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### PRESS RELEASE

## **Border management, economic development focus of OSCE meeting in Dushanbe**

DUSHANBE, 25 February 2008 - Developing a national border strategy and border security and management projects were among some of the topics discussed at an OSCE-Tajikistan Task Force meeting that took place in Dushanbe today.

The event brought together OSCE officials and representatives from different Tajik ministries and agencies, including Deputy Foreign Minister, Erkin Kasymov, the Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, Ambassador Herbert Salber, the Head of the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin, and the Head of the Finnish Foreign Ministry's Unit for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Tuula Yrjola.

They discussed the role of Tajikistan in the OSCE, new developments and achievements since the 2007 Task Force meeting, and plans to assist the country further, based on the Organization's comprehensive approach to security.

"We had very productive discussions today on the relationship between the host country and the OSCE, and on the activities of the Centre in Dushanbe," said Ambassador Herbert Salber.

"The Task Force is a form of privileged co-operation with Tajikistan, it helps strengthen joint consultations in response to questions earlier raised by the host country's delegation to the OSCE."

The OSCE has been developing border related assistance activities in Tajikistan since 2006, with the aim of helping the country to strengthen its borders.

Three Finnish experts will arrive in Tajikistan in March to work on border security projects worth around 2.8 million euro. The main donors are Finland and Norway.

The OSCE and Tajikistan are also discussing establishing a Border Management Staff College in the country, an OSCE centre that would focus on regional border management, projects to train tactical border patrol and surveillance groups, and ways of assisting customs services in combating the illegal arms trafficking and drug trade in the region, and intercepting shipments of precursors, used for heroin production in Afghanistan.

A decision of the 2007 Madrid Ministerial Council called for more intensive efforts by the OSCE to enhance engagement with Afghanistan, an OSCE Asian Partner for Co-operation. During the Task Force meeting Tajikistan demonstrated its commitment and support to realizing this decision.

Participants also discussed a proposal to establish an office for economic and environmental affairs at the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe, activities focusing on water management, energy security and transport, as well as democratization, media, and gender awareness programmes.

"This is the second Task Force and it has proved to be a very useful tool in the co-operation and co-ordination between the OSCE and Tajikistan," said Tuula Yrjola.

She outlined the priorities of the 2008 OSCE Finnish Chairmanship, and noted that the Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, plans to visit Tajikistan in the coming months for meetings with Tajik leaders.

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