.

Politico-Military Dimension Activities

Boosting the cross-border co-operation process
The Presence facilitated joint Border Co-operation Meetings (JBCM) between the Albanian State Police and UNMIK/KFOR. The JBCM is the forum for exchange of information in the cross-border co-operation process. Following the Ohrid Conference in May, and in conjunction with the terms of the Way Forward Document, the Presence has continued to support the Albanian Government, by assisting the State Police in the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Border Management Plan.

‘Enough’ is enough!
The OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE Netherlands Chairmanship co-operated with civil groups to run a four-month publicity campaign, which was aimed at increasing participation in civil society. Launched on 15 March 2003, the MJAFT! (ENOUGH!) campaign targets around 3 million Albanians at home and abroad and has been hailed as the largest awareness-raising and advocacy campaign ever held in Albania. MJAFT! has activated discussions and stirred public debates on numerous important issues in the country.
MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF MISSION

Significant progress has been achieved in 2003 through an ever deepening and productive partnership between the OSCE and Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities.

The Mission dedicated substantial efforts in facilitating the implementation of major reform of the education system in BiH. In June, the State Parliament adopted a Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education unanimously; Education Ministers agreed to a Common Core Curriculum in August; and the Government ratified the Lisbon Convention and signed the Bologna Declaration.

As a result, students throughout the country will soon enjoy the benefits flowing from a common foundation for further modernisation of the education system, ensuring better quality and higher standards for all.

For the first time since the 1992-95 conflict, BiH’s armed forces will have a single command and administrative structure, and wear a single uniform. The Mission reflects with pride on its contribution to these positive developments.

The Mission also worked with BiH authorities to reform governance and the public administration at the local level: citizens are the Mission’s focus and especially youth who were encouraged to engage in public life and actively support on-going reforms. The restoration of pre-war property to those displaced by the conflict was again a top priority, and, in contrast to earlier years, the results in 2003 were very positive. By year’s end, 93% of the claims lodged had been resolved.

Although much work remains to be done in order to see irreversible stability and economic development take root in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Mission’s work in 2003 can be assessed as having made a very real contribution to improving the quality of life for the citizens throughout the country.

Human Dimension Activities

EDUCATION

In co-operation with BiH authorities and other international agencies, the Mission has been working to implement the education reform targets agreed upon in 2002. A Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education was passed in June, setting core standards.

Promoting structural reforms The Mission channelled efforts into promoting structural reforms of the education systems in co-operation with the Council of Europe, European Commission, World Bank and UN agencies. Consequently, a state-level Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education was passed in June, setting the basic standards for education and ensuring greater mobility for all students across BiH.

Soon after, BiH authorities adopted a Common Core Curriculum, which provides a basis for the harmonisation of syllabi for primary and general secondary education, and for further modernisation of BiH education systems. The Mission has also been working with its partner agencies on developing a state-level law on higher education.

Reunifying Mostar Old Gymnasium

The Mission encouraged authorities to re-unify the Mostar Old Gymnasium, which will allow Bosniac and Croat children to attend school together. The Gymnasium was registered as a single legal entity in August. The Mission is now supporting joint extra-curricular activities to promote greater interaction between students and teachers and fund raising for its reconstructions.

The Old Mostar Gymnasium has been a symbol of quality education in the region since it first opened its doors in 1893. In recent years, the school has fallen into disrepair and has become ethnically segregated. The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is working to help restore the school to its former glory. The first step is to ensure that the school will welcome students regardless of their heritage. Now known as the Gymnasium Mostar, students of different ethnic backgrounds will attend the school in 2004.
**Promoting vocational education**
The Mission worked closely with the European Union and the Council of Europe to develop a draft state-level framework law on vocational education and training, which aims to set the regulatory stage for further modernisation of this strategic sector for the economic development.

Another priority was to encourage BiH authorities to ensure a more transparent, equitable, cost-effective and financially sustainable investment of public resources in the education sector.

**Putting an end to segregation in schools**
The Mission encouraged returnee children to attend school in their area of return rather than commuting to attend ethnically segregated schools. The Mission is also supporting the BiH authorities to end the segregation phenomenon of 'two schools under one roof'.

The Mission supported the work of the Inter-Entity Textbook Review Commission, whose purpose was to remove inappropriate material from school textbooks prior to the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year.

**Boosting higher education in BiH**
The Mission worked intensively with its local and international partners to assist BiH to take a number of important steps in the reform of Higher Education, key among these:
- the signing of the Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, in July
- the joining of the Bologna Process, whose objective it is to establish a European higher-education zone by the year 2010. For students in BiH, this will mean increased mobility both within the country and abroad, easier recognition of qualifications and improved quality of degree programmes.

**DEMOCRATIZATION**

**Promoting Government accountability**
The Parliamentary Support Programme (PSP) enhanced the capacity of BiH Parliamentary Assembly members to perform their functions. It also facilitated co-operation between the State and Entity Parliaments.

Key components of the PSP were strengthening committee work, building the capacity of parliamentary support staff and supporting co-operation with the Parliaments of other OSCE participating States. The Mission also organised training sessions for journalists to enhance media reporting on parliamentary issues.

At the local level, the Mission assisted local authorities to implement measures to increase transparency and accountability in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

**Promoting citizens’ participation**
The Mission’s activities in this area were directed at promoting the development of an engaged, informed and empowered citizenry: able to seek accountability from the Government and organise itself to meet its own needs.

Work has begun to develop an appropriate legal and regulatory framework to promote voluntary action and citizens’ engagement.

**Involving young citizens**
Increased participation of young people in public life, in particular at the municipal level, is the aim of the Mission’s Youth programme. The Mission and the Council of Europe co-organised a conference in September, to promote the development of youth policy and called on BiH authorities to implement the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life.

Through the Successor Generation Initiative Project (SGI), the Mission worked directly with selected young leaders from various backgrounds, boosting their ability to take part in public life and act as agents of change.

**Making public administration more efficient and transparent**
The Mission worked with public administrations at the municipal and cantonal levels, providing assessments, recommendations and mentoring in the areas of public finance and human resources management.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW**

**Reuniting returnees with their property**
The Mission continued work to promote and support the substantial completion of the property repossession process by the end of the year. Efforts were made in conjunction with the Office of the High Representative for Returnees and the Commission for Real Property Claims.

With the objective of developing more responsive and accountable governance at all levels, the Mission is supporting the BiH authorities in their efforts to fully implement the Freedom of Information Act.
The issue of refugee return at the regional level was also addressed, in partnership with the OSCE Missions to Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro and the UNHCR. A Joint Action Plan – which set out clearly defined steps to facilitate the regional return process – is being implemented.

The Mission is also working to ensure that returnees have equal access to social benefits, such as health care and pensions, public utilities, education and employment.

Supporting human rights institutions
The Mission continued to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Human Rights Chamber and to support the work of the entity ombudsman institutions as they are embedded within the domestic structures.

Monitoring the legal system
The implementation of the Criminal Codes and Criminal Procedure Codes, enacted at both State and Entity levels, were monitored to identify further legal reform needs, and to produce recommendations for the enhanced application of the Codes.

The Mission continued to monitor the domestic prosecution of war crimes to assess whether proceedings are conducted impartially, effectively and in accordance with international human rights standards.

With a view to producing recommendations to local authorities for the correct prosecution of such cases, the Mission also continued to observe trials related to trafficking in human beings, return-related violence and abuse of office.

Supporting the judicial reform
The Mission participated in the reappointment process of judges and prosecutors by providing information on the strength of candidature to the Independent Judicial Commission.

Additionally, technical assistance was provided to and through the Entity judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centres.

Defending the rights of Roma and other minorities
Civil registration is essential as it allows children to enrol at school and to access social benefits. To this end, the Mission worked with Roma NGOs and BiH authorities to encourage Roma to register their children at birth.

The status of Romani informal settlements across BiH was assessed, examining security of tenure issues and housing assistance needs.

Fighting human trafficking
The Mission worked intensively with BiH authorities, local NGOs and other international organisations in their efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. There was a particular focus on supporting the BiH authorities to implement a National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings.

Supporting BiH Election Commission
As a permanent member, the Mission supported and took part in the activities of the BiH Election Commission. Monitoring the implementation of the Law on Conflict of Interest, and electoral law reform, were the principal areas of concern.
**Politico-Military Dimension Activities**

**Supporting the reform of defence structures**
The current defence structures in BiH prevent the State from full compliance with BiH’s commitments under the OSCE politico-military dimension, in particular democratic control of armed forces. The Mission participated in and supported the work of the Defence Reform Commission established in May 2003 by the High Representative. The reform aims require inter alia defence structures and related legislation to be fully consistent with the OSCE commitments undertaken by BiH.

The Commission concluded its work in September with the publication of its final report. The Mission then worked to galvanise the political support needed for the timely adoption of the relevant legislation related to the reform of defence structures. The BiH Law on Defence and other relevant laws were passed in December 2003.

**Encouraging democratic control of armed forces**
Major emphasis was given to establish functioning democratic control over armed forces – to enhance parliamentary oversight at the State level. In this regard the Mission worked with both houses of the BiH State Parliament to establish a joint committee on defence and security issues.

The Mission also continued to support the establishment of a fully operational secretariat for the Standing Committee for Military Matters.

**Implementing Annex 1B of the Dayton Agreement**
The Mission continued to provide support to the Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office for Articles II and IV of Annex 1B of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

**Life after the army**
Jasmin Razić started a business in bee keeping after leaving the army. He and thousands of other former soldiers are successfully finding jobs as part of a widespread demobilisation program. The OSCE Mission to BiH works with the IOM, the World Bank and the IMF to help ex-soldiers’ transition to civilian life. As a result of military downsizing, the country reduced its armed forces to 20,000 soldiers, saving approximately €102 million.
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF MISSION

The change of Government in Croatia after the general elections in November 2003 comes at a time when Croatia is at a crucial point in its efforts to join the European Union. As a result of this, the OSCE Mission to Croatia is busier now than ever before. The issues covered by its mandate closely parallel those Croatia must address for EU membership. As the Government and other key political actors pay more attention to those issues, the Mission offers advice and support and facilitates and co-ordinates external advice.

There have been important positive changes in areas within the mandate in the past year. Implementation of the important Constitutional Law on National Minorities has begun with elections to the new minority councils. The Government presented a judicial reform programme that recognises some of the concerns voiced by the Mission.

For the first time, the Government has acknowledged the need to provide all refugees who wish to return with adequate housing, including those who lived in apartments with so-called occupancy/tenancy rights. Parliament adopted several media-related laws which were largely based on advice from the OSCE and its international partners.

The Mission continues to play a major role in support of the implementation of new legislation as Croatia is now awaiting the European Commission’s response to its membership application.

With its widespread field presence, the Mission is in a unique position to promote reconciliation and support the implementation of legislation and programmes related to human rights protection throughout the country. During this period and beyond, the Mission will work closely with the Government in addressing issues that are linked to the accession process. Many of these issues, such as refugee return and minority rights, will require a strong commitment from all of Croatian society over a long period of time.

OSCE Mission to Croatia

The Mission funded the documentary series ‘ Somebody’s Land’, recognising that it was not only of interest to the refugee population and Bosnian Croat settlers but also to Croatian society as a whole. The issues raised in the series are important in the context of Croatia’s European integration processes.

Head of Mission, Peter Semneby

Head of Mission: Ambassador Peter Semneby | Revised budget: € 10,110,700
Human Dimension Activities

HUMAN RIGHTS

Improving the human rights situation in Croatia is the focus of all core Mission activities. This includes supporting the reform and effective implementation of Croatian legislation, the reform of the judiciary and administrative systems and the promotion of democratic values and civil society.

To raise public awareness and respect for Croatia’s human rights domestic institutions, the Mission funded projects to support the Ombudsman and Constitutional Court.

The Mission also developed a nation-wide pilot project for judicial training on fair trial principles, which was conducted in the spring and autumn.

Progress on minority rights

The Mission actively monitored the implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM), which was adopted with much input from the OSCE.

The Mission funded the development and distribution of voter information in advance of the May minority council elections – one of the measures foreseen by the CLNM.

A series of training workshops for the newly elected members of the minority councils was also developed and funded by the Mission.

REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

More than 100,000 Croatian Serb refugees and displaced persons have been registered as having returned, and are living within Croatia, while 200,000 remain outside Croatia, mainly in Serbia-Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Mission, with its international partners, advised the Government on ways to remove legal and administrative obstacles which hamper the return and settlement of refugees. In that respect, it has placed emphasis on the creation of an atmosphere conducive to return and reintegration in Croatia.

Repossession of property

The Mission has monitored the implementation of a new legal regime on property repossession, which was adopted in 2002 in response to longstanding advice from the Mission.

Four joint monitoring reports have been released by the Mission, in co-operation with the UNHCR. The reports contain recommendations on accelerating property repossession and compensating owners unable to repossess their pre-war properties by the legal deadlines.

State reconstruction assistance

The Government has begun providing reconstruction assistance to significant numbers of Croatian Serb beneficiaries. This followed joint recommendations agreed with the international community on the full implementation of the Law on Reconstruction. The process has been virtually completed for Croatian beneficiaries.

The Mission has referred previously rejected cases to the Government for review, with positive results.

Redress for lost housing and terminated tenancy rights

Following renewed efforts by the Mission and other international institutions, the Government adopted a housing plan in June for former holders of occupancy/tenancy rights (OTR) who once lived in socially owned urban apartments. This means that refugees from Croatia’s urban centres will for the first time have access to housing if they decide to return.

The Mission actively contributed to creating an implementation plan for the programme. Extensive monitoring of the process is planned for 2004.

Joint Action Plan

A Joint Action Plan (JAP) of the Missions to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro was adopted by the Heads of Mission in May.

The JAP is based on a set of Common Principles on Return, which were presented to the OSCE Permanent Council in October/November 2001.

RULE OF LAW

The Mission offered recommendations for legislative reform, in particular, on issues related to restitution of private property as well as access to court and free legal aid. Of particular concern to the Mission was the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the Constitutional Court, many of which focused on the functioning of the judiciary.

War crimes

The Mission continued its trial-monitoring programme of approximately 70 domestic war crime trials.

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In autumn, the Mission prepared an annual review of its 2002 monitoring activities. The monitoring took on greater importance in late 2003, given the UN Security Council’s enhanced focus on the capacity of domestic judiciaries as a key to the ICTY’s completion strategy.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA

Media legislation to European standards
In 2003, the Mission stepped up its activities as the Government reformed media legislation. Expert assistance was provided in the drafting phase by the Mission, in co-operation with the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media, the Council of Europe, European Commission and the Stability Pact.

The Croatian Parliament has adopted four important media laws: the Law on Croatian Radio and Television (HRT), the Electronic Media Law, the Media Law and the Telecommunications Law.

Libel
The Mission provided the Government with an OSCE analysis on changes to the Criminal Code which removed a provision protecting journalists from criminal prosecution. The analysis – written by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media – recommended the decriminalisation of libel and the repeal of controversial provisions.

Strengthening local media development
Mission staff met regularly with private and public media outlets throughout Croatia to offer assistance and advice on local media development.

A series of media development activities were funded, including:
• two monitoring projects of the Media Council for Human Rights on the political content of the programmes of Croatian Television (HTV), and on media coverage during the pre-election period
• printing costs for three minority newspapers, and their joint publication on housing issues
• a documentary series on refugees and returnees which is to be aired by Croatian Television (HTV).

POLICE DEVELOPMENT

The Mission’s Police Affairs Officers are providing their Croatian colleagues with advice on:
• police education and training
• human resources management
• community policing
• administrative and structural reform
• international and regional co-operation.

The Mission is currently working on structural reforms. The Mission continues to chair an informal police assistance donors’ co-ordination body in Zagreb.

Community policing

Community policing – based on a model of policing similar to that found in Britain and Germany – has continued to develop in Croatia with substantive assistance provided by the Mission.

In 2002/3, the Mission supported the Croatian Government in training nearly 100 community police officers – called Contact Officers – who have been working in six pilot sites across the country.

These sites include the war affected areas of Vukovar and Sisak. Initial results were positive and, in 2004, the Government intends to introduce community policing across the country, with the training and deployment of an additional 700 officers.

CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

The 2003 Democratization Programme focused on two key aspects: institution building and civil society development. In addition, preparations were made for a Public Awareness Campaign (PAC) on Return and Reconciliation, in co-operation with the Government and international donors.

One of the key goals of the PAC – which is expected to be launched in 2004 – is to contribute to climate conducive to refugee return.

76 projects generated by the Mission, local partners and member states were implemented, representing a total of €1.2 million. These projects encompassed a broad spectrum of areas:
• fostering multi-ethnic co-operation and reconciliation
• strengthening the outreach and the stature of the Croatian Ombudsman institution
• improving the capacity and skills of local Governments, NGOs, Roma and other minority associations
• training members of the recently elected local national minority councils on their responsibilities under recent legislation, as well as practical guidance on organising and embarking on their work
• providing psychological and social support for victims of the war.

Multi-ethnic co-operation and reconciliation

Various local projects that brought together multi-ethnic groups were supported in 2003, including:
• women in small businesses
• cross-border projects – bringing together NGOs, local Governments and other associations from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss recruitment, motivation and fostering volunteerism
• youth summer camps and clubs, study trips to Parliament, and support for young adults interested in taking part in the political and economic life of their municipalities.
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF MISSION

The OSCE partnership to help Kosovo move from a troubled past to a stable future has continued apace in 2003. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) has assisted Kosovo in meeting the challenges of self-government.

OMiK’s tasks are far from complete. Kosovo is constantly evolving and the Mission has adapted its work to the situation on the ground. The core task of institution-building has not changed, but the Mission has restructured its plans to help ensure the sustainability of Kosovo’s institutions.

The main objectives of 2003 were:
• capacity-building both within the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) and civil society
• promoting reconciliation and inter-ethnic dialogue
• monitoring, promoting, and raising awareness of human rights and rule of law, particularly issues of non-discrimination
• developing the media
• continued training and specialisation of the Kosovo Police Service

Preparing the electoral groundwork for 2004

OMiK is unique among all OSCE missions in that it is directly responsible for the organisation and running of elections. For the next elections in Kosovo, OMiK and a local body will share electoral responsibilities.

In 2003 – the first year without an election after three consecutive years – the focus was on planning and preparing the ground for handover of electoral ‘know-how’ and operational responsibilities to an emerging local counterpart.

Transferring electoral capabilities to a Kosovo authority

The Central Elections Commission (CEC) Secretariat was established as the operational arm of the future electoral management body. Its creation is a crucial element in the transferring of capabilities. To ensure its sustainability, the core staff was recruited according to local civil service rules and salaries. The CEC Secretariat and OMiK will share responsibilities for the organisation and management of the 2004 Kosovo Assembly Election.

In 2003, OMiK, as Pillar III of the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), has successfully adapted to new developments, and is yielding tangible results. Self-government is forming: democracy is beginning to take hold.

UNMIK and the international community continue to uphold the general policy of prescribed standards and have set attainable levels of performance for Kosovo society and the PISG, which would at some future time permit integration into a wider Europe.

The Mission looks forward to the new challenges ahead and successful co-operation with all partners.

Human Dimension Activities

ELECTIONS

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• developing the media
• continued training and specialisation of the Kosovo Police Service

Preparing the electoral groundwork for 2004

To increase local ownership of the process, the Elections Working Group (EWG) met throughout the year to produce consensus recommendations for modifications to the framework used in previous elections. The EWG is a consultative forum, hosted and chaired by OMiK, and composed of representatives of the main local political and civil forces. The recommendations are to be sent to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for approval as an appropriate electoral regulation, which will define the framework for the 2004 elections.

DEMOCRATIZATION

Support to the Assembly of Kosovo

The Assembly’s development as an institution, since 2001, has been accompanied by the OMiK-led Assembly Support Initiative (ASI). The ASI has continued to conduct and arrange training seminars on parliamentary work and policy issues, in Kosovo and abroad.

Many programmes focused on developing the capabilities of the Assembly Committees and Secretariat to manage legislation. The ASI also encouraged non-legislative work, including field visits, holding public hearings and drafting reports on policy issues.

OMiK supported the start of the Assembly Bulletin in the Albanian and Serbian languages, to help publicly promote the work of the Assembly to voters. Progress was made on strengthening the regional dimension of parliamentary support and co-operation.

The Mission has facilitated co-operation between the PISG assembly of Kosovo and the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. With other OSCE Missions in South-eastern Europe and ODIHR, it organised a conference in October, which brought together parliamentarians from the region to discuss issues and ways to engage in policy-making debate.
Supporting municipal governance
The Municipal Assembly Support Programme (MASP) aims to improve good governance at the local level. Over the course of the year, the programme has shifted from a technical to a more policy-orientated content: it now aims to strengthen Municipal Assembly members’ skills in policy formulation and implementation, including budget and economic development issues.

OMIK also carried out the Responsible Governance and Civic Participation Programme – a series of citizen consultation projects designed to increase involvement with municipal structures. Other initiatives such as the Youth Assemblies Project aimed at enhancing young citizens’ understanding of local policy-making and community issues.

136 school children from all communities and regions in Kosovo attended the three-day Junior Safety Officer Summer Camp to learn about road and school safety, conducted by the Kosovo Police Service School in Vushtrri/Vucitrn, in July.

Reforming local government
Over the course of 2003, the Council of Europe ran a decentralisation mission, which designed a concept for local government reform in Kosovo. The experience of OMIK contributed to this effort to develop guiding principles - which aim to provide alternatives to ensure more effective and responsible local management, and improve the delivery of public services to all citizens.

Nurturing civic participation
Civil society organisations have progressively become more involved in holding Government institutions publicly accountable. The mission encourages grassroots initiatives that support citizens’ rights giving attention to the relationship between communities, and promoting democratic values within communities and municipal structures.

The Civic Dialogue Project connects NGOs and other civic groups from Kosovo and Serbia through non-political activities and reconciliation projects. OMIK’s main partners in this endeavour are the M other Theresa Society from Kosovo and the Centre for Regionalism from Novi Sad in Serbia proper. All programmes support the participation of women in society, strengthening their contribution as decision-makers in both the political and social spheres.

On a more local level, OMIK’s community centre network continues to be instrumental in promoting best practices throughout Kosovo.

Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo Pascal Fieschi at the opening ceremony of the library at the Special Institute in Shtime / Štinji Municipality, in September.

GOOD GOVERNANCE
Advising the Office of the Prime Minister
The Mission supports two advisory offices in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) – those on good governance, human rights, equal opportunity and gender; and on communities. The group has supported dialogue between the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and UNMIK in reserved and transferred areas, such as:
• on property issues for ethnic minorities and communities
• minority employment
• anti-discrimination in employment and services
• gender issues
• cultural heritage protection.

Advice extends to other offices within the OPM, as well as to other Ministries.
OMIK, through its presence in the OPM, contributes to the capacity-building of the OPM, and monitors performance of the PISG in key areas of OSCE concern.

Returns and Reconciliation
As part of the returns process, OMIK has concentrated on activities to make it possible for returning families to remain in Kosovo, establish themselves and build working relationships with their neighbours. The Mission has worked to ensure the conditions necessary for sustainable return, such as equal access to basic services and employment, as well as to property. It has encouraged the governmental institutions which provide these services, protections, and remedies to respect the human rights of all, without discrimination.

OMIK’s Small Investment Minority Fund supported the reconciliation and integration of smaller communities into society, through 47 effective inter-ethnic and tolerance-building projects. Efforts were largely conducted at the field level, and brought together communities to address common concerns. Local institutions were empowered to resolve disputes through consultation and mediation.

Thru monitoring, reporting, and direct advocacy of local and international institutions, the Mission has played a key role in effectively setting the agenda on the most pressing human rights and rule of law issues in Kosovo.

