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PRESS RELEASE

OSCE Chairman and Tajik leaders agree on mandate for OSCE office

DUSHANBE, 3 June 2008 - The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, met top Tajik officials today in Dushanbe, agreeing on the continued work of the OSCE in the country.

"We found an agreement for a renewed, comprehensive mandate for the OSCE's work in Tajikistan. I am pleased to recommend the mandate to the participating States so that the Organization can continue its important work for the benefit of all Tajik people," Stubb said.

Speaking after meetings with President Emomali Rahmon and Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister Stubb said he welcomed the positive signs of Tajikistan's active participation in the OSCE, including with initiatives to enhance engagement with neighbouring Afghanistan.

"As an OSCE participating State Tajikistan plays a pivotal role in strengthening regional co-operation, and I am confident that we will continue to deepen the dialogue that we began here," said Stubb. "One important result of our talks is the agreement to establish a border management staff college in Tajikistan for the training of border staff from all countries, which will benefit the whole OSCE region."

"Tajikistan is critical to the success of OSCE efforts to enhance engagement with neighbouring Afghanistan, and the work that we are already doing together provides a strong foundation for future co-operation. This includes OSCE border management initiatives, to which Finland is the single biggest contributor," he added.

Minister Stubb also announced a Finnish pledge of 345,000 euros for initiatives to destroy small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition in the country, as well as 120,000 euros for a shelter for women.

In his meetings the Chairman-in-Office discussed the work of the OSCE Centre, including in the areas of de-mining, water management, transport, trade, police reforms, gender equality and freedom of the media.

"We discussed human rights, rule of law and democracy, all key aspects of the work that we do within the OSCE. In this context we discussed prison visits by the International Red Cross, child labour and media freedom, among other issues," said Stubb.

During his one-day visit, the Chairman-in-Office also met representatives of Tajikistan's political parties, civil society and the international community while in Dushanbe. "The debate becomes richer with the participation of many voices, and it was important for me as visiting OSCE Chairman-in-Office to hear such a diversity of views," said Stubb.

Minister Stubb will be travelling to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan during his visit to the region.

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