



**Report of the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan  
Ambassador Ivar Vikki to the OSCE Permanent Council**

**8 July 2010**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Over the last years the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has undergone a significant reorganization, and the scope of its activities has been expanded to meet new threats to security in all three dimensions.

The Office now provides a robust OSCE capacity, supporting the host country in implementation of OSCE principles and commitments.

The Fourth Joint OSCE - Tajikistan Task Force Meeting in March 2010, reconfirmed that the activities of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan are conducted on the basis of mutual understanding and common agreement. An elaborate consultative process, with the Annual Task Force Meeting being a key tool for strategic planning, enhances transparency and accountability. This has contributed to the development of a close, constructive and fruitful, strategic partnership between the OSCE and the host country.

Since the last report on 14 May 2009, the Office has further consolidated programmatic activities around key priority areas:

- Strengthening border management and security;
- Addressing the need for cross-border regional co-operation on transport, trade, water-sharing and energy security in Central Asia;
- Promoting human rights and democratic values.

Overall in its activities, the Office has focused on policy level, and has provided legislative support and capacity building in all three OSCE dimensions.

The launch of the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) on 27 May 2009 marked a significant addition to the Office.

With its linguistic and geographical proximity and a vested interest in the security, stability and prosperity of its southern neighbour, Tajikistan plays an important role as a gateway and platform in support of implementation of Ministerial Council Decision 04/07 on OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan. The readiness of Tajikistan to contribute to capacity building and cross-border co-operation, has become more visible in the activities of the Office. Moreover, Afghan officials have increasingly participated in workshops and training conducted both by the Office and at the BMSC.

Apart from having a fully fledged programme devoted to gender, which includes promoting gender equality and combating human trafficking, gender mainstreaming permeates all activities, guided by the OSCE norms, principles and commitments.

## II. CONTEXT DEVELOPMENTS

### 1. *General Developments*

On 28 February 2010, Tajikistan held **parliamentary elections** to the *Majlisi Namoyandagon*, the lower chamber of Parliament. The ruling Peoples Democratic Party won 71.69 percent of the vote. The required five per cent threshold was also passed by the Islamic Revival Party, the Communist Party, the Party of Economic Reform and the Agrarian Party. The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) reported the voter turnout to be 87.1 percent. According to the *Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions of the International Election Observation Mission*, composed of observers from ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, the “election took place peacefully, but despite certain positive steps, Tajikistan’s parliamentary elections failed to meet many key OSCE commitments.” In protest over the election results, the Islamic Revival Party decided to withdraw from the Public Council, which was created in the process leading up to the 1997 *General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord* with the aim to foster political discussion and dialogue.

**Water resources management** and its impact on national and regional long-term energy security has increasingly become one of the major challenges for Tajikistan. Electricity shortages and energy rationing have been a recurrent problem for several years and continued to affect the country during the winter of 2009-2010. Tajikistan’s dependence on energy imports from other Central Asian countries underlines the importance of regional energy co-operation. In order to overcome domestic energy challenges and increase Tajikistan’s ability to import energy during the winter and export it during the summer months, investment projects in hydroelectric power plants and transmission lines remain among the highest priorities for the government. It has repeatedly stated that the development of such projects would also benefit all countries in the Aral Sea region. A feasibility study, supported by the World Bank, will examine the social-economic and environmental impact of the **Roghun Hydroelectric Power Plant**, the largest of such projects in Tajikistan.

In December 2009, the first reports appeared about the **delay of railway cargo** bound for Tajikistan via Uzbekistan. In March 2010, there was growing concern over the economic impact of the delays, particularly with the approaching spring agricultural season. The number of delayed railway cars, carrying food supplies, grain, aluminium oxide and fuel, were at times reported to be more than 2,000. The importance of the issue to the government of Tajikistan was reflected in an increasingly number of diplomatic demarches and statements in international fora, including the OSCE, seeking support for Tajikistan’s position. Reports in Tajik media and statements by officials related the railway issue to the dispute with Uzbekistan over the construction of the Roghun Hydroelectric Power Plant. Uzbek officials have stated that the delays are due to technical problems and ongoing repairs. On 11 June, in a meeting between the two countries’ presidents during the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an agreement was reached on the transit of all goods not intended for the construction of Roghun.

In the period under review, Tajikistan hosted two major **international conferences**:

- From 18 to 20 May 2010, Tajikistan was host to the 37th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the 57-member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference held in Dushanbe. This is the first time a Central Asian country hosts such a meeting.
- From 8 to 10 June 2010, an International Water Conference provided a high-level platform to review progress made in the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life 2005-2015". It formed an important opportunity to discuss issues related to accelerating progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals, fostering trans-boundary water dialogue, adaptation to climate change and sustainable financing of water resources management. The outcomes of the Conference have been summarized in the so-called Dushanbe Declaration on Water. The Office provided support to this conference.