OMIK continued to promote and instil a human rights culture, reaching thousands of students, educators, NGOs and PISG officials.
HUMAN RIGHTS and RULE OF LAW

Reporting on human rights concerns
The Mission continued to monitor the human rights situation in Kosovo, in particular: in relation to a functioning law enforcement and judicial system; non-discrimination issues; property issues; as well as protection from and prevention of trafficking in human beings and domestic violence.

Major reports have focused on:
• the situation of minorities
• the status of property rights
• the functioning of the judicial system, particularly the witness protection system
• the presence and effect of parallel institutional system
• the status and availability of legal remedies.

OMIK systematically follows up with relevant institutions.

Addressing property issues and minority rights
Resolving the property situation, especially as it affects minority communities, is essential for Kosovo's development and the establishment of the rule of law. OMIK monitoring has found that property rights are not fully protected, and discrimination against Kosovo's smaller communities is active.

Though much work remains to be done, there have already been several notable successes, including the establishment of an inter-agency property working group, which has moved rapidly to address the most pressing property issues as they affect minorities. The Mission has also initiated a regional effort to develop a consistent policy for Governments to improve the human rights situation of Roma, and other vulnerable groups living in informal settlements.

Protecting victims of violence
Protection of victims and the prevention of victimisation are a part of OMIK's efforts to provide comprehensive assistance and support to people who are trafficked, or suffer from domestic violence.

As a first step, the Mission has helped set up an interim secure facility to provide psychological and legal counselling to victims of trafficking. Similarly, the Mission has played a significant role in an inter-agency effort to develop a Kosovo Anti-Trafficking Plan. Following a conference in October, the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government agreed to develop and adopt such a plan. The Mission also raised awareness on domestic violence and its potential effect on family and society.

Promoting professional law enforcement systems
The Mission continued to monitor the development of the legal system and assist UNMIK to ensure standards of fair trial and due process. Upon OMIK's recommendation, UNMIK is in the process of revising the witness protection system to make it more effective and compliant with international standards.

Strengthening the legal community
Throughout the year, the Mission worked to complete the independence and sustainability of the OMIK-created rule of law institutions, which are designed to provide support to Kosovo's growing legal community. The Criminal Defence Resource Centre (CDRC) – which provides assistance to defence counsel – will be completely independent from the Mission in 2004.

The Kosovo Judicial Institute (KJI) is well on its way to becoming an independent magistrate school. This year the KJI held its largest ever training when it instructed over 500 judges, prosecutors, police and other officials on the new criminal codes of Kosovo. The Kosovo Law Centre (KLC) continues to help educate the next generation of legal minds.

Strengthening anti-discrimination protection
Through its direct advocacy, OMIK helped draft an Anti-Discrimination Law which has been approved by the Government and submitted to the Assembly of Kosovo.

It aims to promote uniformity in the protection against discrimination - including in areas of employment, public and social services, education and property.

This bill, if passed in its current form, would represent one of the most progressive anti-discrimination laws in Europe.
MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening local media development

OMiK continued its media support and training programmes designed to promote the development of professional, tolerant and unbiased media in Kosovo. Support was offered in setting up local press clubs and topical training sessions for journalists. Two main themes were reconciliation and supporting minority broadcasters. Highlights include:

• a series of multi-ethnic radio discussions on a range of issues affecting all communities
• a regional conference bringing together Serbian and Kosovo Albanian editors to discuss issues of freedom of expression and ongoing cross-boundary activities
• establishing KOSMA (Kosovo Media Association) – a network of 27 Kosovo Serb radio stations. Each station received equipment and training to help develop the capacity to produce and communicate news in their own language.

OMiK’s Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) has begun planning transition to the Kosovo-run Independent Media Commission (IMC), in anticipation of the IMC law. Meanwhile, the TMC had one of its most successful years in enforcing media statutes guarding against hate speech.

POLICE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

The goal of the Kosovo Police Service School (KPSS) – to help create a new police service – is nearly complete. Over the course of 2003, the KPSS has trained more than 700 new officers, bringing the total number of basic recruits to over 6,200, of which 16% are women and 16% represent minority communities. It is anticipated that the final target number of 6,500 basic recruits will be met by mid-2004, but further courses will be necessary to replace officers who have left the Kosovo Police Service since 1999.

The KPSS, which began its work in 1999, provides an example of best practises used for police education and development in post-conflict areas.

KPS officers are trained in international standards regarding human rights, including modern techniques in dealing with domestic violence, awareness of human trafficking and community policing.

At the same time, to create a sustainable police service, KPS officers must also broaden their skills and be trained in supervision and management techniques. Advanced and specialised police training includes investigation techniques for cases of homicide and organised crime. Addressing these issues the KPSS delivered an increasing number of specialist courses in criminal investigation, border and boundary policing, forensics and drug surveillance.

The KPSS continues to make the shift to Kosovo ownership: with the transition of international posts to local professional officers. Much of the training at KPSS is already conducted by specialised KPS officers.

Based on the successes at the KPSS, instructors have been called upon to share expertise with other police training programmes in Georgia, Afghanistan and Iraq – thus exporting this successful example to other post-conflict and developing regions in and outside of the OSE area.

The OSCE is the acknowledged leader in the slow and difficult field of democratization, which is an unfamiliar word in the outside world, but means something worthwhile. It means getting involved in the problems of society at every level and introducing new methods of solving them, which are better than traditional methods based on confrontation and violence.

Harri Holkeri, SRSG, UN Mission in Kosovo
MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF MISSION

When referring to the reform of the police, the judiciary, war crimes trials, human rights, the fight against corruption and the media – fields in which the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro provides its assistance and expertise – we are essentially talking about OSCE direct involvement in key sectors that influence whether the transition in Serbia and Montenegro will be democratic and European.

Numerous problems that the country experienced last year notwithstanding, one must acknowledge the progress made so far. 2003 saw the adoption of the Constitutional Charter and Action Plan on Harmonization in Serbia and Montenegro, which paved the way towards the eventual initiation of the EU Stabilisation and Association Process.

In 2003, Serbia and Montenegro has gained membership in the Council of Europe and significant progress on the reform and democratization of the armed forces has been achieved.

The assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic on 12 March and the 42-day state of emergency complicated the internal political situation and partly affected the continuation of the reform agenda. Nevertheless, the country succeeded to ‘stay the course’ and to achieve, also with the OSCE’s assistance, some meaningful results.

A new legislation on war crimes was adopted and the Mission, in co-operation with local authorities, has initiated the implementation of a capacity-building strategy so that domestic war crime trials can be conducted in accordance with international standards.

In the framework of the fight against corruption, the Mission provided expert support to the drafting of key laws such as the Law on Financing Political Parties, which was adopted in August.

In co-operation with the relevant Ministry, the Mission implemented several programs to uphold the rights of national minorities. A new Charter on human and minority rights was adopted in March and several national minority councils created.

The consolidation of reform to make the police and the judiciary more functional and depoliticised remains the major challenge ahead both for Serbia and Montenegro. The OSCE Mission has put great energy in assisting the reform process in these areas and it will continue to do so also in 2004.

Finally, in 2003 the consolidation of the peace process in South Serbia has continued and has been closely monitored by the OSCE Mission. The major challenge in South Serbia lies in the creation of the economic basis of security, through the activation of projects of economic development and multi-ethnic job creation.

Human Dimension Activities

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Since the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic, the emphasis on combating organised crime has taken priority over all other aspects of police reform efforts in Serbia and Montenegro. The medium- to long-term strategy for police reform aims at assisting the Governments in implementing reform. This strategy continues to follow the six priority areas as outlined in December 2001 when the OSCE was named as co-ordinator of international support to the police reform process. The priority areas are:

- police education and development
- accountability and internal control
- organised crime
- forensics
- border policing
- community policing.

Strategy for Police reform

To tackle organised crime effectively and holistically, accountability and internal control within the police structures have been an important focus for the Mission this year.

In close co-operation with the Serbian Ministry of Interior, the Mission has also prioritised community policing in Southern Serbia. The aim of this programme is to develop a partnership between the police service and the public, which promotes multi-ethnic harmony in the region.

With support from the International Organisation for Migration and the Italian and UK Governments, an important border policing project was launched in order to assist the authorities in combating trafficking and organised crime.

For Montenegro, the Mission’s relationship with the authorities has developed significantly since the formation of the Police Accountability Strategy and the commencement of the Police Development Training Programme in Montenegro. To assist the authorities in combating human trafficking and organised crime, the Mission’s Office in Podgorica instructed 500 border police officers through five cycles of specialised training.

Head of Mission: Ambassador Maurizio Massari (since 8 January 2003) | Revised budget: € 8,604,000
RULE OF LAW

Combating organised crime
The Mission is closely monitoring the Djindjic assassination trials which were initiated in December. This year the Mission also supported the Special Prosecutor on Organized Crime through an ad hoc training programme, introduced during the state of emergency following the assassination. The Mission additionally provided legal advice to harmonise the special law on organised crime.

The Mission’s Office in Podgorica has supported the review of the Montenegrin Criminal Procedure Code, which envisages special rules of procedure for offences committed by perpetrators of organised crime. It also participated in preparation of the draft Law on the State Prosecutor, at which the Special Prosecutor for Organized Crime institution was introduced for the first time.

War crimes

The Mission conducted an assessment on the capacity of the Ministry of Interior to conduct war crimes investigations. Looking ahead, the Mission will implement the steps of the OSCE War Crimes Strategy and will work on the establishment of a witness protection programme and an International Technical Assistance Office to the Special Court on War Crimes.

In April, the Serbian Government adopted the Law on War Crimes. The Mission worked closely with the Serbian Ministry of Justice by providing support during the drafting process. Through the International Bar Association, the Mission established a team of international experts which, with representatives of the Council of Europe, provided substantive amendments to the initial draft.

Since January, the Mission has also been monitoring the on-going trials of war crimes that are taking place in Serbia.

The Office in Podgorica conducted workshops on the compatibility of the Montenegrin draft Criminal Code with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Consequently, Montenegrin criminal legislation will be in a position to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Fighting against corruption

Since the 2001 establishment of the Anti-Corruption Council by the Serbian Government, the Mission provides legal advice and expertise, particularly concerning a broad series of laws pertaining to the fight against corruption.

Independence of judiciary

The Serbian Ministry of Justice has announced an initiative to review criminal legislation. The Mission will provide legislative and programme assistance in key areas, through direct interaction with the Ministry and through the Council for Judicial Reform at which the Mission participates.

The Office in Podgorica continued its support of the reform of the prosecution process in Montenegro. The Office organised a workshop in June on the Draft Law on the State Prosecutor as well as the final public debate in September. Based on conclusions drawn from this workshop, the Ministry of Justice will prepare a consolidated version of the law for adoption – a key step in the overall reform of the judiciary in Montenegro.

Driving forward prison reform

The Mission continued to work structurally with the Ministry of Justice, and with the prison administration to further prison system reform. Building up training capacity to increase performance in the area of human rights has been a key priority.

Over 300 prison staff received basic human rights training and a team of ten trainers underwent ‘training for trainers’. Prison governors were given prison management training in Serbia and members of the Ministry and the prison administration have benefited from several study visits. Additionally, in its efforts to increase the transparency of prisons, the Mission has facilitated a workshop between journalists and prison governors.

The Mission’s Office in Podgorica supports the work of the Prison Service Training Centre (PSTC). Most notably, over half of the prison service staff have completed a course on the issue of drugs misuse. A study visit to the Netherlands was organised in August – as a part of the Prison Management Training Programme.

The Mission also organised a co-ordination meeting on combating organised crime during the state of emergency; and a roundtable on the future of prison reform in Serbia was held.
DEMOCRATIZATION

Parliamentary support
The Mission organised a number of round-tables, seminars and training programmes for parliamentary committees. Special emphasis was put on the Security and Defence Committee as well as the European integration committee in the Serbian and State Union Parliaments.

Accelerating refugee return
The Mission has adopted a regional approach in removing remaining obstacles in the countries of origin for refugees who wish to return from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Programme activities are implemented in close cooperation with all international actors in the field of refugee protection, and respective Governments.

NATIONAL MINORITIES

Technical support was offered to Serbia and Montenegro for the 2003 adoption of the Charter on Human and Minority Rights – an integral part of the state union constitution. Also this year, in line with the state union Law on National Minorities and Ethnic Communities, the Mission was involved in supporting the process of electing National Minority Councils. To date, ten minority councils have been elected, while the election of the Albanian National Council is yet to take place.

Progress in the field of refugee return has led to the adoption of common principles and a Joint Action Plan between three OSCE missions; and the establishment of a regional legal assistance programme. These strategies accelerate the resolution of difficulties in the area of property, statutory and acquired rights.

Enabling communities to build sustainable policy
The Office in Podgorica has continued to assist communities by strengthening the legal and institutional framework for minority rights in the Republic of Montenegro. The Office continued to further implement a comprehensive training programme designed to increase the professional skills and capabilities of ministry personnel; as well as to broaden knowledge on international standards of human and minority rights protection. It has very actively assisted the expert group of the Ministry for minorities in the drafting process of the new Montenegrin Minority law.

A national strategy for the integration of Roma
The Mission and UN partners funded and oversaw the drafting of a National Strategy for the Integration of Roma. The document will be publicly discussed for adoption by the Serbian Parliament and the Roma National Council. In 2003, the Mission and partners funded the work of the Roma Secretariat with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, whose role is to facilitate the debate and further adoption of the Roma Strategy.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMME

The programme this year has strengthened and empowered the Serbian Republican Team to combat trafficking in human beings. It has also assisted relevant Ministries and specialised NGOs to develop and implement national plans of action to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. Particular emphasis has been placed on the judiciary and on law enforcement.

The Mission supported the establishment of a Referral and Counseling Centre (RCC) for victims of trafficking, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Centre for Social Work in Belgrade, and two NGOs. The RCC is intended to be the main counseling and co-ordinating body of the National Referral Mechanism in Serbia.

Monitoring on-going human trafficking cases
The Office in Podgorica co-chaired the Montenegro Anti-Trafficking Project Board in 2003. Apart from monitoring active cases, the Board assists in the early warning identification of potential victims of human trafficking. The Office also seeks to assist the Montenegrin authorities further to institutionalise counter-trafficking policies as well as to devolve and expand effective anti-trafficking measures to the municipal level.

Capacity building of local self-government
The Office in Podgorica assists local partners in institutionalising public participation in municipalities through the establishment of five citizen information and education centres, in the north, central and coastal regions. Such centres serve as key information resources and clearing houses for training and technical assistance, for municipal officials, local NGOs and other civic groups.

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In this respect, the Office played a significant monitoring role in one particularly sensitive case in which a deputy state prosecutor was accused of trafficking a young Moldovan woman. Following the decision of the Basic Prosecutor to drop the case, the Office assisted an OSCE-CoE expert team, invited by the Government to review the case and to recommend steps for further action.

The Office serves on a newly established inter-ministerial body set up by the Government to develop and implement a strategy covering the three core anti-trafficking pillars: prevention, protection and prosecution.

MEDIA

In the three Parliaments (Serbia, Montenegro and State Union) the Mission continued to support media committees, and the transformation into public broadcasters of state-owned RTS (Serbia) and RTCG (Montenegro).

The Mission continued to provide support to legislators and Internet providers’ and users’ associations to help develop a free and pluralistic Internet market, according to OSCE Freedom of the Media 2003 priorities.

Several media awareness campaigns and training exercises in Serbia and Montenegro on anti-trafficking, war crimes trials, and the environment were also undertaken. Additionally, the Mission supported the transformation (legal, financial, organisational and editorial) of municipal media outlets into multi-ethnic and multilingual local public services. It also supported Romani media outlets.

The Mission remained committed this year to supporting the rapid adoption of certain media laws, including the Access to Information Bill. In this regard, throughout September and October, the Mission organised five roundtables on the Serbian draft law on free access to information. Equipment was provided for the Montenegrin Broadcasting Agency to enhance the ability of the Agency to conduct media monitoring.

The Office in Podgorica has continued to support the implementation of media reform in Montenegro. Shortly it will organise a three-phased advisory project on bylaws for the broadcasting agency and a seminar for print media editors-in-chief and their deputies aimed at strengthening the professional responsibility with regard to human and moral principles of journalism.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities
Tackling drugs trafficking

In line with the OSCE 2003 economic and environmental dimension focus on various forms of trafficking, the Mission prepared a national strategy to counter drugs trafficking. This paper contains an overview of the situation and recommendations to enable an appropriate approach to this problem.

Supporting sustainable development

In 2003 the Mission continued to support the sustainable development of the Bjelasica and Komovi areas in Montenegro, with the co-operation of stakeholders who include the local authorities, the civil sector and local businesses.

The Mission also worked on a number of projects in support of the creation of SMEs in Serbia and Montenegro.

A new centre for environmental issues

Opened in Belgrade this year, the Centre is a joint endeavour of the Mission and the Serbian Ministry for Natural Resources and the Environment. It provides a co-ordination point between the Serbian Government and international and local environmental organisations. It is envisaged that it will act as a support structure, enabling full implementation of environmental legislation.

The Mission provided the centre with five environmental experts as part of the environmental support programme. The centre is also producing a strategy for setting up an environmental information system for Serbia.

The Mission held a second preparatory meeting on the Environment for Europe Process in February in Belgrade. The meeting served as preparation for the fifth Pan-European Ministerial Conference on the Protection of the Environment, which was held in May in Kiev.

The Mission supported the creation and implementation of a Public Relations Strategy for the Serbian Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. This aims to increase transparency and accountability of the Ministry and its work.
Politico-Military Dimension Activities

Confidence- and Security-Building Measures
According to its mandate to assist and promote the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), the Mission has focused on the wider issues of the defence reform process, as well as on the implementation of the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

Momentum for democratic control of Armed Forces
Supporting the process of defence reform, which is gaining momentum, the Mission has followed the norms outlined in the OSCE Code of Conduct in Politico-Military Aspects of Security, which sets out the OSCE standards for democratic control of the armed forces. Opportunity to give practical expression to these standards has been offered through the improvement of the capacities of parliamentary oversight in the defence and security sectors, as well as discussions on new relevant documents.

Partnership for destruction of SALW
The Mission’s involvement in issues related to the control and destruction of small arms and light weapons has benefited from its partnership with the South-Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC). The Mission participated in monitoring several projects for the destruction of surplus small arms in Serbia and Montenegro.

Southern Serbia: consolidating the peace process
The OSCE Southern Serbia Programme remained on task in 2003. Emphasis was put on speeding up the implementation of the Covic Plan with the aim of building security, stability and prosperity in the region.

The Mission remains committed to the consolidation of the peace process by assisting the political actors in Southern Serbia, and helping them to gradually take full ownership of the process.

In support of consolidating a multi-ethnic environment in Southern Serbia, the Mission continued to work in the following areas:
- multi-ethnic media programmes
- support for minority rights and local self-government
- reform of multi-ethnic policing
- support for the judiciary, education and youth sectors.

OUTREACH PROGRAMME
Raising awareness of OSCE priorities and values
Throughout the year the Mission conducted an outreach campaign in the towns of Novi Sad, Subotica (Vojvodina), Novi Pazar (Sanzidak), Uzice, Kragujevac (Central Serbia), Zajecar, Bor (eastern Serbia), Budva and Niksic (Montenegro). The idea was to outline the projects currently being implemented by the Mission, as well as to research their impact.

The visits also served as opportunities for the Mission to meet with local government representatives as well as media, civil society, church and police representatives; and to familiarise itself with the situation on the ground and to adjust the Mission’s programmes accordingly.

As part of the outreach campaign, the Mission also distributed notebooks to all first graders in Southern Serbia. The notebooks carried the slogan ‘My house is in Europe’.

The Head of Mission’s role during the state of emergency
During the state of emergency - introduced following the March assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic - the Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, Maurizio Massari, played a vital advocacy and guiding role by outlining the importance of the rule of law as a cornerstone of democratic society.

At the height of the state of emergency, the Head of Mission consistently and clearly reminded the local authorities about reinforcing conditions necessary for the rule of law and the consolidation of democracy.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF MISSION

With the assistance of the OSCE and international partners, the Government achieved significant progress towards full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and admission into Euro-Atlantic Structures. In particular, the Framework Agreement requirement to train 1,000 non-majority police cadets by July 2003 was met (a joint effort between the Ministry of Interior and the OSCE), as was the passage of nearly all Framework Agreement legislation not relating to decentralisation. The successful completion of the 2002 census, with final results released in November 2003, was also a major achievement for the country - paving the way for final reforms and local elections that will occur in the forthcoming year.

It was also a year of change for the international community. 2003 saw both the end of a NATO military presence and the successful completion of the EU’s first military mission. The transfer on 15 December from the EU Military Force, Concordia, to the EU Police Mission, Proxima, signified the accomplishments that have been made towards the security and stability in the country. The OSCE’s efforts to build confidence in the former crisis areas have contributed extensively to this progress.

There was also a clear shift in the role of the international community away from post-conflict management towards efforts in capacity-building and institutional support. That can be seen in the OSCE by the growing emphasis on project work. The Mission, in accordance with its mandate, initiated 70 projects in support of the Framework Agreement in the fields of policing, media, local self-government, rule of law and inter-ethnic relations. Many of these projects were developed and implemented in close partnership with the relevant Government officials and local and international organisations.

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A year of achievement.

The Head of Mission, Craig Jenness, addresses the 350 police cadets who finished their three-month training course on 30 July.

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Politico-Military Dimension Activities

POLICE DEVELOPMENT

Following the successful redeployment of the police to the former crisis areas, the Mission consolidated activities to focus on community-based policing and training.

Consolidating community-based policing throughout the country

The Ministry of Interior, assisted by the OSCE, has embarked on a new form of policing aimed at bringing the police and communities together. The underlying concept is to balance robust activity with confidence-building and co-operation.

The Mission deployed 30 community policing trainers in former crisis areas to work directly with the local police. In the autumn, the Ministry of Interior assigned 32 community policing trainers to the programme. Once trained by the Mission, they will assist and progressively take over the responsibility of implementation of community policing.

The Police Unit – working in co-operation with the Mission’s confidence-building monitors – assisted the Ministry of Interior in setting up Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs). These groups offer opportunity for regular, innovative meetings between local police and a broad range of citizens, such as teachers, community leaders and business people, to exchange information and discuss matters of mutual concern. So far, 46 CAGs covering over 200 villages have been established.

A benchmark of the Framework Agreement: training 1,176 cadets from non-majority communities

One of the key tasks given to the OSCE in the Framework Agreement was the training, by July 2003, of 1,000 new police officers from communities not in the majority. The objective was to ensure that police services will generally reflect the composition and distribution of the population by 2004.

HQ: all units gathered under one roof

As part of its effort to maximise its effectiveness, the Mission moved to new quarters in the heart of Skopje. The Police Development and General Services units, which were previously located across town, joined the rest of HQ under one roof. This has allowed for better use of resources and facilities, more efficient communication and time management, and improved co-ordination among departments.
The non-majority cadets trained to 1,176. Police cadets bringing the total number of the graduation of a further 650 multi-ethnic.

This key target was met on schedule with the graduation of a further 650 multi-ethnic police cadets bringing the total number of non-majority cadets trained to 1,176.

The Basic Training Programme, which comprises a three-month academy course followed by six months of structured field training, is developed by a specialised OSCE Police Development Curriculum Unit. MOI, focused on democratic principles, rule of law, European policing and international human rights standards.

Training for more professional and responsive policing

The PDU, in co-operation with the IOM and the Ministry of Interior, started the implementation of Gender Awareness and Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings Training Courses. 540 police officers will be trained.

