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PRESS RELEASE

OSCE Office helps rid Tajik-Afghan border of landmines

DUSHANBE, 29 April 2010 - An OSCE-supported project to assist Tajikistan in clearing landmines along the border with Afghanistan was launched in the southern town of Panj today, with a graduation ceremony for Tajik officers who completed a demining course.

The project provides an integrated system of mine clearance machines and personnel trained in manual mine clearance. It is supported by the OSCE, the United States Office of Defense Co-operation and the Tajik authorities, who have partnered since 2009 to map, mark and clear the minefields along the Tajik-Afghan border. The project will be instrumental in completing a technical survey of the minefields in the area, with the OSCE providing operational support and capacity building.

"The creation of this integrated mine clearance asset in Tajikistan, the first of its kind in Central Asia, is an important step towards eradicating landmines from this region," said Ambassador Ivar Vikki, the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

"Multilateral co-operation is key in addressing mine threats in Central Asia, and the model of co-operation we are inaugurating today may serve as an example for the planned Central Asian Mine Action Co-ordination Council when it is established."

The OSCE Office has supported mine clearance in Tajikistan since 2004, allocating some 5.4 million euros. The OSCE will continue to assist Tajikistan in meeting its obligations as a signatory of the Ottawa Treaty by supporting the host country in establishing sustainable national mine clearance capacities.

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