## 2. Security Situation

**The situation in Tajikistan remains stable.** However, for the first time in almost ten years, the country experienced a series of incidents of violence, which in the summer months of 2009 temporarily destabilized the situation in the Rasht Valley and Tavildara district.

Following rumours and reports about armed insurgents filtering into Tajikistan in May and June 2009, groups of armed insurgents in July attacked several police checkpoints in the Tavildara District, 150 km east of Dushanbe. About a dozen combatants and several law enforcement officers were killed. The insurgents, allegedly affiliated to the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), were reportedly led by the former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) field commander Nemat Azizov. He was later killed in an exchange of gunfire with governmental forces. Former UTO-Commander, and later Minister of Emergency Situations, Mirzo Ziyoev, was also killed during the July clashes. In the same month, three improvised explosive devices were set off, one injuring two policemen in Dushanbe.

Police operations against suspected IMU members, such as in August 2009 near Dushanbe and in October 2009 in the Northern Sughd Region, reflect challenges in preventing **violent extremism** and radicalization that lead to terrorism. Alleged members of various banned organizations, among them, the *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and the *Salafi* movement, have been arrested. In March 2010, the Supreme Court upheld the sentences of 56 followers of the *Tablighi Jamaat* for “engaging in activities of an extremist organization.”

**Anti-personnel landmines** continue to pose a threat to the safety and security of the population in the border areas. Tajik authorities continued to express concern over the regional landmine threat, particularly mine fields along the Tajik-Uzbek border.

Continued progress has been made in providing an infrastructure for **safe and secure storage** or destruction of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition. Since 2005, more than 31,000 weapons have been destroyed, with 4,000 pieces still to be processed.

One of the biggest threats to border security in Tajikistan is **trafficking in narcotics** originating from Afghanistan. Sophisticated methods impose new challenges for border and law enforcement agencies. Combating drug smuggling remains high on the political agenda. On the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Drug Control Agency on 29 May 2009, the President called for Tajikistan’s commitment to mobilize all government structures for a comprehensive approach to combating illicit drug trafficking. One year hence, there appears to be a greater public awareness of the drug scourge. In addition, improved co-ordination between law enforcement structures have resulted in an increase of interception of drug traffickers.

### ***3. Economic and Environmental Situation***

Tajikistan is facing vast challenges arising from its complex transition period, global economic and financial crisis, energy shortages, difficult water management issues, radioactive waste and negative effects of climate change.

The global economic and **financial crisis** continued to have a considerable impact on Tajikistan. Labour migrants' remittances, which make about 50 per cent of the GDP, decreased sharply in 2009. The overall negative effects were, however, less than expected since the internal economy managed to avoid recession mainly due to strong domestic economic orientation. In 2009, the government approved a new Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2010-2012. The government also seeks to alleviate the impact of the economic crisis by focusing on improvement of public administration and to attract investments in the energy and agricultural sector.

Important is also **cross-border trade** for domestic market supply of goods for daily consumption and the industrial sector. Aside from being dependant on Uzbekistan, as a transit country, for all major transport routes, poor transportation infrastructure inside Tajikistan itself, is an obstacle for economic development. However, several ongoing or completed construction projects could help Tajikistan's aspiration to become an important link of the Trans-Asian and Eurasian transport networks.

Widespread **corruption** remains an impediment for Tajikistan in pursuing economic development. It undermines progress in all sectors, and produces tremendous moral and economic damage, and poses a threat to the state. On 30 April 2010, the President in his annual report to parliament re-iterated the importance of combating corruption. In recent years, the government has made progress to build its capacity in combating corruption. In 2006, Tajikistan ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and in 2008 the Agency for State Financial Control and Fighting Corruption was established, but needs support to fully meet international standards in its work.

Severe **environmental changes** have become increasingly evident in recent years. Global warming has caused Tajikistan's glaciers to shrink 35 per cent during the past five decades. Tajikistan continues to face threats caused by radioactive waste, pesticide dump sites and land degradation. Landslides, mudflows and floods, such as those experienced in the Kulyab region last May, have become a regular occurrence.

### ***4. Human Dimension Developments***

On 27 May 2009, the lower chamber of Tajikistan's parliament approved a decree by the President appointing a former presidential adviser, Zarif Alizoda, as the first Human Rights Ombudsman. The decree and its parliamentary endorsement were the first steps in implementing the Law on the National **Human Rights Ombudsman** Institution. Since the establishment, the rising number of complaints indicates that awareness about this institution is growing. Challenges remain, such as limited funding and lack of clarity among governmental bodies about the Ombudsman's role. The Ombudsman nevertheless actively works with both civil society and the international community to build the institution's capacity.

On 1 October 2009, a new **Law on the State Language** made Tajik mandatory for the work of government bodies. The law makes no reference to Russian as a "language of interethnic communication," as provided in the Constitution. The law was complemented by an amendment, according to which all future legislative and normative acts will be published in Tajik only.