Additionally, professional training programmes requested and approved by the MOI, were held in the fields of human rights and democratic policing as well as in drug identification.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

Maintaining stability and security on the ground

Confidence-Building Officers (CBOs) worked continuously throughout the former crisis areas on the maintenance of stability and security. CBOs deepened relationships between various Government entities such as local police, community leaders and the military, as well as the local population. CBOs play a key role in defusing tension, promoting inter-ethnic relations and in working with the communities on issues of concern.

Building confidence through community projects

In addition to monitoring activities, the OSCE and the Ministry of Interior's Sector for Human Rights and Democratic Policing have initiated a series of activities that focus on building confidence and trust between the police and the community. This includes the implementation of training programmes for police officers on human rights, conflict resolution, and community relations.

Most notably, in co-operation with the OSCE Field Office in Skopje, the unit guided 125 secondary school leaders from six different communities through a series of youth leadership conferences that focused on effective communication and inter-ethnic conflict resolution skills. Participants also received project management training and as a final stage in the programme, they designed and ran their own projects covering activities such as volunteerism initiatives, peer counselling, park clean-ups and inter-ethnic cultural outings.

In addition to these activities, the CBU also sought input and guidance from various international community partners, such as IOM and NATO, in the process of drafting a feasibility study on the reintegration of unstable populations impacted from the 2001 crisis.

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Human Dimension Activities

RULE OF LAW

From monitoring to longer-term programme development

In light of the increasingly stable security situation, the activities of the Mission’s Rule of Law Unit increasingly focused on programmatic areas, such as institution- and capacity-building and combating human trafficking.

The Unit continued monitoring individual allegations of physical abuse by the security forces. War crimes cases were also followed, as well as other high-profile issues such as corruption trials.

Progress was noted in the professionalism and standardisation of various domestic human rights complaint mechanisms, including the Ombudsman’s Institution and the Ministry of Interior’s Sector for Internal and Professional Controls.

The mission worked closely with these institutions through their reform efforts, and noted increases in public confidence.

Institution-building

The Mission contributed to the passage of a new Law on the Ombudsman as required by the Framework Agreement. The Law gives the institution significantly increased powers including a new mandate regarding non-discrimination and equitable representation, as well as the establishment of six regional offices.

The OSCE is co-ordinating international support to set up these new offices and is working on a nationwide public information campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the institution and its new capacity.

Additional police trained in 2003:

- Field Training Officers Course: 136 officers
- In-Service Training Course: 722 officers
- Human Rights & Democratic Policing Course: 2,527 officers
- Drug Identification Course: 1,135 officers
- Road Safety Training: 14 officers
- Computer Training Courses: 137 officers
- Community Policing Courses: 943 officers.

The Mission assisted the Government and UNDP in a country-wide weapons collection project by observing at sites of weapons hand-in. Over 7,000 weapons were collected, which significantly contributed to a decrease in shooting incidents in the country.
Stepping up support for NGOs
The Unit initiated a large-scale project to train and mentor domestic NGOs in the management of complaints of police abuse. This will allow the Unit to transfer much of its individual casework to these NGOs in 2004. The Mission supported a number of smaller projects, including a magazine providing basic information on legal matters and information campaigns on domestic violence in the Roma community.

The Unit spearheaded the establishment of a Trial Observation Network with 18 domestic NGOs. From July to October, observers attended 400 criminal and civil court hearings throughout the country.

Judicial reform
In line with the Framework Agreement, the Unit is addressing the issue of equitable representation of minorities in the judiciary, and is contributing to improving the trust in, and efficiency of, the country's legal and judicial system.

The Unit initiated training programmes on alternative dispute resolution for the local judiciary. It is working with the Association of Public Prosecutors on a new draft law, and by doing, is addressing the necessity to improve the efficiency of the fight against organised crime.

The Unit also funded the publication of a Guide to the Courts and a project providing free legal advice in two pilot municipalities.

Combating human trafficking
Working closely with Government and civil society partners, the Unit seeks to strengthen efforts to combat trafficking in human beings.

Recent successful prosecutions since the 2002 adoption of an anti-trafficking criminal law provision are encouraging signs for this OSCE 2003 priority campaign.

The Unit funded the domestic NGOs' awareness-raising initiatives. It also co-sponsored 20 specialized training workshops - targeting almost 300 legal professionals - on improving prosecution and fair trials in cases of human trafficking.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA
Working towards a balanced, objective and all-inclusive media
The Mission's Media Development Unit supports a wide variety of projects aimed at improving journalistic standards and promoting a multi-ethnic approach to media. Its projects are targeted at all communities and benefit university students, print media, private broadcasters and the public service broadcaster Macedonian Radio and Television (MRTV).

Setting up a training centre
The Unit co-funded and established a new training centre at MRTV, which aims at improving technical, journalistic and managerial standards to help MRTV modernise to European standards. Under the management of the UK-based experts Thomson Foundation, 600 staff received training at the centre.

Developing curricula
The Unit sponsors a wide variety of training programmes targeting all sectors of the media, including courses in practical journalism for St. Cyril and Methodius and South-East European University students; as well as specialist courses, such as investigatory journalism or computer-assisted research, at the Macedonian Institute for Journalism.

The Unit works closely with private broadcasters developing programme strands and documentary series with a strong multi-ethnic approach. It has funded a major re-branding of the Albanian language news journal LOBI, and provided business and marketing expertise to a variety of media associations in the country.

The Point Newspaper Team works with young people interested in journalism and guides them through the process of turning ideas into publishable articles. Today over 200 students from all ethnic backgrounds in Tetovo, Gostivar, and Kumanovo participate in producing the monthly newspaper which is printed in Macedonian and Albanian languages. The journalists are engaged at all levels from editorial planning to distribution.

The Unit also monitors the media and takes a close interest in its regulation and legal framework. In 2003 it assisted and supported the drafting of a new broadcasting law which, once adopted, should help public and private broadcasters develop towards a sustainable future.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities
Moving on the decentralisation process
The Public Administration Support Unit (PASU) was created to facilitate the decentralisation process as stipulated in the Framework Agreement.

Through research and programming, PASU seeks to assist in building skills of local government officials and raise public awareness on the benefits of the decentralisation process. In 2003, in a capacity-building effort, PASU took on four National Professional Officers, who will spearhead an intense training programme for local officials.

Piloting inter-municipal co-operation
The OSCE, in co-operation with the Ministry of Local Self-Government, initiated a pilot project to promote the concept of inter-municipal co-operation, among six municipalities in the ethnically-mixed Kicevo region.

23 mayors and municipal staff of various ethnicities and political affiliations were given core training and technical assistance on municipal co-operation, strategic planning and project management.

In partnership with UNDP, the focus is now on establishing a local economic development fund.
The OSCE and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Context

The OSCE continued its close, naturally-suited partnership with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP) throughout 2003. On different occasions experts of the two organisations co-ordinated their work and have met in bilateral format, or in a wider context with the participation of other partners for co-operation. The permanent framework of dialogue offered by the OSCE has also been used by the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact and Chairpersons of Stability Pact Task Forces.

2003 Stability Pact Activities in Areas of Interest for the OSCE

Local Democracy and Cross-Border Co-operation (LODE/CBC) in South-eastern Europe (SEE)

This SP initiative was established in November 2002 with the SP role focused on donor co-ordination, the support and development of Euroregions in SEE, the encouragement of the decentralisation process, and local capacity-building through the support of twinning and training activities.

Systematic co-operation of local actors (governmental, civic, and business) across national borders provides the practical underpinning to regional co-operation in SEE.

Strong support was received from various political levels in SEE and from implementing agencies and organisations on the ground. SP has been most successful in promoting LODE/CBC as a priority. Cross-border co-operation has been recognised as a cornerstone for broader regional co-operation and thus attracted increased and targeted donor interest.

Media

By forging co-operation between donors, international organisations and recipients, the Stability Pact Media Task Force (SP MTF) assists the development of independent and professional media within SEE.

Broadly composed Media Working Groups in all countries ensure full involvement of local actors and articulation of regional needs. The goal of the SP MTF is to ensure that necessary legal changes are implemented.

Fight against organised crime

Fighting organised crime is essential for the development of the region and requires sound judicial systems and efficient law enforcement institutions. The activities of the SP are thus aimed at capacity building, improving the legal framework and cross-border co-operation with the focus on prevention and prosecution.

To this end, the following inter-linked instruments are in place:
- the SP Initiative to Fight Organised Crime (SPOC)
- the SP Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings (SPTF)
- the SP Anti-Corruption Initiative (SPAI).

Managing and stabilising population movements

The merger in 2003 of the Migration and Asylum Initiative (MAI) and the Refugee Return Initiative (RRI) serves as the basis for a single, more streamlined and focused approach to managing and stabilising population movements in SEE.

The initiative aims to combine national measures with cross-border and regional efforts to render national action more effective, thus allowing the phasing out of the current activities devoted solely to the humanitarian aspects of displacement issues.
MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF OFFICE

The year 2003 was marked with a fresh start for the OSCE field operation in Belarus.

On 30 December 2002 the Permanent Council adopted Decision No. 526, according to which the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus was dissolved and the OSCE Office in Minsk (OOM) was established.

The Office quickly became operational and deployed its activities in conformity with its mandate. This provides for assisting the Belarusian Government in further promoting institution-building, consolidating the rule of law, developing relations with civil society, and developing economic and environmental activities.

These tasks have been fulfilled through implementation of relevant projects in the field of human and economic/environmental dimensions, as well as through monitoring and reporting activities.

Projects, such as the Workshop on International Standards for Democratic Elections and Election Law Reform, Local Democracy and Assistance to Local Government Building, Creation of Rural SME Support Centre - to mention just a few implemented during the reporting period - not only served the purpose of making progress in the relevant fields, but also helped develop good co-operation between the OOM and the host Government, as well as civil society.

Human Dimension Activities

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Local democracy and assistance for building local Government

The purpose of the project was to assist the authorities of Belarus in promoting and developing the concept of local democracy. Four study tours were organised, by the OOM and its project implementation partners, for exchange of experience of self-government in neighboring countries and to support professional contacts on the international level.

The OOM implementing partners were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the public association Lev Sapega Foundation and the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities of Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Latvia.

The second stage of the project - the concluding conference on Conceptual Issues of the Development and Perfection of the System of Local Government and Self-Government on the European Experience - was implemented by the joint efforts of the OOM and the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, which oversees the development of the concept of local government and self-government in the country.

Improving the electoral framework

On 22 September, 60 participants, including representatives of the Belarus election authorities, as well as representatives of political parties and NGOs, took part in a seminar on International Standards for Democratic Elections.

The event was organised by the OSCE/ODIHR, the OOM and the Central Election Commission of Belarus. Concluding the event, the OSCE expressed readiness to support follow-up activities on the transparency of and confidence in the election process.

Developing human rights education

The OOM supported an initiative by the Ministry of Education to publish a textbook entitled To Schoolchildren on Human Rights which addresses the human rights curriculum in Belarusian secondary schools. Two local NGOs and a Russian expert NGO have been invited by the OOM to offer independent comment.

The Office has begun fund-raising efforts among the OSCE participating States to finance the printing of the textbook.

The Office has supported the ODIHR in implementing projects, including:
- electoral system reform seminar
- alternative sentencing
- improvement of the registration system of the population in the Republic of Belarus
- a masters degree programme - at the Centre for European and Transatlantic Studies of the European Humanistic University.

Five representatives of the Council of Europe and the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities of Europe were among the participants.

The year 2003 establishment of the OSCE Office in Minsk represents a fresh start for the Organization's field operation in Belarus. An effective operational characteristic of the OOM's work is the solid co-operation with ODIHR during project implementation, and other OSCE institutions in broader issues of mandate fulfillment.

Head of Office: Ambassador Eberhard Heyken (since 31 January 2003) | Revised budget: € 832,600
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA
Promoting investigative journalism through an open competition

The Office signed an agreement with the International Educational Centre-IBB in Minsk on a joint project to promote investigative journalism.

Belarusian journalists were invited to enter a competition to gain a place on an international study tour to an EU country of their choosing. The journalists conducted meetings with representatives from official and non-governmental institutions. On their return, all the journalists submitted and published articles related to their investigations.

The Office facilitated the visit of delegation of journalists to the OSCE Secretariat, in co-operation with the Secretariat’s Press and Public Information Section. The journalists later published articles related to their findings about OSCE structures.

At a number of meetings with Government officials, the OOM suggested that the draft of the Law on Mass Media be submitted to the OSCE and the Council of Europe for comment by international experts. It has been emphasised that the Law should reflect the OSCE commitments and secure a democratic environment for freedom of expression and the media.

MONITORING ACTIVITIES
Demonstrations

Several opposition demonstrations were observed in the city of Minsk, particularly in March and April. A number of participants were arrested at these events and later fined or sentenced to up to 15 days of administrative arrest by local courts. When considered appropriate, Office observers attended these court trials.

The overall situation led to increased attention towards the implementation of OSCE commitments regarding freedom of peaceful assembly.

Trials

Throughout the year, Office representatives monitored court trials. The majority of these cases concerned NGOs, including one trade union, while other court hearings dealt with charges on slander or disobeying police orders.

Addressing the closing down of NGOs became an increasingly important task for the OOM. In addition, the Office supported several Belarusian NGOs’ participation in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in October, in Warsaw.

Individual complaints

The Office continued to deal with a large number of individual complaints of allegations of human rights violations, mainly regarding law enforcement agencies.

The complaints covered both civil and criminal cases; many related to violations of the right to fair trial and the treatment of prisoners.

The OOM’s findings and concerns were regularly brought to the attention of Belarusian authorities. Generally prompt replies were offered and in several cases the relevant body took remedial action in response to the intervention by the Office.

The prison system

Guided by requests from NGOs and individuals, the Office carried out prison visits to further monitor the prison conditions in Belarus.

In June, a pre-trial detention centre in Minsk was visited. As a result, the OOM proposed steps to improve the situation, and expressed its willingness to assist the relevant state structures.

In August, the Office visited a Ukrainian citizen sentenced in Belarus to the death penalty. The Belarusian Helsinki Committee and other agencies were subsequently approached with a view to looking closer into the formalities of the case, and the possibility of providing a lawyer. The Office supported the plea to commute the sentence to life imprisonment.

In December, the Head of Office visited the imprisoned Professor Yuri Bandazhevsky, currently serving an eight-year term for alleged bribe-taking. The visit was facilitated by the Committee for Execution of Punishments. The case of the former rector of the Gomel State Medical Institute is believed, by Amnesty International and other organisations, to have a political background and has received significant international attention.
Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

The OOM has established positive working relationships with a number of governmental institutions and NGOs in the area of economics and the environment. The OOM has co-operated closely with the Office of the Coordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities.

Five programmes were completed during the year. Activities focused on local empowerment, sharing knowledge from international experts on a range of topics and the dissemination of information to national experts and civil society.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Reforming the pension system
Ahead of planned reform, the OOM, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, developed a programme to invite a team of experts to Belarus for discussions on the options available for the pension system. Representatives from official and non-governmental organisations participated in the programme.

Developing rural enterprise
The Office and international partners implemented a number of tasks to help promote and develop rural enterprise, within the context of a national programme for SME development.

Two hotlines were established offering judicial and commercial advice to rural entrepreneurs. These were advertised with a national TV and radio advertising campaign.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Raising awareness of the Aarhus Convention
Following the recent signing of the Aarhus Convention by Belarus, the OOM worked with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and Eco-Prava Belarus to develop an analysis of environmental legislation.

The analysis was published in a guidebook and 1,500 copies were distributed to judges, students and libraries throughout the country.

Introducing the EU Water Framework Directive
A comparative analysis was completed on the EU and Belarus water legislation and presented for discussion to relevant managers from all regions. Two guidebooks, one for water specialists and one for the general public, were developed on the basis of recommendations made during the seminar, and were subsequently distributed widely. This project was spearheaded by the Office in co-operation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and TACIS, and was designed to build upon the previous year’s work started by TACIS.

Creating a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
The OOM, in collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences and the Belarus Man and Biosphere Committee completed all the steps required for an application to UNESCO to create a transboundary biosphere reserve in West Polesie.

The successful completion of the project has given Belarus the option to submit a joint application with Poland and Ukraine for protected status for the reserve.
For the OSCE Mission to Moldova, 2003 was a year filled with great promise, achievement, and frustration. With the exceptional engagement of the Dutch Chairmanship, in particular through the Chair’s Personal Representative for Moldova, Ambassador Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged, the OSCE played a crucial role in negotiations for a political settlement of the Transdniester question. Moldova and local Transdniester authorities agreed to establish a Joint Constitutional Commission to draft a new constitution for a reunited country; the OSCE Mission opened a new office in Bender to provide the venue and support for this effort. Negotiating initiatives during the fall brought Chisinau and Tiraspol to the verge of a settlement, but a final accord eluded the parties. However, the role of the OSCE, and the Mission in Chisinau, remains central in the search for resolution of this ‘frozen conflict’.

The OSCE Mission to Moldova also engaged on a wide range of human dimension issues. Mission members negotiated a solution for the operation of Moldovan Latin script schools on the left bank, and fought to see it implemented, without success. The Mission played an indispensable role in leading and co-ordinating the fight in Moldova against human trafficking, including initiating a major project on victim assistance and witness protection. In all of their efforts, the international and national members of the OSCE Mission team were unmatched in their dedication and professionalism in pursuit of conflict resolution and regional stability.

Political negotiations

Based on the Moldovan President’s February initiative to work out a new constitution for a united federal state, the Mission actively supported the creation and work of a Joint Constitutional Commission (JCC), composed of representatives from Moldova and the Transdniester region. The JCC works in parallel to the ongoing political settlement negotiations.

R representatives of the three mediators - the OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine - have observer status in the JCC. R representatives and experts from the European Union and the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission also have a designated role in advising the JCC. The Mission provided the JCC with a venue, working facilities, and other logistical support. In co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Mission organised two seminars for JCC members and legislators from both sides, to study European models and aspects of federalism.

By the end of the year the Commission had worked out a draft chapter on human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, it failed to make progress on the federal structures of the future State and the division of competencies between local and central authorities.

By mid October the three mediators worked out a set of proposals and recommendations intended to assist the two sides in addressing disputed issues in the work of the JCC.

Concurrent with attention devoted to the question of a special status for the Transdniester region, the Mission expended considerable effort throughout the year in attempts to defuse tensions between the two sides on a broad range of contentious economic and jurisdictional issues.

The Mission proposed the formation of an Economic Experts Working Group within the broader negotiating process, in response to growing tension between the sides over questions such as legal registration of Transdniester enterprises; customs fees and documentation; and fixed line and mobile phone systems on the right and the left bank.

The economic experts worked actively during the second half of the year in search of compromise solutions, but with limited success.
Politico-Military Activities

THE JOINT CONTROL COMMISSION (JCC)

Military Mission members continued their efforts in 2003 to co-operate with, and support the work of the JCC – the body responsible for implementing the July 1992 Ceasefire Agreement.

The JCC is also the supervisory body for the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPF) in the Security Zone - the strip along the Dniestr River that separates the two sides of the dispute.

The Mission took part in all weekly JCC meetings in its capacity as observer.

DEMILITARISATION AND TRANSPARENCY

The Mission’s efforts in the JCC toward confidence-building and military transparency bore fruit in August, when it was able to broker an agreement on full withdrawal by the Moldovan and Transdniestrian militaries of armoured vehicles held by their peacekeeping forces inside the Security Zone.

This action was based on a recommendation made by a group of OSCE military experts in 2001, but was never implemented due to a lack of consensus in the JCC.

On 27 May the JCC finally agreed on this measure, but implementation was stalled by disputes on practical details. After the meeting at the Mission headquarters on 1 August which settled these details, a total of 71 armoured vehicles were removed from the Security Zone in two stages, on 14 and 21 August. OSCE Mission members observed and verified all stages of this withdrawal.

In late August, to enhance military transparency, the Moldovan delegation unilaterally provided all other JCC participants with comprehensive data on the organisation of the Moldovan army, including the locations of military units and their personnel strength and equipment.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Notwithstanding the successes noted above, throughout 2003 work in the JCC was challenged by several longstanding contentious issues in the Transdniestrian region, including: the cutting off of utilities; pressure to move legally stationed police units; the continued closure of a bridge over the River Dniestr; and interference with Moldovan farmers in the region.

These issues were raised by the Head of Mission in several meetings with the leadership in the Transdniestrian region, but without clear resolution of any item by the end of the year.

WITHDRAWAL AND REDUCTION OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION ARMS & EQUIPMENT

The Mission was very active throughout 2003 in facilitating and supporting the withdrawal and/or destruction of Russian Federation arms, ammunition and military equipment from the Transdniestrian region of Moldova; in particular under provisions added to the Mission’s mandate after the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit.

This year the Mission’s Programme Management Cell observed and verified the withdrawal of 11 trains with military equipment and 31 trains loaded with more than 15,000 tons of ammunition.

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Establishing dialogue on reform of history teaching
The Mission continued to support the Council of Europe’s series of seminars, History Teaching in Moldova. This and other related initiatives were designed to follow the Council’s recommendations for teaching History in Twenty-First Century Europe.

Elections
The Mission worked closely with the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission of the local and municipal elections in Moldova in May and June, and took part as short-term observers in the first and second rounds of voting.

Mission members subsequently followed-up on several complaints from political parties and individuals, including those on the use of administrative sanctions by Government agencies against opposition candidates. Members observed several further rounds of repeat elections.

In November, Mission members closely followed preparations for the elections to the Gagauz Peoples’ Assembly in the Autonomous Region of Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri). With the assistance of an elections expert provided by ODIHR, a political assessment was conducted. Mission members visited nearly all polling stations during both rounds of the elections and followed the counting procedures in select locations.

Anti-Human Trafficking and Gender Issues
Stepping-up the fight

Expansion and co-ordination of anti-trafficking efforts
2003 saw the Mission consolidate and expand its anti-trafficking efforts through the establishment of a dedicated unit.

It has concentrated on assisting Moldova in monitoring, co-ordinating and advocacy, as well as in boosting capacity and institution-building.

The Mission’s new unit acts as an effective focal point for co-ordinating local and international anti-trafficking efforts in Moldova, and supporting synergies.

Close co-ordination has been developed with the OSCE/ODIHR Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Stability Pact Anti-Trafficking and Gender Task Forces.

Similar extensive co-operation with the network of anti-trafficking staff in other OSCE Missions and institutions, international organisations and NGOs has proved effective to advancing anti-trafficking issues in Moldova.

Monitoring Human Rights
As in previous years, the Mission received and responded to a very large number of individual and group petitions and complaints from citizens on both sides of the Dniestr River.

In some cases the complainants were advised as to which Moldovan institutions they might appeal for redress, while in other cases the Mission approached appropriate officials for clarification, or requested reviews.

In addition, the Mission continued its engagement in the case of the three remaining members of the Ilascu group – Moldovan nationals convicted by Transnistrian authorities of alleged crimes during the 1992 conflict, and incarcerated in Tiraspol since then.

In March, the Mission facilitated an on-the-spot investigation by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, as part of the proceedings in a case brought to the ECHR by members of the group.

Supporting parents’ choice of languages in schools
The disputes over seven Moldovan schools in Transdniestria continue despite agreements brokered this year by the Mission and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

These schools use the Latin alphabet in teaching Romanian/Moldovan, and are funded by the Moldovan Government and follow the Moldovan curriculum.

Early in the year authorities in the Transdniestrian region repeated threats to close the schools.

Working in close co-operation and with substantial key assistance from the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Mission reached an agreement with education and judicial authorities in the Transdniestrian region at the end of the summer. This should have allowed the schools to register with local left bank authorities and function without hindrance.

Unfortunately, officials in the Transdniestrian region observed neither this agreement nor an amended version mediated by the Mission in October. Instead, they reverted to previous tactics especially with respect to schools in the northern river town of Ribnita and the Transdniestrian administrative centre of Tiraspol. A criminal investigation was initiated against the director and teachers of the Ribnita school. By the year’s end, registration of the schools was still pending, and their future remained in doubt.

