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PRESS RELEASE**Border management, Afghanistan, energy security, Ombudsman support focus of fourth Task Force Meeting on OSCE and Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE, 30 March 2010 - OSCE officials and representatives of the Tajik government and civil society discussed their partnership in facing challenges including border management, engagement with Afghanistan, political dialogue, police reform and counter-terrorism, energy security and support for the Ombudsman at the fourth annual Task Force Meeting on OSCE and Tajikistan in Dushanbe today.

The Task Force was launched in 2007 to provide a forum for consultation in all three dimensions of the OSCE's work - the political-military, economic and environmental and human aspects of security - with a focus on practical implementation.

"Tajikistan considers the OSCE as one of its trustworthy partners," said Mahmudjon Sobirov, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in his opening remarks.

He added: "I am confident that it strives towards becoming an efficient and strong organization working for the benefit of all the participating States and will continue to collaborate in the spheres of economic and environmental issues, security, politics and democracy in the OSCE area."

Welcoming the participants, Ambassador Ivar Vikki, the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and host of the meeting, said: "By bringing together all key actors, the annual OSCE-Tajikistan Task Force Meeting is a unique forum for constructive dialogue about the strategy and activities of the OSCE in Tajikistan, which provides valuable input as the beginning of our annual planning cycle."

Usen Suleimenov, representing the 2010 Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship, said: "The Task Force provides a unique and useful forum for continued dialogue and deepening co-operation between a host country and the OSCE. The OSCE Border Management Staff College, which opened in Dushanbe last year to train border officers from all 56 OSCE participating States, is an excellent result of this co-operation."

Goran Svilanovic, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, said he believed that the key to future co-operation with Tajikistan is to improve engagement in the field of economy and environment, in particular with improving the business environment and tackling water and energy issues. He welcomed the memorandum of understanding signed the previous day between the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the Ministry of Economy to support the development of free economic zones.

Doug Wake, the Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), said the Office looked forward to co-operation with the government of Tajikistan on a range of issues, including the follow-up process of the ODIHR Election Observation Mission, support to the newly established Office of the Ombudsman and issues of criminal procedure code reforms.

The Director of the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre, Ambassador Herbert Salber, said: "The annual Task Force Meetings have developed into an important tool for transparency and mutual trust in the relations of the OSCE and its Office in Tajikistan with the Government of Tajikistan."

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