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The unit hosts monthly technical co-ordination meetings among NGOs and national and international agencies. It also maintains a database of ongoing projects to enhance anti-trafficking co-ordination and funding efforts.

**Supporting the National Committee**
The Mission continued to assist the Moldovan National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in its efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy. On Mission advice, four thematic sub-working groups were founded, involving NGOs and international organisations. The Mission co-chairs the sub-group on legislation.

**Reforming anti-trafficking legislation**
ODIHR, the Mission and partners have provided technical assistance in the drafting of the Moldovan Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes, which came into force in June. The Codes establish human trafficking as a criminal offence maximally punishable by life imprisonment. The Mission continues to provide assistance in analysis and review of criminal and witness-protection legislation.

**Building local capacity and institutions**
In co-operation with international partners, the Mission supported the Moldovan Ministries of Interior and Justice in developing anti-trafficking training modules for police officers, prosecutors and judges.

In order to promote responsible journalism on trafficking issues, the Mission organised a four-day intensive workshop, which was delivered by international experts to thirteen journalists.

**Strengthening protection and assistance to victims**
In summer, the Mission started a large-scale project entitled Strengthening Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking: Adults and Minors. It aims to build a national referral mechanism and to develop protection measures for victims and witnesses. The project is expected to last for two years.

Through its implementing partner, La Strada, the Mission allocated financial and technical resources to provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking, especially women and children. More than 400 persons, including 260 children of victims received material, legal and psychological assistance.

Meanwhile, thirteen victims benefited from scholarships for vocational training and university education.

Advocting combating trafficking in Transdniestria
The Mission has devoted considerable attention to human trafficking in Transdniestria. It welcomes the new anti-trafficking provisions in the regional criminal legislation on the left bank.

**Gender issues**
Empowering women
The project to promote women's participation in political and public life concluded in March, ahead of the local elections.

Women Can Do It - which was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency - offered 37 seminars, during which 892 women from 318 localities were trained. Participants included representatives from twelve political parties, civil society organisations, mass media, and trade unions.

**Freedom of the Media**
Mission concerns remained over longstanding restrictions on freedom of expression by Transdniestrian authorities. In addition, during 2003 the Mission noted an unfortunate increase in cases on the right bank of alleged manipulation by authorities of the state media and pressure on the independent media.

The media situation in the Transdniestrian region continued to cause serious concern. Authorities in Tiraspol continued a long-standing campaign to silence independent opposition voices and movements on the left bank, in particular through attempted closures of independent local newspapers and restrictions on other media.

On the right bank, tensions continued throughout 2003 over efforts to transform the state broadcasting company Teleradio Moldova into a public broadcaster. Debates on this issue focused on implementation of Council of Europe recommendations and amending the national broadcasting legislation. Later in the year the Moldovan legislature chose to liquidate Teleradio Moldova rather than restructure it.

In the process of transforming the state broadcasting company serious concerns were raised that the reform might be used to eliminate independent journalists or those critical of the current administration. There were several incidents in which journalists working in the state media were allegedly dismissed or prevented from broadcasting regular programs for political reasons.

The Mission also noted several allegations of favoritism in the allocation of radio and television broadcast licenses to private firms. Mission concerns and observations were regularly conveyed to the participating states as well as to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.
MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine has worked with the country’s authorities in further developing the new form of co-operation between the OSCE and Ukraine as described in the 1999 Memorandum of Understanding.

2003 was an important transition year in this relationship. A new Project Co-ordinator was appointed in April. This appointment was followed by a period of consideration with Ukrainian authorities concerning how the new form of co-operation would complement Ukraine’s established institutions and its accomplishments in its goals of good governance.

The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and Ukrainian authorities – including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – is involved in the development, planning, and implementation of significant projects. Ukrainian authorities have indicated broad support for the activities of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine.

As Ukraine progresses toward targets set forth in the action plans it has developed, this new form of co-operation is yielding tangible results.

Developing a tool for articulation of activities
In order to assist in the development of new projects, the office created a database reflecting the aspirations of its host nation as described in Ukraine’s action plans.

The database also includes the activities of NGOs, international organisations, and the international community active in Ukraine.

This cross-referencing tool has helped avoid duplication of efforts, and has clarified areas where the office should concentrate its resources.

Project Co-ordinator:
Ambassador David Nicholas
(since 25 March 2003)
Revised budget: €1,136,100

Co-operation with the host country in 2003 and beyond
At the time of the appointment of the new Project Co-ordinator, several projects were being implemented in the areas of rule of law, defence conversion and social adaptation of demobilised military personnel, anti-trafficking, reform of the system of registration of citizens, and legislative drafting.

Several of these activities are ongoing: some have been completed or are entering new phases. New and additional projects have been conceived with a goal of developing wide-ranging and large-scale initiatives.

This year, this dynamic field presence has developed a true partnership with Ukraine. New projects are primarily in the areas of:
- rule of law – a set of relevant projects
- border control – including training, equipment, and border delineation
- economic and community development – especially supporting SMEs
- elections.

To help accomplish many of these projects, extra-budgetary contributions pledged for next year are considerably larger than those received this year.

RULE OF LAW
The office offers financial and logistical support to courts and research institutes in the following areas:
- language training for judges
- publication of legal materials and research
- publication in Ukrainian of materials for judges dealing with the European Court of Human Rights
- development of a library and information centre at the Ministry of Justice for those working on European integration
- training lawyers and judges with respect to new legislation and international conventions to which Ukraine is a party
- attendance of Ukrainian lawyers, judges, and administrators at international forums where topics in their various areas of competence are discussed.

The establishment of an administrative court system is supported as part of an ongoing implementation of judicial reform. Parliamentary committees and agencies which undertake legislative research and drafting receive assistance.

In co-operation with the Ministry of Justice, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine also supports legislative review, and harmonisation of proposed legislation with European standards.

In partnership with the Presidential Administration and OSCE/ODIHR, the office supports continuing work on the country’s registration system, through international conferences and consultations with other countries which have reformed their systems to European standards.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:
A new area for projects

Nurturing entrepreneurs
Working with appropriate Ukrainian authorities on all levels in various regions, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine is supporting efforts to create opportunities for established and would-be entrepreneurs. Through the development of employment centres, opportunities are created for education, professional assistance, and finance for SMEs.

Economic initiatives
In the context of involvement in the retraining of former military personnel and support of anti-trafficking in human beings, the office is supporting programmes which will help create conditions for economic development in run-down regions in Ukraine.

One initiative aims to create a business support infrastructure in remote areas with little or no access to business advisory services. Others envisage improving and updating existing business training materials, to provide new entrepreneurs with up-to-date legal literature reflecting provisions of Commercial and Civil Codes that will come into force in 2004.
Promoting vital investment
The office recognises the importance of foreign direct investment flow into Ukraine as a means of stimulating local economic activities, alleviating poverty, creating new jobs, and improving the well-being of citizens. Consequently, it is working with regional authorities to design strategies to assist in promoting investment opportunities through:
• development of long-term investment promotion plans
• preparation of investment trade fairs, and advertising Ukrainian opportunities at investment forums abroad
• networking businesses.

Human Dimension Activities

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING
With relevant Ukrainian authorities – especially the State Committee for Family and Youth and several NGOs – the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the OSCE/ODIHR support prevention of anti-trafficking campaigns across the country.

Raising awareness through targeted education and hotlines
Among the most effective trafficking prevention tools supported are the NGO-managed national and regional toll-free counselling hotlines. To date, more than 22,000 Ukrainians have called and received information about trips, work and study abroad in the context of trafficking awareness. Training for hotline consultants is provided as part of these programmes.

The education of high-risk groups and school and university students was supported within the framework of prevention campaigns and in close co-operation with Ukrainian authorities. Over 11,000 people have attended presentations on the problem of trafficking this year.

Planning for effectiveness in the anti-trafficking campaign
During 2003, the office co-financed an assessment of needs with respect to victim identification and rehabilitation. It is also examining possible improvements for ongoing prevention campaigns. The outcome of this assessment and its consequent recommendations will be reflected in the office’s activities in 2004.

Propiska-Registration of Citizens
The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and the OSCE/ODIHR are supporting the nation’s authorities in the reform of the propiska system – the registration of citizens.

Reviews of relevant draft laws have been carried out by international experts. The experiences in this area of other countries have been studied, and Ukrainian registration legislation has been analysed. The support provided has consisted of seminars, a study trip to Lithuania, and publication of relevant materials.

In January, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a preliminary order on the registration of citizens, which is to be replaced by a new law. A draft Law on Freedom of Movement and Freedom of Choice of Place of Residence is ready for the second reading in the Ukrainian Parliament.

Socially re-integrating retired military personnel
Incident to downsizing of its military, Ukraine has numerous facilities and thousands of personnel in transition from military to civilian life. The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine financed a model defence conversion project on a military base. In the framework of this project, an assessment of the situation of conversion in Ukraine was carried out.

This project has provided a basis for the office’s further activities in this area. Consequently, it is funding training clinics for soldiers making the transition to civilian status, in close co-operation with the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and the National Co-ordination Centre on Conversion and Social Adaptation.

At the clinics, soldiers in transition are informed about housing and pension rights, as well as about other opportunities available. Psychological support is also provided. Special attention is paid to the development of retraining opportunities.

Initial steps include a new programme which is providing graduate level business management training for retiring senior officers.

ELECTIONS

Ahead of the forthcoming 2004 elections, a comprehensive action plan has been finalised and submitted to Ukrainian authorities for their consideration.

Following statements by Ukrainian authorities at the highest levels which confirm the commitment to conduct fair and transparent elections, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine began to assist the attainment of the highest democratic standards of procedure. To this end, Ukrainian authorities, NGOs, and the international community have deepened co-operation.
OSCE Office in Baku

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF OFFICE

2003 can be described, without doubt, as having been the busiest and most successful year for the Office since it was established some four years ago.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Office has focused particular attention on the rule of law and good governance as its overall priorities.

It has closely followed developments related to compliance with OSCE principles and commitments, commented on them and maintained close and meaningful dialogue with relevant authorities. The Office has striven to support implementation of those commitments by facilitating and co-ordinating activities and pertinent events. Most importantly, projects have been developed and implemented, and action plans formulated with the authorities.

The political year in Azerbaijan has been focused on the presidential elections, which were held in October. Therefore, the Office worked closely with the OSCE/ODIHR to support good practice in the election process wherever possible.

The Office has also addressed issues as diverse as trafficking in human beings and water management, anti-terrorism legislation and development of civil society, eco-tourism, freedom of the media and development of the police service.

In 2003, the country has consolidated an important commitment to fight against trafficking in human beings - one of the OSCE priority issues. With our support, Azerbaijan has ratified the Palermo Protocols and has become one of few countries to have adopted a draft National Action Plan to combat the phenomenon.

Azerbaijan has taken major steps in playing its role in combating terrorism, and the Office is facilitating support for its legislative implementation of international instruments and decisions.

Substantial OSCE resources recently allocated to the Office has given major impetus to programmatic and project-based work. Looking ahead, the Office shall build upon the newly-established emphasis on design and implementation of projects specifically aimed at supporting the realisation of the Organization’s principles and commitments.

POLICE DEVELOPMENT
Building upon the successful on-going implementation of a Police Assistance Programme in Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) identified Azerbaijan as the next focus for an OSCE policing partnership.

A team of the OSCE/SPMU Officers visited the country in April 2003 and reached agreement in principal on priority areas for OSCE assistance.

With effective and sustainable improvements to policing in mind, expert assessment of existing Azerbaijani methods created the agenda for the Police Assistance Programme. This needs-assessment phase was implemented over five months and covered the following thematic areas:
• Community policing: a pilot scheme
• Strengthening of the Police School for induction training of police recruits
• Strengthening of intelligence-led drug investigation.

The core element of community policing is the emphasis on providing a service to the population, by providing social protection and defence of the community’s legitimate interests.

To this end, the Office’s Police Development Project involves:
• reconfiguration of various police services including patrol, neighbourhood inspectors, traffic police and operational investigators, in a selected jurisdiction to remove vertical divisions and provide integrated service to the population
• introduction of competitive and transparent recruitment procedures for neighbourhood inspectors
• modification of the system of measurement of police performance to include as indicators the assessment of the quality of life as well as the accuracy of crime reporting
• development of crime analysis and implementation of a strategy for public information about crime patterns
• implementation of the concept of problem-oriented policing.

Getting the basics right: dramatically improving Police School conditions
As part of the extensive package offered by the Police Assistance Programme, the Office and the OSCE/SPMU focused on the Police School by strengthening its curriculum and providing suitable facilities.

Refurbishment and renovation included a new roof, replacement of the heating system, provision of two shower blocks for the sports area, and complete renovation of two floors in the teaching block of the school.

Before this work took place cadets had to study and live in dilapidated buildings with limited electrical supply and no heat regulation (up to 40°C in the summer, and freezing conditions with 90% humidity in the winter).
Strengthening of the Police School for induction training of police recruits

The building of a strong and transparent partnership with relevant local authorities was a key objective of the assessment phase of the programme. This included the improvement of the Police School, which trains new police recruits at the level of non-commissioned officers.

The Office and the SPMU focused on two main areas:
• vital refurbishment of facilities
• an extensive re-alignment of the training curriculum with best international practices and requirements of the service.

Politico-Military Dimension Activities

In recent years, Azerbaijan has deployed larger contingents of armed forces to international peacekeeping effort, including Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

In response, the Office met with the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs to identify areas where the OSCE might best promote understanding of international norms of military activity.

Training Azerbaijani forces before international deployment

The Office provided comprehensive Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security training for the International Co-operation Battalion; with the Swiss Ministry of Defence and the OSCE’s Forum for Security Co-operation.

It also issued personnel with laminated aide-memoires covering international warning signs and organisation emblems, together with a similar document on the obligations under the Geneva Convention and other obligations under International Humanitarian Law applicable to soldiers in combat.

This event has led to a closer co-operation between the Office and the Ministry of Defence, and by November a major seminar covering practical aspects of the Code of Conduct for mid-ranking officers was organised and led by Finnish Ministry of Defence experts. It is envisaged that these officers, in turn, will train other personnel.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

A new plan of action

In late 2002 a roadmap of action was informally agreed, after the Office and the IOM presented an overview of the impact of trafficking in human beings to representatives of ten governmental ministries.

During 2003, the Office supported the Government in encouraging its ratification of the United Nations Palermo Protocols, thereby committing the country to adopting certain legislative and other instruments. This paved the way for the development of a functioning national action plan.

Azerbaijan announced the adoption of a draft national action plan at the OSCE Economic Forum in May.

Since then, the Office has rallied support from international organisations and bilateral representatives to commence implementation of the plan. Working with the IOM and a local NGO to establish the national helpline has been a first step. The training has begun for social workers and professionals to support trafficking victims.

The Office has also initiated support of legislative reform to develop a co-ordinated response to incidents of suspected trafficking; and has started training NGOs in the skills needed to run effective awareness raising as a means of protection for the at risk community, to manage and effectively run a toll-free helpline for potential and actual victims of trafficking and in the basic skills to manage and provide support to potential and actual victims of trafficking within the environment of a secure accommodation. Events in this sphere represent rapid progress; in November 2002 the phenomenon of human trafficking was not officially recognised in Azerbaijan, but now the country has a draft action plan based on internationally recognised agreements and best practices.

ELECTIONS

The elaboration of a new electoral law dominated the agenda of internal politics during the first half of the year. In February, the Office organised a conference, at which the author of the Draft Electoral Code and one of the co-authors of the opposition coalition’s comment on the draft presented their views and a discussion followed.

The interventions and discussions were chaired by the Head of Office on State Television.

The Office supported the ODIHR election observation mission during the Presidential election. The election was accompanied by civil disturbance and the subsequent arrest of several hundred people, including senior opposition political figures, a religious leader and members of the press.

The Office, having observed the civil disorder, has followed the circumstances surrounding the continuing detentions of more than one hundred individuals and the alleged dismissals from employment which have occurred. With the permission of the Azerbaijan authorities, the Office regularly visited those detained and, in co-operation with ODIHR, has instituted a monitoring programme of all court proceedings which have recently commenced.
It continued to offer support to the Azerbaijan authorities in implementing recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Report on election standards, and to provide whatever assistance it can in preparing for the Municipal Elections 2004.

Human Dimension Activities

Assistance to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Based on the amendments to the Constitution of Azerbaijan, adopted in the 2002 referendum, and on the Constitutional Law on Realisation of Human Rights, a new mechanism of protecting and restoring human rights was made available for the citizens of Azerbaijan. The Constitutional Court has been given the authority to repeal, by its decision, the norms of individual and general normative acts violating human rights.

With a view to provide an opportunity for administrative staff of the court to get acquainted with ways in which practical issues of administering a high number of cases can be approached, the Office organised a study trip for senior staff members. During the trip, three staff members, directly charged with receiving and administering individual complaints, visited a constitutional court in Poland. During their stay the participants were given an opportunity to become familiar with practices and experiences of the host court in case management and implementation of decisions.

Driving forward Bar reform

At the end of the year the Office organised a one-day roundtable discussion on Bar reform, which offered:

- a platform for discussion on the legal reform suggested by the Government
- an opportunity for practising lawyers to get involved with draft legislation.

The Office also has been engaged in a series of:

- human rights training activities for NGOs and the Ombudsman Institution
- events designed to resolve the current problem pertaining to NGO registration
- training for practising lawyers on advanced litigation skills
- training for 100 law students on court proceedings, drafting of legal documents and fair trials

Human rights training for NGOs

Throughout the year the Office organised human rights monitoring and reporting training for representatives of local NGOs. The project included a follow-up phase during which participants were encouraged to submit proposals for a small-scale monitoring project. Three grants were awarded for monitoring:

- availability of state-provided legal aid
- the observance of the principle of publicity and timelines of court trials, as stipulated in article 6 of the ECHR
- the religious expression of head-scarf wearing.

Freedom of religion

The Office joined a parliamentary working group, providing a source of information and model examples of international good practice, drafting a new law on freedom of religion in Azerbaijan.

In co-operation with the ODIHR, a comparative study was commissioned on how the issues that would be dealt with in the proposed law are treated in various European countries. This provided an overview of possible models for legislators. The Office stands ready to support the Government in its further efforts in implementing the resulting law.

Civic education for NGOs & Police

The Office with the Ministry of Interior organised a series of training sessions aimed at the strengthening of co-operation between NGOs and the police. Through the financial support of the company British Petroleum, the seminars were held throughout the country, and marked the start of open communication and co-operation between NGOs and structures of the Ministry of the Interior.

Freedom of Association

One of the priorities of the Office was activities in the field of promotion of full freedom of association in Azerbaijan.

A survey on the issue was compiled by the Office in co-operation with the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, and used to inform discussion. As a part of an overall strategy the Office implemented an NGO advocacy capacity-building project.

Together with its implementing partner, the NGO Tolerance, the Office trained and encouraged local NGOs to use the legal tools available for advocacy; as well as advocated support for NGOs facing problems with the fundamental act of registration. Emphasis was placed on the principle of the right to associate, reflected in the registration of an NGO. Legal aid was provided to those NGOs willing to pursue their rights through the ombudsman institution, the Constitutional Court, and international mechanisms.

The Office launched the concept of an independent professional lawyers’ organisation – the National Forum of Lawyers. The Forum has provided opportunity for over 400 lawyers to address matters of crucial importance.
Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

The Office focused much of its energy in the past year on promoting the development of SMEs and employment, particularly in the less prosperous regions outside of Baku.

Taking the leading role in introducing new business systems

In line with the Government’s plans to establish business incubators as source of job creation, the Office sponsored a study tour in Austria and Hungary and a joint OSCE/UNIDO National Workshop on Business Incubators.

Both events brought together leading business and Government representatives to discuss the merits and best practices of existing structures.

Promoting enterprise

SME regional development is hindered by the lack of access to business training and micro-credits. In this regard, the Office harnessed the experience of international and domestic organisations, sponsoring two training programmes for particularly vulnerable population groups: women and the youth.

The Office initiated the YES Programme (Youth Entrepreneurship Seminars) in five western regions bordering with Georgia. The Office also sponsored training seminars for promising women entrepreneurs in ten regions of Azerbaijan. These training seminars were followed by a national workshop on women entrepreneurship with the goal of promoting the role of women in business.

Addressing poor access to micro-credit loans

The Office sponsored a Micro-Finance Practitioners’ Conference which brought together the micro-finance community with Government and international stakeholders to pool experience and determine the way forward.

The Office also initiated an Economic Training Programme for municipality leaders and executive staff on themes of strategic economic planning, as well as on their role in SME development in local communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SECURITY

Supporting Azerbaijan’s accession to the Aarhus Convention

On 21 September, the Office officially opened the Aarhus Public Environmental Information Centre in the premises of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan.

Consisting of a library, Internet and conference room facilities, the Aarhus Centre provides equal and open access to anyone interested in the environmental affairs of Azerbaijan. In addition, the centre’s conference room is used by many non-governmental organisations for their public events and workshops.

DEVELOPING THE MEDIA

With the aim of developing professional skills of journalists, the Office, in conjunction with the BBC Training Centre, organised training courses for Azerbaijani journalists on election reporting.

A study tour was organised for members of the newly formed independent Press Council to its German counterpart in Bonn. This visit provided the institution for media-society relations with first-hand experience of an established press council in a country with a longstanding tradition of media operating in a democratic society.

In September, a group of four young journalists had an opportunity to observe the functioning of the media in the United States of America. During their stay, they gleaned comprehensive information on investigative and factually-based reporting, and on the ways of covering potentially troublesome stories. Most importantly, during their weeklong visit in a press newsroom they experienced the skills they learnt can be applied practically.
The Office also conducted a series of events designed to promote environmental journalism, education, and non-governmental activity, including sponsoring:

- an ecological youth training programme providing environmental education for schoolchildren in ten regions of Azerbaijan
- the Youth Environmental Congress in Baku.

**Promoting environmentally-sound business**
The Office also made an effort to draw the business community into supporting environmentally sustainable business practices, and sponsored the Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility and Ecology in co-ordination with the Business Development Alliance. The success of this preliminary venture, in attracting a broad spectrum of participation from international businesses operating in Azerbaijan and local entrepreneurs and openly discussing environmental impact, will be followed up during 2004 with more activity oriented meetings to look at harmonising the development of specific businesses with environmental conservation and protection.

**Determining water priority issues**
Throughout the year, the Office held a number of regional and national meetings of water experts, in co-ordination with USAID, to build dialogue and determine water priority issues in Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus region.

Moreover, the Office lobbied the host Government for the establishment of a national water commission to help co-ordinate various stakeholders in the water sector.

**The second year of the OSCE/NATO project in the Southern Caucasus on unified water standards**
The Office has continued to support the OSCE/NATO Science for Peace Programme initiative to place 30 water monitoring stations along the Kura and Araks river basin. The project is unique in that it involves all three South Caucasian states: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The Office co-ordinated with OSCE colleagues in Georgia and Armenia on this initiative. It has facilitated fundraising from private donors for the salaries of the Azerbaijani scientists working on the programme.

**Combating money laundering**

The Office held a series of awareness-raising and policy workshops designed to assist the Government in combating the money laundering and preventing the financing of terrorism.

The first National Workshop to introduce relevant international conventions and case laws was organised by the Office. This workshop was followed by training for judges on pre-trial investigation of drug-related cases, and on developing a legal framework for combating money laundering.
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF MISSION

The focus on the changes in the political environment in Georgia in November/December 2003 and the Mission’s subsequent rapid, close involvement in the presidential and parliamentary election processes should not distract attention from the solid achievements registered elsewhere by the Mission throughout the year.

In the opening months of 2003, the Border Monitoring Operation more than doubled its area of responsibility and now conducts observation over a 280 km segment of the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation. At the same time, it greatly improved its technical capability to observe and report on border crossings. To achieve these results – in less than four months – required great effort and commitment from all members of the Mission team – a fact which has been warmly recognised by the new President of Georgia. The Mission, through generous contributions from participating States, was also able to improve the technical equipment of the Georgian Border Guard Security teams, enabling them better to provide the required level of security to our Border Monitors.

Although little progress was achieved in moving forward on the political processes to resolve the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the Mission was able to register a number of practical achievements in the areas of voluntary weapons handovers, joint policing and civil society co-operation and development. Importantly, at the end of the year, agreement was finally reached between all parties on the implementation of a €2.5 million grant, given by the European Commission to the Mission, to carry out projects related to refugee/IDP return and infrastructure improvement in the areas affected by the conflict. These projects, designed to build confidence at the community level, will be implemented in 2004 in co-operation with UNHCR and UNDP.

The Mission has also continued to assist the UNOMIG operation in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict by providing personnel and financial support to human rights projects in that region.

The Mission has concentrated a great deal of resource on Human Dimension issues. Legal and technical support and assistance was directed towards both governmental and civil society structures in order to develop programmes in such areas as local self-governance, freedom of religion, strengthened human rights institutions, access to information through the media, and civil society development to promote conflict resolution. In addition, work initiated by the Mission resulted in the formal adoption of a National Plan of Action against Torture and has also contributed to the implementation of a National Plan of Action against Trafficking of Human Beings. Working with all those involved in prison reform has also been a major activity in 2003.

In the Economic Dimension, work continued on transboundary rivers and water management issues along with small business development projects in the regions of Georgia.

However, the political environment and changes in Georgia in the latter part of the year meant that the Mission became heavily engaged, at short notice, in election related issues. Throughout the year 2003, the Mission continued to chair an international Technical Working Group which provided legislative and practical advice and assistance to the Parliament and electoral authorities. Due to a lack of political will, the failure of the November election led to the change of power and an urgent need to provide direct assistance to ensure that the January 2004 presidential election marked a major step forward from previous practices.

Participating States contributed some €4 million to the Mission to enable this goal to be met. The Mission was able to respond successfully to this challenge, establishing a dedicated election team – which is currently working on a similar programme of support for the impending, new parliamentary elections.

Finally, mention must also be made of the Mission’s central role in the destruction and re-cycling of ammunition stock-piles in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence and Georgian research institutes. This is a major task, whose importance cannot be overstated.
GEORGIAN-OSSETIAN CONFLICT
Despite sporadic flare-ups of tension between the Georgian and Ossetian sides, the regularity of the process of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict settlement was maintained in 2003. This process is supported by two mechanisms, in which the Mission also participates: the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and the Experts’ Groups meetings on political issues. The regularity was reflected in the number of meetings – six in all – held within the framework of the JCC.

As a result, agreements were reached on various important issues related to urgent matters, in particular, the decision to speed up:
- the process of elaboration of the Georgian-Russian programmes on Return, Integration and Reintegration of Refugees and IDPs and on Economic Rehabilitation in the Zone of Conflict
- the release of a JCC news bulletin.

Seeking a peaceful resolution: meeting in The Hague
Upon the invitation of the Dutch Chairmanship, the 10th Experts’ Group meeting took place in The Hague in October, with the participation of the authorised delegations of the sides, within the framework of the negotiation process on a full-scale settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

Despite the fact that the discussions revealed strong differences between the sides on the key issues of the political settlement and they were not able to agree upon a protocol of the meeting in The Hague, the sides reiterated their commitment to continue the political dialogue on the key issues and repeated their firm intention to continue to seek a resolution of the conflict by exclusively peaceful means.

A financial boost for confidence-building measures
A second European Union grant in support of the JCC and the Experts’ Groups has been instrumental in maintaining the dynamics of the settlement process. The pledge agreement was signed between the OSCE and the European Commission in August.

It is envisaged that part of the grant, administered by the Mission, would go towards funding the JCC bulletin and other confidence-building activities.

Economic rehabilitation: high on the conflict settlement agenda
The Georgian and Ossetian sides share the view that economic rehabilitation plays an increasing role in the overall settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Discussions on the implementation of related projects were continued during the year 2003. The key projects – funded by a €2.5 million EC grant – will focus on the areas of rehabilitation and refugee/IDP resettlement.

VOLUNTARY HANDOVER OF SMALL ARMS
The Mission has supported the Joint Peacekeeping Forces’ (JPKF) programme for voluntary handover of small arms and ammunition since its start in 2000.

Projects for the benefit of the communities voluntarily handing over weapons
Within the framework of the Rapid Reaction Programme, the Mission continued with the implementation of small-scale targeted projects, offering goods and services to the benefit of communities that decided to voluntarily hand over small arms to the JPKF.

The implementation of these projects in 2003 offered an opportunity to publicise the programme throughout the zone of conflict. Vivid interest in the Programme eventually led the Mission to anticipate that significant progress will be made in the area of arms collection in 2004.

Trasparency and monitoring
The Mission has continued to monitor the Joint Peacekeeping Forces in the Georgian-Ossetian zone of conflict. The OSCE’s efforts have contributed to enhancing transparency of activities and cooperation on all three sides (Georgian, Ossetian and Russian) forming the peace-keeping forces.

In 2003 eight projects were implemented, including:
- road and irrigation canal repair
- the purchase of medical equipment
- environmental rehabilitation of illegal waste dumps.

Irrigation canal repair was one of the OSCE Mission projects for the benefit of communities. Here the Mission representative is inspecting progress.

The programme which awards community projects for voluntary handover of weapons also serves as a strong confidence-building measure in the zone of conflict – bringing together the Georgian and Ossetian communities in a spirit of co-operation.
The Special Co-ordination Centre (SCC)

The Mission presented a plan of action to the Joint Control Commission aimed at enhancing the operational capacity of the SCC. The plan included the provision of additional financial and material support and police training.

A representative from the OSCE Strategic Police Unit (SPMU) came to the zone of conflict on two occasions to refine the plan. Acceptance by conflicting sides of the final Mission/SPMU recommendations had not been finalised by the end of this reporting period.

Crime is a matter of growing concern in the zone of conflict and isolated incidents could ignite ethnic tension and violence. The Mission therefore continues to encourage both sides to increase efforts to work within the framework of the Special Co-ordination Centre.

Supporting the Resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict

The peace process has continued to be in a political deadlock since the last session of the UN-led Co-ordinating Council in January 2001 and the meeting on confidence-building measures in Yalta in March of the same year.

In 2003, the overall situation on the ground has been predominantly calm. However, following the kidnapping in the Kodori Valley of 3 UN observers in June tension rose and the situation was reported as unstable in the upper part of the Valley. All UN activities were subsequently suspended for the rest of the year in that part of the region.

Steps towards the opening of a human rights office in Gali

The year 2003 was marked by the decision of the Abkhaz side to let the UN Observer Mission to Georgia deploy a group of 20 international civilian police officers with the aim to train and equip the law enforcement bodies in the conflict zone (in particular the Gali and Zugdidi districts).

This key event in the peace process is considered the necessary step before the opening, in Gali, of the Human Rights Office as recommended in 2001 report of the OSCE-UN Joint Assessment Mission.

At the second meeting of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General held in Geneva in July, the Abkhaz side expressed for the first time their readiness to work on the remaining obstacles that are currently preventing the opening of the office (see the Human Dimension section of this report for additional Mission activities in Abkhazia).

Border Monitoring Operation (BMO)

The work of the Border Monitoring Operation of the OSCE Mission to Georgia (BMO) continues to contribute significantly to building confidence and promoting stability in the region. This year saw the enhancement on the Chechen and Ingush segments and the enlargement of the BMO to the Dagestan segment of the border with the Russian Federation.

Enhancement of the Operation Concept

Establishing four new Bases and eleven Permanent Observation Patrols

Four new Patrol Bases and a Forward Supply Point were established on the Dagestan segment of the border. These have been created in response to the 2003 expansion of the Mission’s mandate: to observe and report on movement across the Dagestan segment of the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation.

The BMO now consists of:

- 8 Patrol Bases along the border
- one Permanent Border Patrol
- a Forward Supply Point in Tbilisi (positioned midway between the Tbilisi Head Office and the border).

With the enhancement of the BMO operational concept commencing in May, eleven Permanent Observation Patrols were established along the 280km stretch of border, within the patrol bases’ area of operation.

The BMO conducts an intensive monitoring operation with communication equipment that allows direct-time reporting between patrols and the BMO head office in Tbilisi.

Border monitors normally travel to their observation positions by helicopter. Half of the mountain Bases can only be re-supplied by air, making all three BMO helicopters a veritable life-line for the operation.

The observation, recording and reporting equipment is state-of-the-art. It incorporates thermal imagery for night observation, digital photography and video. Satellite communication enables patrols to send data directly from the observation positions on the mountains to the head office.
Human Dimension Activities

DEMOCRATIZATION

Filling the information vacuum

The Mission's Freedom of the Media Programme focused on addressing a lack of access to information by populations who are isolated geographically, socially or as a result of conflict.

A series of projects were implemented, which aimed to provide these groups with media outlets and access to information.

The Mission supported the publication of three newspapers which provide information for women in targeted communities in the zones of the Georgian-Abkhaz and the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and to Georgian IDP women. Training was provided for South Ossetian journalists with support from the Knight Foundation and the International Centre for Journalists. Two initiatives were launched to provide autonomous Internet access to civil society in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali – a key factor in boosting the development of civil society in both areas.

Monitoring legal protection of press freedom

The Mission monitored and reported on the legislative process, especially draft amendments to the Criminal Code, which, if they had been adopted, would have criminalised certain forms of libel and defamation. The Mission monitored this issue closely, and raised its concern with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING

The Mission has developed a broad anti-trafficking programme. It focused on supporting the Government to develop its anti-trafficking policy – through implementation of an Action Plan against Trafficking, which was adopted in January 2003. Support included improving the legislative base addressing this issue, and encouraging the establishment of links between policy-makers, Government officials and NGO experts.

Project activities include a translation into Georgian of:
- the UN Convention against Transnational Crime – the Palermo Convention
- the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
- an initiative financed from the ODIHR Anti-Trafficking Fund to develop more comprehensive legislation complementing the changes in the Criminal Code made in June 2003.

In an effort to promote the protection of victims of trafficking, the Mission supported a project to develop standards for operators of anti-trafficking hotlines. This represents the first step towards further activities to develop a National Referral Mechanism.

RULE OF LAW

Access to legislation

The Mission pays specific attention to the population’s access to information on legislation. The publication of judgements made by the Constitutional Court and the availability of Georgian translations of multilateral conventions are of special importance.

Monitoring legal reforms

The Mission’s monitoring and reporting role also covers institutional reforms of law-enforcement and prosecution, including the investigation process.

Special attention is given to the ongoing penitentiary reform: the Mission supports the Ministry of Justice by elaborating upon a draft code on penal execution issues. Assistance is provided in creating conditions for drafting the code using local specialists and their expertise, national practitioners and NGO representatives.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Supporting comprehensive measures against torture

The Mission supported the National Security Council (NSC) in elaborating the National Action Plan against Torture 2003-2005, which came into force by presidential decree on 27 September.

In order to bolster this plan, eight roundtables were conducted with the Mission’s financial support, throughout the country, with a broad participation of law enforcement agencies, civil society, human rights defenders, the NSC and the Office of the Public Defender.

To ensure a transparent and democratic drafting process, the Mission launched a web-site with the NSC to present the draft anti-torture plan for public comment. The new plan is seen as a model for others because of its practicality in carrying out effective measures against torture practices.

Strengthening human rights defenders

The Mission assisted the Public Defender’s Office (PDO) in strengthening its capacity and building a network of practitioners in the regions.

The Mission delivered several comprehensive training sessions on the protection of human rights to all staff members of the six regional offices of the PDO.

With the protection of the rights of detained persons in focus, the Mission organised regional roundtables for human rights defenders, lawyers and local law enforcement bodies.

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Consolidating human rights knowledge
Booklets on the role of the Public Defender's Office and on the rights of detained persons in Georgia were compiled and disseminated. The Mission also provided the regional Offices of the PDO with national and international legal textbooks.

Monitoring human rights violations

Monitoring of alleged human rights violations, and rendering legal and administrative advice to complainants, represent a key component of the Mission's human rights portfolio. A human rights officer receives individual human rights complaints, ensuring appropriate referral of many to a growing number of national legal assistance services and the Public Defender's Office.

Legal and administrative advice is rendered to individuals complaining about breaches of human rights, particularly those related to religion and fair trial. The Mission follows proceedings where the case may set precedent or could reach the European Court of Human Rights.

The Mission continues to monitor closely the situation of religious minorities, both in society as well as in the courtrooms. It follows the increasingly frequent cases of violence, harassment and defamation perpetrated by extremists against various non-orthodox religious groups.

Human rights in Abkhazia
The Mission seconds a human rights officer to the UN Human Rights Office Abkhazia, Georgia (HROAG).

The mandate of this office is to address current human rights problems by providing direct support and protection in individual human rights cases, and by focusing on preventing future human rights violations.

In this perspective the Mission seeks to address the local population, local de facto authorities, NGOs and law enforcement officials to improve and strengthen human rights awareness.

In addition, the Mission's human rights activities in Abkhazia include six projects, which address the promotion of awareness through training programmes and the media.

All the projects sponsored by the Mission involve young people throughout Abkhazia. At the same time, effort was made to increase local NGOs' management capacity.

An extensive three-year programme on minority issues launched in April
Projects have been designed to raise awareness about minority issues, build confidence and develop capacities in language, the media, law and monitoring.

To drive this programme forward, a Programme Manager joined the HCNM in September 2003.

The €1 million programme was brokered by the OSCE and funded by the Canadian Agency for International Development and the UK’s Global Conflict Prevention Pools.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

This year, monitoring of economic and environmental issues from a security perspective - especially the gas and electricity sectors - has been balanced with an increased focus on activities supporting:

• good governance
• SME development and trade
• access to governmental information on environmental matters.

Economic activities

Anti-corruption and good governance
In an effort to address issues hindering the development of the Small and Medium Size Enterprise (SME) sector, the Mission supported the publication and distribution of 4,000 booklets on best practice in customs and border procedures for the use of traders and customs officers.

The Mission and the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) worked together to initiate entrepreneurial training for young people. Training was offered in the area around the cities of Rustavi, Gardabani and M arneuli - an area of particularly high unemployment. The Marneuli region is mainly populated by an Azeri ethnic minority.
The Mission initiated discussions with the Government and civil society on the development of a Centre promoting the Aarhus Convention, which addresses access to information, decision-making and justice in environmental matters. The Centre hopes to support access to governmental information on environmental issues, as well as foster a partnership between the Government and civil society sectors in this area.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES
The second year of the OSCE/NATO project in the Southern Caucasus on unified water standards
The Mission has continued to support the OSCE/NATO Science for Peace Programme initiative to place 30 water monitoring stations along the Kura and Araks river basin. The project is unique in that it involves all three South Caucasian states: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The Mission supported two meetings for project colleagues in Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is also boosting national expertise by supporting the training of young Georgian water specialists.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO DESTRUCTION OF SURPLUS MILITARY STOCKPILES IN GEORGIA
The first of the two projects initiated in 2003 is concerned with the tens of thousands of shells, bombs and missiles of all types located throughout the country.

The second project concerns toxic waste, decaying and damaged munitions that are contaminating the land on which they have been dumped. Approximately 1,000 hectares have already been contaminated in the ammunition storage sites, but a much larger area has been made inaccessible through that contamination. Neutralisation of contaminated soil is the aim of the next stages of the project.

A centre for recycling and destruction of ammunition
By May, the first stage of the project to recycle and destroy stockpiles of ammunition and bombs on former Soviet bases was completed with the construction of a dedicated facility at the former base of Dedoplitskaro.

The Mission arranged for:
- the installation of equipment for the separation of the various components of artillery ammunition
- the dismantling of thousands of rounds of ammunition
- the reprocessing of gunpowder for industrial use.

The second stage of the project started in August and is due for completion in June 2004, and involves:
- further conversion of the ammunition recycling centre to include modern living accommodation for the employees
- transportation of ammunitions to the centre from other bases
- destruction of dangerous and unstable bombs and the assessment of soil pollution on the former bases.

First stages in the project to neutralise dangerous chemicals
Tons of dangerous chemicals, such as napalm and decontamination chemicals, were transported from the bases where they were located to a special facility in Tbilisi.

The chemicals were neutralised using safe and ecologically-friendly methods, and samples of soil were taken for analysis.

All the activities listed above were funded from contributions by Finland, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.
I was shocked when there were about 50,000 people in front of the Parliament building. That is a lot for a small country with a population of not quite five million! Many of them stood there day and night in the cold and rain.

Acting President of Georgia, Nino Burjanadze, on the events of late November 2003.
Concerning assistance to the elections in Georgia, the OSCE demonstrated its commitment to democratization, and an unrivalled ability to respond rapidly and effectively to an unforeseen need, with tangible results.

Ahead of the November parliamentary elections, the OSCE/ODIHR established the election observation mission, and the OSCE Mission to Georgia played a leading role in the efforts of the international community to advise the government of Georgia on points of concern. The critical nature of these points was proved correct by the events leading to the resignation of President Shevardnadze following peaceful protests rejecting the results of the election. By November, public demand that the elections take place fairly was greater and better articulated than at any time since Georgia’s independence.

After the events of November, the OSCE responded to Georgia’s calls for assistance for the impending presidential and parliamentary elections in January and March 2004 respectively.

Within the short timeframe between the events of late November and the 4 January elections, the Organization rapidly galvanised and implemented assistance:

- the participating States pledged some €6 million at a donors’ meeting which was swiftly convened by the Netherlands Chairmanship
- the Georgia Elections Assistance Programme (GEAP) was designed and set up within the OSCE Mission to Georgia and Phase I was successfully implemented
- the OSCE/ODIHR re-established, with continuity, the international election observation mission, and was re-joined by short-term observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other international organisations
- the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre co-ordinated liaison between donors and the Mission.

The metamorphosis in 45 days from an old system to the beginning of a new one was truly phenomenal.

President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Bruce George, on election standards in Georgia.
THE MISSION TO GEORGIA’S DEMOCRATIZATION ACTIVITIES

Assistance to the November elections

**Promoting fair parliamentary elections**
In close co-operation with the ODIHR, the Mission played a leading role in the efforts of the international community to advise the Government of Georgia on points of concern, which if not met, would seriously undermine the credibility of the parliamentary elections. By playing a co-ordinating role in both technical assistance efforts available to address these points and in the political message warning of their necessity expressed through an UNDP-led Ambassadors Working group, the Mission endeavoured to help the Government navigate through the period building up to the election.

**International co-ordination of electoral assistance**
Throughout the reported period, the Mission chaired a Technical Working Group on Elections (TWG), comprising experts and working level representatives of diplomatic Missions. This group in turn provides technical support and analysis to an Ambassadors Working Group (AWG) whose aim is to politically engage the Georgian authorities on elections issues.

Through its participation in both groups, the Mission promoted a unified approach among all international players, and presented a series of recommendations in advance of the November parliamentary elections. Through co-ordination of technical assistance and political message, the Mission laid the groundwork for the planned ODIHR election observation mission.

**Assistance to the CIo/Council of Europe Ad Hoc Selection Committee for the CEC Chairpersonship**
The Mission provided an Ad Hoc Selection Committee consisting of representatives of the OSCE CIo and the Council of Europe with technical and logistical support, as it engaged in the consultation process on selecting the Chairperson of the Central Election Commission. The resulting nominations of three candidates were presented to President Shevardnadze on 30 August.

**Assistance to implement anti-fraud measures in the election code**
In August, the Georgian Parliament adopted the long awaited amendments to the Unified Election Code. Among other anti-fraud measures included in the law, Article 52 stipulated the use of indelible ink to prevent multiple voting. Following consultations with the Georgian authorities and political parties, the ODIHR recommended the adoption of this measure.

THE ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

In September, the OSCE/ODIHR established in Georgia what was to become one of the OSCE’s longest and largest election observation missions. It took part in regular meetings with the OSCE Mission to Georgia, where it drew on briefings from the Mission, and in return, offered updates on the technical and legal aspects of the elections as they unfolded.

Ten election experts were based at the mission’s headquarters in Tbilisi and 21 long-term observers in the regions to closely monitor and analyze the entire electoral process, including campaigning by political parties, the work of the election administration and of the local authorities, the media, the legal framework, as well as election-day and appeals procedures.

Shortly before election day, the mission was enhanced by some 400 short-term observers from 43 OSCE states, who together with parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament, were deployed throughout the country to monitor the voting, vote count and tabulation of results. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office appointed the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as special co-ordinator for the short-term observation.

The 2 November parliamentary elections were critically assessed by the observation mission as marked by widespread and systematic fraud, and as falling short of a number of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.

The second round of parliamentary elections, scheduled for 24 November and to be observed by nearly 400 international observers, was never held due to events that resulted in the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze the day before. A proportional component of the elections was cancelled by the Supreme Court on 25 November and a presidential election was called for 4 January 2004.
A donors’ auction at the OSCE Ministerial Council

At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht on 1-2 December 2003, the Acting President of Georgia, Nino Burjanadze appealed for financial assistance for the impending presidential and parliamentary elections in January and March 2004.

Capitalising on the presence of dozens of foreign ministers in Maastricht, the Netherlands Chairmanship of the OSCE decided to convene a donors’ meeting. As a result, the participating States pledged some €6 million.

Setting up the assistance programme

€4 was directly administered by the OSCE Mission to Georgia. Consequently the Georgia Elections Assistance Programme (GEAP) was set up to provide for international technical and financial support to the country’s electoral process in view of the presidential and parliamentary elections. (Of the pledged €6 million, the European Commission gave €2 million to the UNDP for election related projects).

The designed programme consisted of two phases, the first of which focussed mainly on the preparation for the 4 January presidential elections, while the second dealt with the parliamentary elections scheduled for 28 March. Phase II of GEAP was to build upon and continue the activities established in Phase I.

To ensure transparency and co-ordination, an ambassadorial working group, chaired by the OSCE Mission to Georgia, met regularly in Tbilisi.

The OSCE Participating States’ Pledge

Co-ordinating between political donors and the Mission to Georgia

In Vienna, donor meetings were chaired by the OSCE Secretariat. As well as playing a pivotal role in liaison between the donor participating States and the OSCE Mission to Georgia, the Secretariat’s Conflict Prevention Centre also assisted in the rapid identification and deployment of additional expert election personnel.
From the outset, close, effective and productive co-ordination was established between international donors, Government and electoral administrations and civil society. Within the Mission, a dedicated Task Force was established, using contracted international election experts together with Mission members. The need was to work rapidly in order to produce improvements in Georgia's election standards and record.

The Head of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, Roy Reeve

THE OSCE GEORGIA ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (GEAP)

Assistance to the 2004 elections

The assistance provided by the OSCE participating States within the Framework of the GEAP Phase I enabled the timely transfer of funds from the Ministry of Finance of Georgia to the election administration bodies, to cover salaries of election officials. This provided a crucial contribution to realising the presidential elections within an extremely tight timeframe. The Programme also enabled the civil society to play an important role in promoting much needed confidence of the public in the electoral process, through domestic observation, training and media campaigns.

Phase I of the programme consisted of nine projects for the 4 January 2004 presidential elections covering three main programmatic areas:

• direct financial and technical assistance to the Central Election Commission
• funding of the main domestic observation and parallel vote tabulation programme
• funding of a diversity of voter education campaigns

Providing financial support for the Election Administration

During past elections, election officials' salaries were paid late, if at all. As a fundamental basis of any anti-corruption strategy, the Ministry of Finance of Georgia obliged itself to pay salaries in time for those involved in the election administration. This was made possible by the funding of basic election administration operational and logistical costs provided by the OSCE.

Supporting the Public Information Campaign

Financial and technical support was provided to the CEC Public Information Unit to develop and implement a voter registration campaign and a voting day information campaign. In this way it was ensured that the proactive media policy applied by the CEC led to increased public confidence, awareness and participation in the electoral process.

Training of Election Commission Staff

Among the shortcomings in the election administration identified by international observers was the inability of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to carry out training for District and Precinct Election Commission staff. To meet this need a training programme was prepared under the directions of the CEC and drawing on the lessons learned during the previous elections. Fully funded by the OSCE the programme was implemented in co-operation with IFES and UNDP. The training targeted the Precinct Election...
Commission Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Secretaries and reached a total of 6,144 staff from 2,513 different precincts. The training received top ratings by the participants and significant improvements of the election administration were apparent on Election Day.

The GEAP funded a comprehensive training programme for election commission staff in order to improve Election Day performances. A total of 6,144 commission members from 2,513 precinct election commissions underwent training through this programme.

**Anti-fraud measures - voter marking**

Building on experiences from the November elections, the GEAP conducted an expanded programme to support the anti-fraud measure of voter marking with indelible ink. This measure was deemed necessary to increase voter confidence in the electoral process. Practical aspects of the programme included:
- the procurement of inking supplies for the CEC
- provision of technical assistance for implementation
- a series of public education activities, including the production of television spots and public information posters.

**Support for Domestic Election Monitoring and Parallel Vote Tabulation**

GEAP provided the Georgian NGO International Society for Fair Election and Democracy (ISFED) with resources to conduct a countrywide observation. In total some 2,550 ISFED volunteers were deployed in the vast majority of polling stations and district commissions. ISFED successfully monitored the pre-election period, polling, counting and results consolidation, as well as conducted parallel vote tabulation.

**Voter Education Campaigns**

With the aim to increase public knowledge of - and ultimately participation in - the electoral process, four different voter education projects were conducted. In total 13 local NGOs were involved and successfully reached local communities throughout most of Eastern and Western Georgia. While the community based voter education attracted a broad audience, one project was implemented specially aimed at engaging the younger voting age population.
The Director of the ODIHR Christian Strohal (right) with the head of the election observation mission Craig Jenness, at a briefing in Tbilisi on the election observation findings.

THE RE-ESTABLISHED OBSERVATION MISSION

The ODIHR re-established its election observation mission on 7 December. The 37 long-term observers included a large majority of the previous mission’s staff. 13 observers were based in Tbilisi while 27 were deployed in the regions. Again the long-term mission was joined by short-term observers shortly before Election Day: 450 observers from 37 countries were led by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President.

The observation mission concluded that the 4 January presidential elections demonstrated notable progress over previous elections, and in several respects brought the country closer to meeting OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.

Please also see the ODIHR chapter on page 129 for an account of the ODIHR’s work on elections.
Without the strong will of the international community to support the young Georgian democracy, the Georgian people and Government would have faced very serious problems in attempting to conduct the mid-term presidential elections in accordance with the timeframes established by the constitution. I would like to thank donor countries and international organisations for providing the immediate and effective financial and technical support and consultations.

It is very difficult for me, as a citizen of Georgia, to find enough words to express my appreciation for the enormous moral support which the democratic world has expressed towards Georgia.

Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Zurab Chlaberashvili
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF OFFICE

This year was marked with a number of important events and developments for Armenia. In the first half of the year presidential and parliamentary elections were held. The Office was very active in hosting the international working group on elections which served as a forum for co-ordinating activities among international actors in Yerevan in preparation of the elections. On the more technical side, the Office assisted the Central Electoral Commission with the procurement of transparent ballot boxes, which were used for the first time in the CIS countries.

A major OSCE Police Assistance Programme was launched establishing a partnership between the Armenian Police and the OSCE. The first preparatory seminar for the Economic Forum – an important OSCE event in this field - was hosted by Armenia. The Office also focused on promoting good governance initiatives and in particular continued its efforts on combating corruption.

This year the Office has seen important developments in Armenia’s legal reform: the newly adopted Criminal Code, the Law on Freedom of Information and the Law on Ombudsman are just a few examples where the Office has also had its share of involvement.

The Office has been operational since 2000. It has been given a broad mandate to contribute to security- and stability-building in Armenia through development of democratic institutions in the country, strengthening civil society and promoting OSCE standards and principles.

Having this flexible mandate, the Office cooperates equally with Government, Parliament, civil society, media and international community. Therefore, the Office has often been requested to act as a facilitator - a channel between various players.

Politico-Military Dimension Activities

ELECTIONS

General monitoring and reporting
As part of its ongoing monitoring and reporting on the political situation and developments in the country, the Office continued to focus on election related issues. Assistance and briefings were provided to the election observation missions of the OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE/PA and the Council of Europe.

Following the issuance of the ODIHR observation reports on the presidential and parliamentary elections, the Office again took up the issue of electoral reform and began co-ordinating efforts to provide input into not only revising the electoral code, but also to mechanisms to improve the overall administration of elections in Armenia.

This led to joint recommendations on the electoral law and the electoral administration being produced by OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe Venice Commission in December. The Office is following up on these recommendations with roundtables on electoral reform.

T he International Working G roup on E lections

The Office continues to chair the International Working Group on Elections, which contributed to exchange of information, better co-ordination of activities as well as co-operation among international players in providing election related assistance.

Transparent ballot boxes

The Office assisted the Central Electoral Commission by arranging procurement and delivery of transparent ballot boxes, which were used in all polling stations during the presidential and parliamentary elections. Such ballot boxes were used for the first time in Armenia and on the territory of the CIS.

In total, about 5,400 ballot boxes were supplied, a thousand of which were further provided temporarily to Georgia for its November parliamentary elections. The use of ballot boxes contributed to the general transparency of the electoral process and was assessed by the OSCE and CoE observation missions as a progressive step.

Improvement of the voter lists

The Office facilitated and supported a project on improving voter’s lists efforts were focused on the standardisation and systematisation of the population registers in local communities before the elections.


The Head of the Office in Yerevan, Vladimir Pryakhin (left) and Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian welcome the OSCE Chairman in Office during his visit to the South Caucasus in October.
Freedom of Assembly: rallies and demonstrations connected with the presidential elections

Following the reported cases of administrative detentions of demonstrators, the Office investigated and monitored the right to peaceful gatherings and freedom of assembly. A set of recommendations was developed to remedy the situation, and emphasis was put on the need for effective legislation to guarantee this constitutional right.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

A new anti-corruption strategy

The Office has continued coordinating the International Working Group which assists the Government in elaborating and adopting a national anti-corruption strategy. The newly created coalition Government prioritised the fight against corruption, soon after accession. Efforts have resulted in the adoption of a strategy, subject for further discussion and elaboration. The Office facilitated public discussions on the strategy and intends to assist in its implementation.

National recognition of the Head of the Office in the fight against corruption

At the July opening of the national anti-corruption resource centre, the former Head of Mission was presented with an award for his contribution in the fight against corruption in Armenia.

MILITARY AND SECURITY ISSUES

Professional to Professional: the Office organises an anti-terrorism workshop

The overall objective of this results-oriented workshop was to improve the command and control structures in the event of a contingency, and to address the security sector's operational and legislative capacity in the fight against terrorism.

In the course of the workshop five case studies were tackled:

- aircraft hijacking
- public building siege
- vehicles contingency
- diplomatic representation siege
- sensitive strategic installations - nuclear power plants.

Police Reform

After several visits from the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed, establishing a partnership between the Armenian Police and the Office. A head of the Police Assistance Programme scheduled for 2004, a needs assessment mission identified the following objectives:

- introducing a pilot community policing scheme in the Arabkir police district in Yerevan
- strengthening of the Police Training Centre for induction training of police recruits and refresher courses
- strengthening of the emergency response capacity of the police in Yerevan.

Drafting anti-terrorism legislation: implementing the 12 UN protocols and conventions

The Office organised an expert seminar on implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and international anti-terrorism agreements. This initiative was realised in co-operation with Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OSCE Action Against Terrorism Unit, OSEC/ODIHR, UNODC and UNCTC.

Connecting Armenia to the OSCE Communications Network

The Office technically assisted the connection of Armenia to the modernised OSCE Communications Network – a secure channel for the exchange of military information between participating States.

Practical Training on Code of Conduct

The Office and international partners trained the Armed forces on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security – with a focus on the practical issues of democratic control, international humanitarian law and the rights and duties of service personnel.

MEDIA

Co-ordinating NGOs and donors in the field

The Office launched an informal media legislation working group for international organisations as well as local and international media NGOs. This forum for information exchange provides the opportunity to draw up joint measures – to tackle issues more effectively.

Increasing transparency: adoption of the Law on Freedom of Information

The law was adopted following the Office’s assistance to a joint working group of representatives of NGOs, the Government and the National Assembly. It affects the media and public alike, and is a boost for increasing transparency of governmental institutions, and represents a successful manifestation of the Office’s anti-corruption endeavors. As part of a civil initiative, the Office was requested to assist the implementation of the law.
MEDIA MONITORING
In co-operation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Office continued to follow and report on the state of the media in Armenia.

Particular attention was given to the distribution of broadcasting frequencies, notably the case of two TV stations, A1+ and Noyan Tapan, who lost their frequencies in 2002. The Office monitored and reported on all tenders where the above-mentioned stations were involved. The Office also monitored and reported on the state of the media in Armenia.

At the request of the President of Armenia and the OSCE Chairmanship, the Office will conduct monitoring of the media situation with assistance from OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media.

Human Dimension Activities
Supporting creation of the Ombudsman Institution: a decisive step in defending human rights
After Armenia committed itself to adopting a law establishing an ombudsman institution in line with its accession to the Council of Europe, the OSCE/ODIHR provided legal analysis of the new draft law. It emphasised the importance of appointment and dismissal of the defender by the legislative branch rather than the executive.

The Office, the OSCE/ODIHR, the Parliament and the Council of Europe co-organised an expert workshop on amendments to the draft law. The Law on the Human Rights Defender, which passed in October, retained the transitional provisions on the defender appointed by the President.

The Office also chairs the International Working Group on Ombudsman. This group has served as a forum for discussing issues related to the adoption of the law which took place in October. Following the adoption of the law, the group serves as a forum for discussing important aspects of the establishment of this institution.

Spearheading the leading human rights awareness campaign
More than 5,000 people from different target groups took part in 160 presentations organised by a public awareness team supported by the Office, which aimed at deepening understanding of:
- human rights standards and best practices
- legislation and protection mechanisms at the domestic and international levels
- 16 different human rights topics corresponding to main areas of OSCE activities.

In addition to the 16 existing movies used during the presentations, two new films were produced on the Armenian judiciary and children’s rights. The movies were produced by the Office in co-operation with ODIHR and serve as a basis for the presentations held by the public awareness team. The Office is encouraged by increasing demand for presentations to continue this project.

Creating a monitoring mechanism for prisons
The Office, ODIHR, the Ministry of Justice and civil society co-operated on the drafting of a legal basis, ahead of the formation of the civil society monitoring group of penitentiary institutions. The decree adopted by the Minister of Justice was amended in order to provide for wider monitoring powers to the group and increase its independence from the Ministry. A similar mechanism is also foreseen for police custody facilities.

Introducing alternatives to military service
The Office, together with ODIHR, assisted the Armenian authorities by providing expertise on the new law on alternative service, which was adopted in December 2003. During the expert workshop, which was jointly organised by the Office, ODIHR, the Parliament and the Council of Europe, authors of the draft agreed to introduce changes with respect to the following issues:
- eligibility for alternative service
- nature and length of the service
- selection and appeal procedures
- stages at which conscientious objectors can apply for alternative service.

Promoting freedom of conscience, religion and belief
The Office closely follows the state of religious freedom in Armenia and maintains regular contact with the different religious denominations and groups present in the country. Particular attention is given to legal and structural aspects of religious freedom as well as conscientious objection.

Training NGOs in human rights monitoring and reporting
Following the training of Armenian NGOs by experts of the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, three monitoring projects were implemented by Armenian NGOs on the following areas:
- procedural safeguards concerning pre-trial detention
- rights of secondary school students to physical integrity and personal dignity
- fulfilment of equal rights, and access to quality secondary education for urban and rural students.

Handling individual human rights complaints
Since 2000, the Office has been involved in handling of individual complaints on alleged human rights violations. The Office has defined a procedure of receiving complaints and established a systemised database. It also works closely with the relevant Armenian authorities for resolution of the individuals’ complaints.

Capacity-building of prison staff
At the request of the Ministry of Justice, the Office and ODIHR, Penitentiary Reform International, and Open Society Institute organised the ‘training of trainers’ on the secure management of prisons. Interactive training methodologies were utilised, to set up a local pool of experts for training on international standards and best practices.
The Office with the OSCE/ODIHR has been assisting the development of the Ministry of Justice Law Institute into a fully-fledged prison training centre. The institution-building process started with an assessment study of the Law Institute carried out by an international expert in December 2003. Based on the report the future policy in the institution building component of the training centre will be drawn up.

THE FIGHT AGAINST TRAFFICKING

Driving forward anti-trafficking laws

In co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR, the Office provided expert assistance to include an article criminalising trafficking into the new Criminal Code.

The Office also provided assistance with the development of effective implementation mechanisms, and the protection of victims' human rights.

The broader programme addressing organised crime and anti-corruption involves a project to develop a consistent legal framework for effective criminalisation of trafficking and victim and witness protection. It deals with legislative gap analysis and the review of a package of draft legislation, and amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Other anti-trafficking activities included:
- arranging the expert review of the draft National Plan of Action (NPA)
- assisting the preparation of a consolidated matrix of projects for international organisations and local NGO actors.

Improving assistance to victims of trafficking

In July 2003, the Office - in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator's Office in Ukraine - organized a study tour to Ukraine on trafficking victim assistance and the development of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

The study tour brought together relevant Government officials and NGO representatives to introduce them to the NRM concept and to international and regional best practices in trafficking victim assistance.

As a follow-up, the Office organised a debriefing session to identify the existing gaps and to brainstorm strategies. Recommendations produced as an outcome of the discussion were presented to the Interagency Commission on Human Trafficking under the Government of Armenia.

In December 2003, the Office in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOM, ODIHR and US Embassy in Armenia organized a workshop on trafficking victim identification and referral. Law enforcement, NGOs, personnel from Armenian Embassies in Greece, United Arab Emirates and Russia, as well as, Russian consular representatives in Turkey and border guards participated as essential elements in the emerging National Referral Mechanism.

GENDER ISSUES

Furthering women's role in society

Expertise was provided to develop a national plan of action which seeks to define basic policy for the Armenian Government on the position of women in society.

Its long-term goal is to fulfill Armenia's constitutional provision on equal rights and opportunities for men and women.

Women's rights and leadership 'training of trainers' in 2003, activities emphasised developing women's leadership skills. Participants regularly conduct workshops in their respective communities to raise awareness on women's rights and to enhance grassroots activity.

Combating domestic violence

Senior level police officers from Yerevan and the neighbouring regions have been given awareness-raising training on domestic violence, as part of a joint initiative of the Office, OSCE/ODIHR and the local NGO Women's Rights Centre to raise their awareness of domestic violence.

The Office works closely with other international and local actors on this issue. In September, the Office co-organized an online discussion for police officers and NGOs on prevention and combating domestic violence, including effective models of Government-NGO collaboration and policing.
Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

Bringing together policy-makers
In co-operation with the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OSCE/OCEEA, the Office organised the First Preparatory Seminar for the 12th Economic Forum, in Yerevan in November.

Support for development of SMEs was at the top of the agenda for the 200 policy-makers from the participating States and international organisations. The Office will seek ways to elaborate follow up programs together with respective authorities and business community.

Combating money laundering and suppressing the financing of terrorism
Comprehensive legislation and effective structures to tackle money laundering and financing of terrorism were discussed at the first such national workshop, which was organised by the Office in co-operation with the OSCE/OCEEA and UNODC.

The Office has been driving this agenda in 2003 by:
- drawing up a plan of action with Armenian authorities
- establishing an inter-ministerial working group
- co-ordinating efforts to create and advise a Financial Intelligence Unit in Armenia
- organising two workshops for parliamentarians on legislative framework.

Protecting economic competition
Following the successful seminar on competition policy, the Office worked in partnership with the State Commission on the Protection of Economic Competition to establish their public Internet site. The purpose of the Internet site is to provide information on the State Commission and policy reform in the field of competition policy.

Providing expertise for Labour Code Reform
The Office contributed to the draft of a new Code to ensure compliance with international standards and conditions conducive for implementation. The Office co-organised an expert workshop in October to discuss the draft and recommendations.

Promoting Entrepreneurship to Young People (YES Project)
The Office launched this project to enhance business thinking in the youth and to provide feasible support for further business initiatives. The project offered business classes for 16-25 year olds, and introduced students to supportive institutions. The television programme “Entrepreneurship among Young People – Problems and Perspectives” was produced as part of the project.

Developing chambers of commerce and industry

Fostering international partnerships for the Chambers of Commerce
To introduce institutional provision of business services, the Office organised with the German Technical Co-operation ProSME, a study tour to Germany for top and middle management.

The Office engaged in the institutional development of national and regional Chambers of Commerce. An assessment was conducted of the needs of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Network of the Republic of Armenia by an international expert. The deliberations – on which the Office will base future assistance – looked at internal and external aspects of the activities of the Chambers, relations between national and provincial Chambers, services offered and training needs.

Initiating economic strategy for the remote province of Syunik
The Office brought together for the first time all stakeholders to discuss the factors inhibiting local economic development in the remote province of Syunik. A working group of public and private sector representatives was subsequently established to formulate a local area development strategy.
The Aarhus Centre: new location, new agenda

After discussions with the Ministry of Nature Protection and the Board of Experts, a new location was identified and agenda for the Aarhus Centre was adopted. The Public Environmental Information Centre (Aarhus Centre) was established in 2002 on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the OSCE Office in Yerevan and the Ministry of Nature Protection, to assist Armenia in implementation of the Aarhus Convention (UN Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters).

Activities of the Centre include:
• creating the web-site of the Centre
• filming the underground resources of Armenia
• training of environmental journalists
• raising environmental awareness among the students and schoolchildren
• organisation of public hearings on assessment of environmental impact
• establishing an environmental award competition for journalists.

The second year of the OSCE/NATO project in the Southern Caucasus on unified water standards

The Office has continued to support the OSCE/NATO Science for Peace Programme initiative to place 30 water monitoring stations along the Kura and Araks river basin. The project is unique in that it involves all three South Caucasian states: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The training of experts has been successfully completed and based on the new methodology, data collection, sampling and analysis has begun.

Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, Vladimir Pryakhin (right), presents an award for best radio journalist to Heghine Buniatian from Internews Armenia. The environmental journalism competition was established as part of the new agenda of activities of the Aarhus Centre.
The boundaries and names on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the OSCE.
OSCE Centre in Almaty

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF CENTRE

The OSCE Centre in Almaty continues to play a leading role in co-ordinating efforts with the Kazakhstani authorities, civil society and international organisations. It surveys political, legal, and economic developments to promote stability in the country, while assisting Kazakhstan in meeting its OSCE commitments.

A key role has been played in helping Kazakhstan to reform its penitentiary system, which has now become an example of 'best practice' in the Central Asian region. Further work continues to be done in the fields of legal reform and training of personnel.

At the same time, OSCE/ODIHR obligations have been emphasised in the formulation of a new media law and in amendments to the election law. Numerous roundtable processes and expert analyses have been undertaken to assist the Kazakhstani authorities in this area.

The Centre maintains a flexible approach to new challenges, which has allowed it to re-balance activities across all three dimensions. One key result was that a quarter of 500 repatriated (Oralmam) women were successful in starting up their own businesses, following a seven-month training programme.

The introduction of additional funding for activities has enabled the Centre to deepen its role by providing expertise across various fields of relevance to authorities and civil society. An assessment programme, civic lobbying training and youth development are examples of this.

This commitment to assisting Kazakhstan in reaching its goals of democratic reform and respect for human rights in the context of economic development and environmental concern is firmly set to progress in 2004.

With this in mind, in co-operation with the KISI, the Centre held a conference to discuss a wide range of topical issues related to drug production, abuse and trafficking.

Different models for combating this acute scourge were scrutinised for possible application in Central Asia. The conference findings were widely distributed to all parties involved in tackling this issue and implementing strategies.

Facilitating trade
In the framework of its customs support project, the Centre and international partners launched the International Trade Guide project aimed at enhancing levels of professionalism in customs officers. It also sought to raise the awareness of external economic actors with regard to current customs procedures, rights and legislation in the Republic.

The guide is a country-specific document that provides businesses with information on all requirements related to the import and export of commodities. A regularly updated version will be made available on the Internet.

A New Police Assistance Project

The Police Assistance Project has been initiated by the Centre and the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit. It is anticipated that, in the longer run, the project will assist Kazakhstan in setting up a modern and advanced system for exchanging and storing information, in line with international standards.

This project has been launched in co-operation with the Department of Criminal Information of the Kazakhstani Ministry of the Interior.

Work has begun on the implementation of the larger OSCE police project, Creation of the Core of the Periferal Information Analysis System in the Kazakhstan Police, due in 2004.

Politico-Military Dimension Activities

Exploring international security models
Kazakhstan is taking steps to scrutinise various security models to ensure state security and stability. In this context, the international conference The New Parameters of Security in Central Asia: Eurasian, European and Atlantic Apects was organised.

This event, which took place in June, was supported by the OSCE Centre in Almaty and organised by the Kazakhstani Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan (KISI). The Centre suggested the agenda and experts to analyse the correlation between the security in Central Asia and geopolitical processes, as well as to reveal the relationship between the Central Asian, Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic policies in the context of security.

Capacity-building for skilful border management
In the framework of the border security project, the Centre provided urgently needed technical assistance to a military unit training centre for border guards in Almaty. The equipment was donated at the request of instructors of the training centre, and was used to introduce interactive techniques to their lessons, and to publish manuals.

Addressing the issue of drug trafficking in Central Asia

This September, the Centre opened a new Liaison Office in the Kazakhstani capital, Astana, staffed by one Liaison Office Co-ordinator. This has enabled the Centre to strengthen its co-operation with governmental partners, while retaining close contact with the NGO community which continues to base itself primarily in Almaty.

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Head of Centre: Ambassador Ivar Vikki (since 4 April 2004) | Former Head of Centre: Ambassador Anton Rupnik | Revised budget: €1,173,800

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IMPROVING THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Developing election law

Amendments to electoral legislation have been an important focus for the Centre and the OSCE/ODIHR during recent years.

The Centre continued to promote OSCE standards with regard to amendments of the election law. In May, it opened a dialogue between state authorities and political parties through a roundtable. NGOs, the media and the general public also took part in the forum entitled "Upcoming Electoral Processes in Kazakhstan: 2003-2006."

In addition, the Centre distributed to state officials and political parties the ODIHR/OSCE Preliminary Assessment of the Draft Amended Election Law, and held a finalising round table with political parties on further improvement and development of the electoral draft law.

The Centre worked closely with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) on electoral developments, and co-ordinated meetings between the CEC and the OSCE/ODIHR.

In context of the OSCE PA Trans-Asian Parliamentary Forum, which took place in Almaty from 7-9 June 2003, ODIHR Ambassador Christian Strohal addressed issues impacting free and fair election processes. He also had the opportunity to meet with the head of the Central Election Commission.

Monitoring electoral process

Monitoring the process of autumn’s local Majilis (local governing body) elections was a key area of activity. As observers, the Centre’s staff monitored the process and supported the work of the two designated ODIHR experts.

Throughout the period, co-ordination between the monitors and the political parties was well developed. ODIHR’s observations of these local elections under the existing law were presented widely to the appropriate parties.

MEDIA ISSUES

Shortcomings in freedom and professional development of the media in Kazakhstan were repeatedly highlighted by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (FoM).

In co-operation with the OSCE/FoM, the Centre has been offering additional assistance to support the quality of local journalism and to remove obstacles to free and independent media.

Media legislation

The Centre has actively contributed to the process of improving media legislation and has provided legal expertise to the state authorities. The Centre has distributed a preliminary legal analysis of the draft Law on Mass Media, and has participated in parliamentary hearings since the draft was presented in October.

Survey of Kazakhstani Journalists

This was the first study of local journalism in the country. The survey explored how journalists see mass media and freedom of speech, problems faced, and the role of the OSCE in tackling issues.

This sociological study was collated from 680 questionnaires pooled from 13 cities of Kazakhstan. It was undertaken by the Centre, in co-operation with local media NGOs and international donor organisations.

Encouraging media professionalism

In an effort to raise journalistic standards in local media, training and competitions have been organised by the Centre. The regional journalist awards were presented for the best publication in the ecological field and the most impressive journalistic work on the issue of the death penalty.

Kazakhstani economic journalists were given the opportunity to benefit from expert tutorials. A three-day training seminar was offered on writing techniques.
Meetings with the media
The Centre initiated monthly meetings with the media aimed at increasing the transparency and visibility of OSCE activities in the field.

During these meetings the Centre briefs journalists on its recent activities, answers their questions, and distributes OSCE official bulletins, reports and publications.

Civil Society Matters
Promoting civic dialogue and raising awareness
The Centre has paid close attention to promoting civic dialogue and educating citizens about their civil and political rights, through supporting a number of projects.

This programme raised awareness on political and electoral processes and civil administration in different regions of Kazakhstan, and was administered by NGOs in cooperation and with the support of authorities.

The Centre has sponsored a training session for civic lobbyist trainers in several regions, with international experts offering instruction.

The training, implemented with the national NGO Echo, aimed at increasing a political participation of civil society and endowed the participants with negotiation, fundraising, effective lobbying and public relations skills, as well as basics of national legislation.

Education
The Centre has launched activities for introducing special courses on the OSCE into curricula of local universities. Discussions have fostered close cooperation, including liaison with the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and partner academic institutions.

The Centre has initiated the resource donation to local universities and public libraries with a supply of OSCE and NGO literature.

Human Dimension Activities

Prisons and the Judiciary
Penitentiary system reform
A key success of the Centre for the past years has been the reform and humanisation of the penitentiary system. Special attention has been given to interactive training for prison personnel on the basics of human rights.

Other important elements include the transfer of arrest facilities from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice. The Centre has also supported discussions on introducing public monitoring of penitentiary institutions in Kazakhstan.

Judicial reform
The Centre has followed the issue of transfer of the sanction of arrest from the Public Prosecutor’s Office to the courts, which has been a priority in the OSCE/ODIHR work during the year. The OSCE views such transfer as a key to promoting fair trials in Kazakhstan.

It has also continued its support to the Judges Training Academy, and has introduced a new programme of training for young lawyers, focusing mainly on young professionals from the regions.

Discussion on the death penalty
The Centre has supported the Government’s policy to intensify a discussion within the country on the abolition of the death penalty. In January the Centre hosted a meeting of the Co-ordination Council on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Kazakhstan, with the participation of governmental institutions and human rights NGOs.

The Centre has offered expertise on reforms to accommodate life-imprisonment as an alternative to the death penalty. A conference was organised by the Centre which highlighted the international experience in this field and proposed necessary changes.

These activities have contributed to plans to introduce the life-imprisonment measure from the beginning of 2004.

Anti-Trafficking
The anti-trafficking efforts of the Centre have been undertaken in close cooperation with the IOM, which assumes a leading position on the issue. Joint activities have supported the adoption of amendments to legislation and the appointment of the Government focal point on trafficking issues.

Participants of the two-day seminar on pre-trial detention facilities later visited one of the local prisons to gauge progress.
CIVIL SOCIETY

Supporting the NGO community
The Centre has put particular effort into the issues of legislation concerning NGOs, and has focused on the related draft law. An OSCE/ODIHR-commissioned analysis of the draft law suggested that it would seriously inhibit the work of civil society.

Support to civil society has also included jointly arranging a roundtable in Almaty in June, with OSCE/ODIHR, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Information and Public Accord with financial assistance from the Finnish Government.

By way of follow-up, a group of leaders of Kazakhstan NGOs compiled their own recommendations which were put in an open letter to the President. In October, the draft law was withdrawn from the agenda of the Parliament.

Gender issues
The Centre's activities on gender issues have built upon achievements of the extensive 2002 programme. The main focus has been on promoting women's participation in the local elections. A series of training events and round-tables were arranged in order to encourage and assist female candidacy. On 'Women's Day', 8 March, an appeal was launched to vote for women in the forthcoming elections.

Ethnicity and migration
Inter-ethnic tolerance is a key priority for the Kazakhstani Government and society. To support these efforts, the Centre arranged a seminar on the role of media in improving inter-ethnic accord.

It also continually monitored the situation of ethnic groups, and commissioned research on migrant workers in Southern Kazakhstan.

INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINTS
The Centre continued to receive citizens' complaints, which serve as a valuable indicator of the human rights situation in Kazakhstan.

Many reflect the lack of public knowledge about institutional avenues of assistance. With this in mind, the Centre has supported a publication by the High Commissioner for Human Rights of Kazakhstan informing the public of appeal procedure.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities
The Centre has taken on 20 substantive projects in the economic-environmental sphere. Its new capacity was mainly due to increased financial resources, which also offered the opportunity to draw up medium- and long-term projects. Special attention has been given to environmentally problematic regions.

As a result of increased funding, the Centre has been able to take on a considerable number of projects, and look to the medium- and long-term. Some newly formed projects included:
- enterprise for repatriated women
- promotion of SME rights
- training of economic court chairs and judges
- research in the field of transparency in the oil and gas sector
- development of business-oriented farming.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES
Encouraging entrepreneurship of repatriated women
After gaining independence, Kazakhstan launched a programme aimed at bringing Kazakhs living abroad back to their motherland. This process encountered a range of problems connected with adaptation of the Oralman returnees.

Enterprises were set up as the result of the project.

Empowering entrepreneurs
In recognition of the importance of the establishment of sound SMEs for economic and political stability, the Centre conducted a mid-term project in this field: State Inspections and Entrepreneurs: Ethics of Interrelations.

Within its framework, several activities were conducted:
- monitoring of SME inspections
- surveying relations between entrepreneurs and inspection officials
- training for entrepreneurs on taxation issues
- two conferences.

The project provided a good opportunity for entrepreneurs to meet with various state agencies, and raise issues of common concern. The Centre plans to build upon the solid foundations for project work in the coming years.
Development of cross-border co-operation

The efficient work of customs is essential for the development of SMEs in the border regions of Kazakhstan and Russia. A project aiming at promoting cross-border trade was co-organised by the Centre with other international organisations, and local and central Governments.

Guaranteeing the accessibility of information about customs procedures and taxes was a main objective of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Radiological mapping

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many radiological production facilities were abandoned, resulting in the leaking of dangerous substances. The population in many cases is not aware of the danger. One such hazardous place is Aktau and its surroundings.

The Centre and local environmental authorities launched a project on mapping radiological activity in and around the city. The conclusions of the examination, and those of an independent radiological expert, were presented in a clear and accessible publication.

The project raised awareness of the potential dangers to the local population, and informed local authorities.

Implementation of the Aarhus Convention

The Centre has expanded its efforts to promote the Convention and monitor its indicators.

This project included a public information campaign, and the organisation of long-distance conference communication about the realisation of the Convention.

The main stakeholders – state officials, NGOs and international and local experts – also participated in a three-day workshop, where they developed monitoring systems, built up their skill-base, and identified areas where gathered information could be practically applied.

Supporting eco-journalism

The Central-Asian Festival of Environmental Journalism was supported by the Centre. This meant the production of an environmental information compact-disc; the development of eco-tourism through supporting local communities and eliminating administrative barriers; and the organisation of a conference on ecological problems in the city of Balkhash and other areas.

Supporting eco-journalism

Monitoring the ecotourism project: the Centre’s staff members and their local partners for co-operation.

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Great importance is attached to the mapping and distribution of data on environmental health hazards. The Centre anticipates continuing in this direction, guided by OSCE principles of ecological awareness-raising.

Monitoring the ecotourism project: the Centre’s staff members and their local partners for co-operation.
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF CENTRE

The Centre's activities focused on
promoting and enhancing the dialogue
with the host country and on stimulating
the country's interest in OSCE values,
commitments and activities.

The Centre expanded co-operation and
interaction with the host country, inter-
national presences and organisations, as
well as local NGOs. The Centre continued
its comprehensive approach regarding
the implementation of projects in all three
dimensions, in close collaboration and
consultation with its partners. It partici-
pated actively in the formulation of the
UN Development Assistance Framework
and the Common Country Assessment of
the UN System.

Proceeding from a balanced cross-dimen-
sional approach, the Centre's programmes
were aimed at strengthening the develop-
ment of civil society, the rule of law and
human rights; establishing the framework
for restructuring the economy towards a
market-oriented system; and raising pub-
lic awareness of environmental issues.

The Centre facilitated several high-level
official missions to Turkmenistan, such as
the visits of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office
and his Personal Envoy for Central Asia;
as well as the visit of the OSCE High
Commissioner on National Minorities. The
meetings of the Chairman-in-Office and
his Personal Envoy with the country's
President and other Turkmen officials
were very important steps towards dia-
logue and co-operation between the host
country and OSCE.

While condemning the assassination
attempt of 25 November 2002, the OSCE
continued to monitor the measures taken
by Turkmen authorities. It encouraged the
Government to co-operate with the OSCE
within the framework of the Moscow
Mechanism evoked by ten participating
States; and drew attention to the report of
the OSCE Rapporteur which contains a
number of recommendations and empha-
sises that follow-up is necessary, within
the UN and by the International
Community as a whole.

Politico-Military
Dimension Activities

Promoting transparency
in military issues

The Centre and the OSCE Conflict Prevention
Centre organized a two day training workshop
on implementation of confidence- and secu-
ritiy-building measures (CSBMs) and other
agreed OSCE documents in the political-
military dimension.

This aimed at promoting awareness of
practical questions regarding the OSCE's
CSBMs and the information exchange
regime and its principles regarding trans-
parency in military-related issues. The train-
ing also included practical exercises.

Representatives from the Ministries of
Foreign Affairs, Defence and National
Security and from the State Border Service
participated. The workshop offered a good
opportunity to foster dialogue and co-oper-
ation with the Turkmen authorities and to
identify areas of common interest in
promoting the implementation of existing
instruments on arms control, disarmament
and non-proliferation.

First regional forum
on development and security

The New York-based Conflict Prevention and
Peace Forum, the UN and the OSCE Centre participated, as co-organisers, in the
Forum on Conflict Prevention and Sustainable
development for Central Asia, an event hosted
by the Government of Turkmenistan.

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the OSCE Rapporteur which contains a
number of recommendations and empha-
sises that follow-up is necessary, within
the UN and by the International
Community as a whole.

Issues and opportunities for Central Asia were
high on the forum's agenda, with special
reference to those of border, transit and trade.

Representatives from all Central Asian states
discussed how requirements for border
security and customs procedures can be
balanced best through improved co-operation
on trade development.

The meeting in Ashgabad was the first in a
series of informal dialogue events between
the countries of the region and their inter-
national partners, and contributed to enri-
ching the dialogue and co-operation in
respect of critical development and security
issues.

Media

In the area of media support and promotion,
the Centre provided information on its
own activities and on regional initiatives of
the OSCE in general.Media representatives
stressed the need for expanding contacts
with the OSCE by attending events
organised by the Organization outside
Turkmenistan.

Promotion of Human Security

The Centre assured the translation of the
Human Security Commission report
Human Security Now into Russian and its
publication and distribution in Turkmenistan.
During the launching ceremony, it was
stressed that the report should be seen in
the light of the increased challenges the
world faces as well as the enhanced oppor-
tunities. With human security the objective,
there must be a stronger and more integrat-
ed response from communities and states
around the world.
**Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities**

**First regional seminar on Environment and Security in Central Asia**
In 2003 the Centre and the UNDP office in Ashgabad co-organised the first regional seminar on Environment and Security in Central Asia within the framework of the OSCE/UNDP/UNEP Environment and Security Initiative. The Initiative aims to facilitate a collaborative and consultative process, integrate the links between natural resources and foreign and development policy, thus promoting peace and human security. Participants were delegations composed of Government officials and NGOs from all Central Asian states. Participation was very active and a positive feedback on the event, as well as on the Initiative itself, emerged from comments of the participants. At the conclusion of the seminar a joint declaration was adopted. The first phase of the Initiative was concluded by a presentation at the M inisterial Conference on Environment for Europe in Kiev and OSCE Economic Forum in Prague in May 2003.

**Raising the level of environmental awareness**
In co-operation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education, the Centre organised three one-day seminars in the regions outside Ashgabad, aimed at increasing the level of environmental awareness of secondary school students. The seminars were part of a national environmental programme. The second phase anticipates involving teachers.

**Focal point for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention**
The Centre supported the establishment of an office for the National Focal Point for the Implementation of the Aarhus Convention at the Ministry for Environmental Protection.

The Focal Point is equipped with information technology, and gives advice to NGOs and the general public on issues relating to the Convention and the environment.

**Human Dimension Activities**

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Training on international human rights legislation**
This is the fourth year that the Centre has held a one week training session on international legislation in the sphere of human rights. The training was aimed at raising the awareness and increasing knowledge of human rights among Government officials and NGO representatives.

**Monitoring alleged human rights abuse cases**
The Centre followed an increasing number of individual complaints, including on the lack of adequate legal resolution, social benefits, denials of exit visas, and status issues. Harassment complaints of NGO members and different religious groups were also filed.

Of special concern for the Centre were relatives of those sentenced for their alleged participation in the assassination attempt on the President.

**Capacity-building NGOs**
The Centre increased its support for the civil society sector, and had regular meetings with NGOs on issues such as development of a civic society, education and gender. NGO members were helped to attend OSCE events and organise seminars. The Centre assisted NGOs as they offered legal guidance to citizens and in crisis intervention for juveniles. It also supported a shelter for homeless children in Ashgabad.

**On numerous occasions the Centre acted as a bridge between civil society and the international donor community, thus intensifying co-operation and support.**

The Centre assisted in the reconstruction of the Crisis Centre for Youth and Women: the first of its kind in Ashgabad.
RULE OF LAW

Bringing Turkmenistan's legislation into line with international standards

In co-operation with Turkmen authorities, the Centre organised five roundtables on the draft of the Civil Procedural Code.

This series of roundtables is aimed at assisting the host country in bringing its legislation into line with international standards and best practices, in order to facilitate the transition to a market economy.

The roundtables covered principles underlying civil legislation, the role and mandate of judges, prosecution, international commercial arbitration, and special procedures and cassation.

Roundtables of this kind have proved to be most effective in promoting legal reforms.

Promoting legal ethics

In co-operation with the American Bar Association’s Central and Eastern European Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) and the Turkmen Young Lawyers Association (TYLA), the Centre conducted two roundtables. These came as part of a series of meetings on legal ethics dedicated to theoretical, practical and interactive issues regarding lawyer-client relations.

Women’s rights

International Protection of Women’s Rights and interactive case study exercises were the Centre’s contribution for a one-day seminar organised by the ABA/CEELI.

The participants who represented civic organisations and state institutions have reported they particularly found the Centre’s case study exercise an effective tool for promoting women’s rights.

The gender issue is one of the many areas where the Centre and international organisations combine their efforts to promote the rule of law in Turkmenistan.

The Centre also began the implementation of a project on the role of women in Turkmenistan. The topic of the interactive seminars is the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and focuses on health and education.
OSCE Centre in Bishkek

MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF CENTRE

The OSCE Centre in Bishkek has had a busy year promoting the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the political, human, economic and environmental aspects of security and stability.

The Centre has contributed to the continuing reform agenda through co-operation and assistance, and has encouraged dialogue between the Government, civil society and the donor community.

After February's Referendum for a new version of the constitution, amendments to the electoral, criminal and political party legislation became a focus for the Centre.

Improving the rule of law has become a priority for the Government. The Centre has responded by assisting with legislation assessment, the participation of a good governance consultative body, and organising conferences on penal reform.

The upgrading of the Kyrgyz Police Academy – part of the OSCE Police Assistance Programme – began as soon as the August Memorandum of Understanding was signed. The Centre has co-operated with the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit on this programme, and both have promoted the participation of civil society, as agreed by the OSCE Chairmanship and the Kyrgyz Government.

The Centre has continued supporting civil society; and one of the pillars of the Centre’s work in this area has been the deepening of co-operation between OSCE institutions and local NGOs.

The legal action taken against some newspapers, was among the topics addressed at the fifth Central Asia Media Conference. The Centre organised the regional event in close co-operation with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media; and will use the resulting Bishkek Declaration as a basis for further work with the Kyrgyz media. Initiative to create the OSCE Academy as a regional centre of competence and education in the field of international security and co-operation, and promotion of OSCE principles, received broad recognition. Its further development will be one of the main challenges for the Centre.

The Centre is focusing its 2004 activity on the following priorities: support to the local, parliamentary and presidential elections 2004/2005, support to legislation reform following the approval of a new version of the constitution, and conflict prevention activities in the south of the country.

Conflict Prevention and Confidence-Building

CONFLICT PREVENTION

The Centre continued its efforts to re-establish and facilitate dialogue between the Government and civil society. It has also continued to support the conflict prevention activities of international and local NGOs.

The Centre’s field office in Osh held a series of seminars, bringing together women and authorities, to establish conflict management skills in the Southern Kyrgyzstan district of Aksy, which had suffered from violent clashes in 2002.

Prevention of extremism and terrorism

Extremism as a result of difficult socio-economic conditions, ethnic divisions and external influence, is a latent security risk in the whole Central Asian region. Taking up this issue, the Centre in co-operation with the Kyrgyz State Commission of Religious Affairs and ODIHR organised a Conference on the Freedom of Religion and Belief. It focused upon the role of religion in a modern, democratic society and the combat against extremism and terrorism.

Constitutional Reform

The Centre and OSCE/ODIHR are assisting the Government and Parliament in bringing legislation into line with the new Constitution. This activity began in the summer after the Constitutional Referendum of February produced a new version of the Constitution. The focus of assistance is offered in the drafting process of electoral, criminal and political party legislation.

The Centre fosters close relations with parliamentary structures to ensure participation of all political forces and civil society in the drafting process.

The OSCE Academy

Institution building and developing the curriculum

The Centre has supported the newly opened Academy in further development of its concept, in placing particular emphasis on and participation of Central Asian States. It has also supported the building of the personnel and material infrastructure.

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By the end of the year, the Academy had established all necessary management and controlling bodies, developed a curriculum for a pilot course of international studies with a Central Asian focus, and selected lecturers and students for the initial semester to start in February 2004.

In co-operation with the OSCE and European partner institutions, the Academy also conducted a series of lectures, workshops and seminars in the field of security policy and conflict transformation. This will be continued and expanded in 2004.

**Police development**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the OSCE and the Kyrgyz Government in August on the implementation of a Police Assistance Programme.

The Programme is based on the findings of several needs assessment missions. It contains eight project areas, ranging from criminal investigation and drug interdiction to public disorder management and community policing. Several projects were launched immediately after the signing, including the upgrading of the Kyrgyz Police Academy.

The Centre worked closely with the OSCE Strategic Police Unit in setting up a Project office. Both have promoted the participation of civil society, as agreed by the OSCE Chairmanship and the Kyrgyz Government.

**Anti-Terrorism Measures**

On behalf of the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit, the Centre organised a regional seminar, in September, on the issue of falsification of travel documents. This nurtured closer co-operation of border guards and law enforcement bodies of four Central Asian States.

**DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

**Monitoring and assessment of party legislation**

Ahead of the 2004 local and 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections, the Centre has been focusing its attention on the party system of Kyrgyzstan, including the creation and development of new and existing parties.

In particular, the Centre assisted the efforts of OSCE/ODIHR, international organisations and NGOs in assisting parties and legislators to draft a new law on political parties.

**Promoting parliamentary relations**

As a part of its close co-operation with the two chambers of the Kyrgyz Parliament, the Centre has supported contacts with Parliaments of other participating States. Eight Kyrgyz parliamentarians from both chambers were offered the opportunity to attend the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s June Central Asian Regional Forum in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA**

**Identifying challenges**

Working closely with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Centre organised the annual Regional Media Conference. Discussions on problems and challenges for the media and journalists throughout four Central Asian States resulted in the adoption of a Bishkek Declaration. The Centre facilitated contacts between the OSCE/ODIHR, parliamentarians and the Centre. It supported the reviewing of draft amendments, provided recommendations to legislative bodies and undertook other follow-up activities.

**Human Dimension Activities**

**Assessment of the Constitutional Referendum and local elections**

The Centre has continued to support OSCE/ODIHR in assessing the Kyrgyz legislation and in introducing recommendations for its adaptation to international standards and obligations, particularly in the field of criminal law.

Following an initiative of the Kyrgyz Government, the Centre joined other international organisations and financial institutions in setting up an independent consultative body, which will support the newly created Public Council for Good Governance. This Council is devoted to combating corruption and promoting best practices.
JUDICIAL REFORM

Reforming the penal system and criminal law

Aiming at the humanisation of the penal system, the Centre closely co-operated with the Kyrgyz Ministries of Justice and Health as well as local NGOs.

With ODIHR, it organised conferences and round tables on penal reform, re-socialisation and alternative forms of punishment and participated in the monitoring of health and human rights conditions in prisons.

Special attention was paid to juvenile justice and the human rights training of prison staff.

HUMAN RIGHTS

One of the pillars of the Centre's work with civil society has been the facilitation of contacts and co-operation between OSCE institutions and local NGOs - who are important partners and sources of information, expertise and inspiration in all kinds of events, including seminars and the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings.

The other focus is on capacity-building for local NGOs and strengthening civil society.

Two of the Centre's main projects in the field of human rights monitoring and reporting were based on previous years' training. They culminated in a regional follow-up conference held in Almaty. Projects for the next stage are being considered by the Centre and ODIHR.

As a third party, the Centre facilitates dialogue and co-operation between NGOs and state institutions. In particular, results of NGO research and monitoring activities on human rights and legal reform are presented in round tables and discussed with representatives of the Government.

OMBUDSMAN

The Centre and OSCE/ODIHR has always actively supported the creation of the Ombudsman in Kyrgyzstan. In close co-operation with UNDP, it assessed the needs of the new institution, and provided assistance in the setting up of its office and infrastructure. It facilitated fact-finding missions on the Ombudsman institutions abroad, and provided training to staff. Awareness-raising events and publications were also supported.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

Environmental security and the Mailu Suu Nuclear Dumps Project

The Centre established itself as the co-ordinator of international efforts aiming at the resolution of the environmental threat created by unsecured nuclear dumps in Kyrgyzstan and throughout the region.

An international conference and several follow-up events resulted in the creation of a database, which will clarify strategic areas for further rehabilitation activities.

At the same time, the Centre supported information events and publications designed to create public awareness of the affected areas, in particular the Mailu Suu valley.

In December, the Centre organised an international conference on emergency response to environmental security risks through the Central Asian region. The conference fostered bilateral co-operation between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for initiatives to reduce threats to environmental security.

SM E: sharing best practice

Any legal environment favourable for the development of SME must include feasible mechanisms of conflict resolution. For this reason, the Centre organised a regional conference on Dispute Resolution as an Instrument to Facilitate SME Operations in the Business Environment and promoted the creation of mechanisms on both national and regional levels. It provided extensive exchange of experience and examples of best practice in CIS and EU countries.

Encouraging women to take the lead in local conflict resolution

Having in mind Southern Kyrgyzstan's borders, ethnic composition and the socio-economic situation, the Centre's field office in Osh generated a number of conflict prevention activities. These included a series of training sessions and a conference on the role of women in conflict prevention, in the Jalal-Abad province of Southern Kyrgyzstan.

Women from the Aksy region - an area which suffered from violent clashes between police and local protesters in 2002 - took part in these events alongside women from all over the province, NGOs, governmental officials and journalists. Some participants were relatives of victims of the 2002 disturbance, at which several people were killed.

As a result of the training and the acquired techniques in conflict prevention and resolution, the women became more aware of their possible contribution to peace and the importance of participation in civil society.

They formed networks and identified solutions and legitimate ways to realise their rights. These included how to co-operate with NGOs, international organisations, as well as how to conduct constructive dialogue with local authorities.

The participants drafted and adopted a joint Appeal of Action, which listed clear aims and objectives for women's participation in conflict resolution and the democratisation process.
MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF CENTRE

The mandate of the operation in Tajikistan was enhanced in October 2002 as a reflection of the progress made since the end of the civil war. The OSCE’s refocused mandate has allowed further expansion of activities in the economic and environmental field in 2003.

Activities of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe (CiD) have been refocused, expanded and developed this year, to encompass new initiatives. A first for the OSCE – the Centre initiated Tajikistan’s initial internationally supported mine clearance action. A mine survey project was launched with the implementing partner, NGO Swiss Foundation for Mine Action. Increased provision for project funding in the budget has offered additional possibilities to respond to numerous requests for assistance and provide effective support to the Government and civil society of Tajikistan. The emphasis in 2003 has been on fostering political dialogue; supporting civil society and democratic institutions; monitoring of human rights; and local capacity-building. The CiD has been focusing its attention on election preparation ahead of the 2005 General Election.

The Centre has engaged in a range of projects which support reform of the penitentiary system, independent media and gender equality.

A good co-operative relationship with Tajik authorities has been developed, on a wide range of topics, including the economic, environmental, human and political aspects of security and stability. The new mandate also offered the possibility to broaden activities, and a new field office was opened in the Southern town of Kulyab. The increased stability in the eastern province allowed for the deployment of an international officer to the Garm field office. 2003 has also seen the creation of two new sections for project co-ordination and economic affairs.

Fostering political dialogue and democratic processes

In the framework of the CiD project training workshops for political parties in Tajikistan, the first round-table attended by all political parties was conducted in Dushanbe, in September. It was followed by four workshops in the Northern, Southern and Eastern provinces of Tajikistan. The aim was to provide training on the role of political parties in a democratic society.

The seminars on law and religion which have been implemented in the Northern Sughd region in 2003 have been very successful and should be expanded to the Southern Khatlon province of the country. They are considered to be a valuable tool for encouraging dialogue between religious leaders and local authorities.

Workshop on politico-military aspects of security

Tajikistan has invited OSCE assistance in implementing the OSCE politico-military commitments. In May, the Centre, the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and Forum for Security Co-operation, organised a key workshop on this subject: Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and Confidence-building Measures.
Connecting Tajikistan to the OSCE Communications Network

As a follow-up activity to the workshop, the Centre assisted the Tajik Ministry of Defence in joining the OSCE Communications Network. The network is a newly modernised and secure system to exchange military information under the Vienna Document, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the Treaty on Open Skies, as well as for other correspondence between OSCE participating States.

The Centre provided the host State with assistance in the field of drafting anti-terrorist legislation and offered advice on adopting and implementing measures under the UNSCR 1373, whilst ensuring full respect for human rights commitments in the drafting and implementing process. The National Workshop on Legislative Implementation of UNSCR 1373 held in October was organised in co-operation with ODIHR and UNODC.

Both workshops aimed at implementing the Programme of Action that was endorsed at the Bishkek International Conference on Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: Strengthening Comprehensive Efforts to Counter Terrorism, of December 2001.

Counter-terrorism initiatives

Combating money laundering and other means of financing terrorism topped the agenda of a workshop held by the Centre, in co-operation with OCEEA and UNODC in Dushanbe in October.

The goals of the event were:
• to raise awareness on the technical and legislative aspects of money laundering and the financing of terrorism
• to familiarise participants with legal and administrative tools to help in the fight against these phenomena
• to identify needs for further legislative development in this field to speed up the process of preparing and ratifying new laws in accordance with international conventions and standards.

MINE ACTION: A first for the OSCE

In late 2002 the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe reacted to a request from the Tajik Government to mobilise international support for mine action in Tajikistan.

In May OSCE CiD signed an agreement with the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) on implementation of the project Mine Action in Tajikistan. During its implementation, specially trained local mine survey teams have been identifying and marking dangerous areas and carrying out technical surveys on selected sites where necessary. The work has concentrated on the areas of Tavildara, Sagirdasht, and Rasht Valley.

Achievements for the project in 2003:
• two mine survey teams were fully trained and equipped
• survey teams were deployed by the beginning of September
• 157 settlements were surveyed
• 8,000 kilometres of roads were covered the survey
• identification, logging and marking of 21 mine / UXO contaminated areas were achieved
• previously reported contaminated areas were discounted; this is an estimated 124 kilometres of roads and 29 sq kilometres of land.
Human Dimension Activities

Tajikistan is implementing reforms in light of OSCE commitments and international standards. The Centre supports these reforms via training and educational initiatives, information, assessment of draft legislation, capacity-building and monitoring.

This year the Centre’s activities focused mostly on prison reform, labour migration, reform of the judiciary and prevention of torture.

The Centre also facilitates development of guidelines for action on specific issues, by means of workshops.

Prison reform

As a result of OSCE initiatives the penitentiary system was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Justice. A commission responsible for its reform was created and structural improvements have been introduced.

The Centre continued to support study trips for prison officials abroad. In addition, it facilitated an expert assessment of the draft Programme on Reform of the Penitentiary System of Tajikistan for 2003-2008. It also organised a roundtable on the role of NGOs in prison reform.

The Centre pulled together the experience of these activities and developed guidelines for further action.

Reform of the judiciary

Tajikistan has completed the reform of the Criminal Code, while other laws are at different stages of elaboration.

To complement ongoing reforms, the Centre has supported initiatives to reinforce the role of lawyers.

The Centre facilitated, through a conference, creation of the National Association of Tajik Barristers. This followed the establishment of regional associations, and was implemented in co-operation with the Open Society Institute and the American Bar Association.

Prevention of torture

During 2003, the Centre was presented with almost 100 individual human rights complaints. Some 25% were about ill-treatment in the course of criminal investigations.

Following a request from the Office of the General Prosecutor of Tajikistan, the Centre, and international partners, organised a two-day conference on prevention of torture. The Centre also supported the participation of Tajik Government officials and NGOs in international events on prevention of torture.

Supporting independent media

In the context of promoting democracy though a pluralistic media, the Centre has supported the establishment of independent news agencies. Those who have benefited from the long-term project include Varorud in Khujand, northern Tajikistan, which now thrives as a self-sustaining, credible and independent media outlet.

Reporting corruption

The first workshop on corruption reporting for Tajik journalists was organised in October in Dushanbe. More than 40 journalists from all regions took part in the event, which was organised jointly with Transparency International. Tajik media outlets were provided with small grants to report corruption.

Encouraging amendments to the Media Law

A draft Media Law was presented to Tajik authorities by the joint OSCE-Internews Working Group as a follow up to the December 2002 conference on the subject.

GENDER EQUALITY

Expertise on gender equality legislation

The OSCE Centre offered expertise on the parliamentary draft Law on Gender Equality. The adoption of the law will represent a step towards fulfilment of the Tajik Government’s international commitments taken by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It also reflects a move towards implementation of the State programme on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women in Tajikistan for 2001-2010.

Labour migration

Seasonal labour migration involves hundreds of thousands of people every year. Migrants have very little, if any, knowledge of their rights and obligations.

The Centre published a guidebook on fundamental rights of labour migrants, prepared in co-operation with the IOM, two Tajik NGOs and the Ministry of Labour. It is envisaged that this practical help will be distributed within a larger planned IOM initiative for an information centre.

FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Ensuring public access to information

This remains an important area of focus for the Centre, in a system where information and media outlets are very limited. To this end, information boards have been built for citizens in remote regions. They provide up-to-date material about current events, governmental activities, the OSCE and NGOs.
Gender education

2003 was the third academic year for the Legal Clinic on Education, which is specially oriented to women’s rights. The law students gained practical experience through arguing human rights issues with senior school pupils. This offered the additional benefit of promoting gender equality in schools.

The Centre, which monitors and promotes this ODIHR project, has received calls for further work from the appreciative community.

Informing vulnerable groups on trafficking in human beings

The Centre has completed the countrywide public awareness-raising campaign on trafficking in human beings. This activity counters the widespread lack of information about the issue in this country of origin. With the assistance of the Centre’s Field Offices, the project has reached vulnerable groups in remote areas. The Centre has been pivotal in bringing together the ODIHR directives and the IOM initiatives.

The major focus: awareness-raising

Resources allocated from the OSCE Unified Budget provision have been used to implement several awareness-raising projects on:

- human and economic rights of women
- women’s rights in Islam
- handling case of violence against women
- trafficking issues
- business training.

The CIID and its field offices closely monitor and work with the local NGOs in the implementation of the projects in the remote areas, as well as in the districts around the capital, which are usually left out of mainstream of training.

This Centre attaches great importance to rights-awareness work, in view of the large number of uninformed war widows and labour migrants’ wives, as well as the growing number of girls denied primary education and being offered for marriage as young as 13.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

In 2003, the Centre in Dushanbe received a new mandate, emphasizing economic and environmental activity. The Centre responded by opening a specialized Economic Office, and stepped up its work in this field throughout Tajikistan.

Practical boost for SME s

Entrepreneurship training and micro-credits have been key to the O S C E economic development strategy in Tajikistan.

Through its field offices, the Centre launched these schemes throughout the country. Since August, 2,000 entrepreneurs and farmers have been trained in marketing, accounting and business law as well as farming skills.

During the OSCE seminars, farmers learned how to produce natural pesticide preparations from local plants. The Centre was encouraged to hear farmers from the Navdi district in Rasht Valley later report improved fruit harvests.

The Centre leads and co-ordinates this initiative, which has been implemented by various international organizations and NGOs.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Aarhus Convention activities

The OSCE CIID has been building upon the solid foundations laid last year, when several awareness-raising workshops were held on the Convention. In 2003 several projects and seminars have focused on further awareness-raising activities and implementation of the provisions of the document.

Work in this area has included:

- establishing the Dushanbe Aarhus Information Resource Centre in September
- hosting and organizing the 3rd Regional Festival on Environmental Journalism in October. Two Afghan journalists were among the entrants for the high-profile Central Asian event
- ensuring compliance of legislation with Aarhus Convention. The Centre provided an international consultant whose conclusions and recommendations were presented – in Russian, Tajik and English – to governmental and non-governmental actors

The Environment and Security Initiative

The Centre has been actively promoting the joint initiative of the OSCE/UNDP/UNEP on Environment and Security in South Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This initiative focuses on environmental challenges throughout the region such as: polluted water, radioactive waste and water sharing. The Centre held a national workshop on the second phase of the initiative, at which the following three pillar activities were discussed:

- risk/vulnerability assessment and monitoring
- capacity building and institutional development
- policy development and implementation.
The Centre has five field offices in the cities of Garm, Khujand, Kulyab, Kurgan-Teppa and Shartuz, which are primarily involved in following the regional political and security situation.

In 2003, the OSCE returned its international presence to the office in Garm, in the Rasht Valley, after political and social stability was re-established. To expand the Centre’s activities in the southern region, a new field office in the Kulyab District was opened.

The field offices maintain close contact with the local authorities, and they are able to gather first-hand knowledge from the community. The field offices contribute to the Centre’s reporting, which is regularly submitted to the participating States. Field officers have also been in consultation with local authorities on the resolution of a number of different issues and have promoted OSCE principles.

Building on the OSCE’s established tradition of promoting civic education awareness, all five field offices conducted summer camps for 14-19 year-olds on:

- democratic processes and institutions
- elections
- law-making
- civil society
- drug abuse prevention
- environmental protection.

The youth camps fed into the yearly civic education programme, which is co-ordinated by OSCE in rural schools.

Urgently-needed information boards, featuring newspapers and political and social bulletins, have been put up in town centres. Thus, the field officers ensure up-to-date material to be posted in areas, which have little to no access to radio, television and papers.

In promotion of human rights awareness the OSCE Human Rights Cinema Festival was brought to the field regions. It marked the first time in 10 years that people in the south had the opportunity to experience cinema. The public attending the festival was given information on OSCE activities throughout the country.
MESSAGE FROM
THE HEAD OF CENTRE

The OSCE Centre in Tashkent (CiT) works actively with the Government of Uzbekistan, international organisations and NGOs to carry out its responsibilities in all three OSCE dimensions, which are based on the concept of comprehensive security.

As prescribed by our mandate, we cooperate closely with local authorities. In a spirit of constructive interaction, we benefit from their ideas and proposals in order to reach common understanding about how the Centre may assist Uzbekistan to implement its OSCE commitments.

The Government has been actively participating in CiT events and proposing joint projects in a spirit of partnership. This interaction has led to open discussions on the issues of money laundering, trafficking of human beings, prison reform and torture. In some cases action plans have been drawn up.

Also during 2003, the CiT has benefited from additional funding. It has been able to expand its programmatic work in the politico-military and economic-environmental dimensions, as a result of the additional human and financial resources approved by the OSCE Permanent Council. The extra funding and local staff has boosted professionalism and productivity.

The Centre has also maintained and developed contacts with our regular partners, UNDP, UNODC, ICRC and UNHCR on issues of common interest including refugees, minorities, trafficking of weapons, drugs and human being.s, and money laundering.

The CiT concurs that transformation to a more open society in Uzbekistan is a long-term goal. It recognises that in joining the OSCE, and helping to establish the CiT, the Government has demonstrated a commitment to building a future based on democratic and internationally shared values.

**Politico-Military Dimension Activities**

To promote security, the CiT implements projects related to arms control, preventive diplomacy, confidence- and security-building measures.

In addition, it promotes the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments in the sphere of democratization and strives to address them through its targeted project works.

**Promoting Security**

Promoting the politico-military Code of Conduct

In May, the CiT organised a workshop dedicated to the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security and the Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

Representatives of the Defence and Interior Ministries, the Parliament and other governmental bodies attended the workshop. It has been noted that capacities must be built up in implementing the Vienna Document.
PROMOTING FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

Ongoing legal assistance to journalists

To give journalists the possibility to realise their rights, the CIT and Internews Uzbekistan, support a legal clinic for journalists. The clinic employs two local lawyers who provide local journalists with legal consultations and representation.

Free access to information

In November, the CIT established an Internet café to offer journalists free use of the Internet. The space for the facility is donated by the newspaper Pravda Vostoka, and is located in the same building as the main Tashkent press newsrooms.

ELECTIONS

Monitoring the parliamentary reform process

In anticipation of the December 2004 parliamentary elections, the Centre has initiated a series of round tables on elections, where OSCE embassies and international organisations share information about election issues, as well as any of their programmatic activities.

Human Dimension Activities

The OSCE is dedicated to work closely with the authorities and representatives of civil society to improve the human rights situation in Uzbekistan.

The overall aim of this work is to contribute to the rule of law in Uzbekistan and the development of a strong and vibrant civil society.

The implementation of international standards in Uzbekistan receives special attention.

Monitoring the human rights situation

During the year, the Centre monitored trials and received complaints by individuals. It also conducted field visits in order to reach the Uzbek society outside Tashkent. This comprehensive activity is essential for identification of areas of special concern and to initiate appropriate remedies in accordance with OSCE commitments.

Promoting prison reforms

As stated in the Report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the task to prevent and combat torture within the law enforcement system remains of utmost importance for all actors in Uzbekistan.

In response to the report, the prison administration in Uzbekistan has invited the CIT for close co-operation on prison reform. The CIT conducts training for prison staff and supports Uzbek NGOs in monitoring places of detention.

Eleven officials and NGOs have received special training on international penitentiary standards in preparation for future activities.

Empowerment of women

To strengthen women’s participation in public, the CIT is conducting advocacy and leadership training. This programme is valuable, especially in regard to the forthcoming parliamentary elections 2004, where it is hoped to see women more actively involved.

Preventing and combating trafficking in human beings

In line with the then Netherlands Chairmanship priority, the CIT is strongly committed to preventing and combating this modern form of slavery that affects men, women and children in Uzbekistan.

In co-operation with international and national partner organisations, the CIT is implementing a country-wide awareness-raising campaign. The law enforcement agencies are also receiving specialised training under this programme to enhance their capacity to fight trafficking.

Results of the Centre’s human dimension projects

An early indication of the success of these programmes has been the activation of relevant NGOs and officials. Their increased awareness and capacity for tackling the issues of trafficking and torture is envisaged. Also anticipated are improved prison conditions, a more active civil society and a strengthened civic role for women.

Economic and Environmental Dimension Activities

During 2003, the CIT significantly increased its programmatic activities in the field of the economic and environmental dimension.

It concentrated its activity on monitoring and reporting to OSCE bodies to inform on issues, their causes and consequences.

Officers regularly travel to the provinces to meet with governmental officials, private sector and civil society representatives to deepen the understanding of the economic and environmental situation in Uzbekistan.

The Centre raises Uzbek awareness of the need for sustainable economic development and sound environmental management practices. It assists the Government in addressing economic and environmental challenges, facilitates contacts, and promotes information exchange with local authorities, universities, research institutions and NGOs.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Capacity-building of entrepreneurs

SME development is promoted, especially in rural areas of Uzbekistan, among women and the youth. The Centre has conducted a series of workshops to increase entrepreneurial skills and the legal knowledge of people living in the provinces and mountainous areas.
Training ranges from the very basics of entrepreneurship to advanced business development techniques. In partnership with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, the CIT established an information centre devoted to SME issues.

**Promoting environmental legal advocacy**

In order to enhance entrepreneurs' access to information about the legal and practical aspects of running a business, the Centre and the National Chamber of Commodity Producers and Entrepreneurs began work on a handbook entitled *How to Be a Successful Entrepreneur*, for wide circulation.

**Combating money laundering**

In partnership with the Central Bank of Uzbekistan and the UNODC, the CIT organised the national workshop on combating money laundering and suppressing the financing of terrorism.

As a follow up of the October event, the organisers plan to work with the Government to review draft legislation for compliance with international standards, and to explore the possibility of establishing a financial intelligence unit.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

The CIT continues to work to promote public participation in environmental decision-making and, in particular, Uzbekistan's accession to the Aarhus Convention.

**Environmental protection in Mahallas**

The Centre is committed to facilitating Mahallas - local community organisations - in their efforts to step up activity in environmental protection. To this end, it has conducted a series of roundtables for Mahalla leaders. An overview of Uzbekistan's environmental laws and an introduction to relevant state structures have been offered.

**Identifying environmental risks**

As part of the joint OSCE/UNDP/UNEP Environment and Security Initiative, the CIT helped organise a national workshop which focused on identifying existing and potential environmental risks in Uzbekistan, and facilitating an exchange of opinions about how to prevent environment-related conflicts.

**Supporting NGOs**

The Centre has continued to support the activities of the local environmental NGO Armon, focusing on:

- providing seminars about environmental topics
- identifying potential local leaders for grassroots environmental initiatives
- creating a database on environmental information
- conducting mass-media campaigns to increase public participation in environmental protection matters
- providing free legal consultation.

**Combined Operations 2003**

**Central Asia**
The main task of the OSCE Representative is to participate in the work of the Estonian Expert Commission on Military Pensioners, which makes recommendations to the Government on the issuance of residence permits to former military personnel in Estonia.

Reducing short-term residence permits

The Commission has been successful in further downsizing the number of short-term residence permits (one to three years) to about 450. The number of longer-term (four to five years) residence permits has reached 10,000. All told, there are now approximately 10,500 holders of valid temporary residence permits.

In 2003, 15 requests of residence permits were refused. The majority of these refusals affected beneficiaries of the Russian Officers Resettlement Programme of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Since the Commission took up its work in 1994, a total of 280 requests have been rejected. However, many more applicants have been granted permits on the basis of humanitarian exception than have been refused.

Permanent residence permits

On 24 October 2002, the Estonian State Court (Supreme Court) ruled that foreign military retirees and families listed under the 1994 Bilateral Accord on Social Guarantees were eligible for permanent residence permits. The Ministry of Interior later introduced a bill to amend the Aliens Act by unequivocally excluding the possibility to grant permanent residence permits to military pensioners. The amendment was adopted on 17 December and proclaimed by the President on 30 December 2003.

The OSCE Representative has voiced his concerns over the amendment, as it ignores the State Court decision and amounts to a unilateral modification of the Bilateral Accord.

As a result of the court findings, hundreds of permanent residence applications piled up and were summarily refused pending further directives. These now await a final decision.

The issue of privileged status still under dispute

No progress has been made on the question of according a number of ex-servicemen and their families – who have been presented to the Estonian Government on additional lists in 1994 - the privileged status of military pensioner under the terms of the 1994 Bilateral Accord. While Russian authorities have certified these former officers as military pensioners, Estonia continues to refuse to grant them this status.

As a consequence of this, some of the former officers and families in question have been denied extension of their residence permits and are facing expulsion.

The OSCE Representative has appealed to the Government to have these cases re-examined with a view to possibly granting exceptions for humanitarian reasons.

The continued presence of beneficiaries of US-financed housing

The continued presence in Estonia of a number of beneficiaries of the USAID Russian Officers Resettlement Programme, who had pledged to leave the country, keeps Estonian authorities occupied with elucidating muddled arguments for residency claims. The issue is complex and will only be remedied gradually. It is further confounded by the fact that a large number of the beneficiaries are protected under the 1994 Bilateral Agreement, and can therefore not be refused residence permits.
OSCE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE LATVIAN-RUSSIAN JOINT COMMISSION ON MILITARY PENSIONERS

OSCE Representative: Mr. Helmut Napiontek | Revised budget: €11,800

CONTEXT

In 2003, the OSCE Representative continued to provide assistance in the implementation of the 1994 Agreement between the Latvian and the Russian Governments on social guarantees for military pensioners of the Russian Federation and their families residing in the Republic of Latvia.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Agreement, the tasks of the OSCE Representative are:
• to consider, together with the Latvian and Russian parties, appeals on matters involving the rights of military pensioners
• to participate in the adoption of recommendations and decisions on the basis of consensus
• to consider, at the request of either party, questions relating to the application of the provisions of the Agreement.

A recent annual update in June 2003 counted 18,438 persons eligible under the Agreement; that is 280 persons less than in October 2002 (against an initial figure of 22,320 in 1994).

ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Focus on the individual

To a large extent, military pensioners’ recent appeals related to social questions have been resolved by the respective Latvian local administrative bodies in co-operation with the relevant Russian authorities.

Long-pending individual cases, which were brought to the attention of the Commission and were mostly related to the status of residence, have been solved to the extent possible.

Interpretation of the Agreement’s provisions

In particular in 2003, differing legal interpretations on some of the provisions of the 1994 Agreement related to housing have become increasingly important since this is an issue which is affecting military pensioners and their families more frequently. Based on a legal examination, the Commission is currently considering a common approach for further handling of problems related to housing issues.