The Law on **Freedom of Conscience** and Religious Associations, passed in April 2009, required all religious associations to apply for re-registration by 1 January 2010. Eighty-one out of 89 minority religious groups were re-registered. The ban on Jehovah's Witnesses remains in effect.

In January 2010, the President publicly called for improvements in prison conditions, which may indicate a new openness for **penitentiary reform**. However, there is still no solution to long pending issues such as allowing access by independent observers, such as the ICRC, to prisons.

A new **Criminal Procedure Code**, providing for judicial sanctioning of arrest, search and seizure as well as wiretapping, came into effect on 1 April 2010. The Code presents an important positive step towards judicial and legal reform, but sustained effort of the government to train and retrain judges and prosecutors is required to fully implement the Code.

On 22 May 2010, Nematillo Botakozuev, an asylum-seeker from Kyrgyzstan was extradited to Kyrgyzstan, and released two days later. Botakozuev had been held in detention since 26 February without access to legal representation, despite numerous appeals by the international community, including the Office, to the government.

On media developments, the **Tajik Media Council**, the country's first media self-regulation body, was founded in November last year. Its functioning will be based on the Code of Professional Ethics agreed upon by the journalist community with the goal to improve trust between media and state officials. These positive developments, however, were negated by a series of libel lawsuits against five independent newspapers (*Paykon, Millat, Asia Plus, Farash and Ozodogaon*), which were condemned by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media as "dangerous attempts at censorship." In broadcast media, the licensing policy continues to weaken the development of independent radio and TV.

A comprehensive evaluation of the State Programme *Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women* conducted in November 2009 with the Office's support, found that major challenges for increasing **gender awareness and equality** remain - one of the greatest being domestic violence. A draft law to provide stronger legal and social protection for victims of domestic violence exists, but has not yet been passed. In May 2010, Parliament raised the minimum age for marriage from 17 to 18 years in order to discourage early marriages, and encourage girls to stay in school.

Though Tajikistan has adopted a number of legal instruments to combat **trafficking in human beings**, structures and capacity to enable implementation and enforcement are lagging behind. In 2009, however, the Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced a 26-hour anti-trafficking course for cadets of the Police Academy. In early 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection approved the establishment of a National Referral Mechanism Co-ordination Office.

### III. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

Among the programmatic activities, border management and security remains a key priority, especially due to threats emanating from Afghanistan. Focusing on emerging threats, the Office launched a new activity aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. To promote investment and cross-border trade, especially on local level, is important as well. The Office has also addressed water management issues and provided legislative support for environmental legislation. While strengthening the capacity of key human rights

institutions, especially the newly established Ombudsman institution, the Office has trained officials and students alike on elections, OSCE norms, principles and commitments. With the Office's assistance, a code of professional ethics and self-regulation mechanism for media has been developed. The Office strengthened the capacity of national agencies dealing with gender-based violence, and anti-trafficking.

## **A. Political and Military Aspects of Security**

### ***1. Promoting political pluralism and political dialogue***

Supporting further development of **political pluralism**, by promoting dialogue between government authorities and civil society, the Office continued to support the Social Partnership Club within the framework of the Public Council, established on the basis of the Agreement on National Reconciliation of 11 March 1996. In the period under review, the Office has supported 12 round tables of the Social Partnership Club with 50 to 100 participants at each meeting representing civil society, government representatives and political parties. The topics of the sessions focused on issues, such as the Islamic heritage of Tajikistan, civil society and national security, labour migration, information security, energy security, political parties and elections (six meetings were held on this topic in preparation of the February 2010 parliamentary elections). With the recent departure of the Islamic Revival Party, in protest over the conduct of the parliamentary elections, few opposition parties remain in the Public Council, which has been considered a rare forum for pluralist debate. This development calls for a review of the Office's efforts to support political dialogue and which platform, or forum, is best suited to promote political pluralism.

The Office continued to encourage Tajikistan's engagement with the **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** (OSCE PA). In June 2009, the Office facilitated a visit of the President of the OSCE PA, Joao Soares to Dushanbe, and supported also the participation of two parliamentarians in the OSCE PA 2009 annual session in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Addressing the issue of **violent extremism** and radicalization that lead to terrorism, the Office has developed several programmatic activities over the last year. Initially, a country-wide survey of radicalization trends will be completed by the end of 2010. This will lay the foundation for further capacity building of government and civil society representatives, encouraging joint efforts to combat this phenomenon.

### ***2. Border management - supporting implementation of the National Border Strategy***

In the period under review, the Office has had considerable focus on border-related activities, both in form of legislative support and assisting border services on the ground:

- A **National Border Strategy** and its Implementation Plan, developed with assistance by the Office, was adopted by the government on 29 April 2010. The new strategy provides border and law-enforcement agencies with a clear policy framework for the period 2010 to 2025. The objective is to strengthen border security, while developing commercial and economic activities, respecting human rights. By including co-operation and co-ordination among the core principles, and by also covering such human and economic aspects of security as human rights, gender, and action against corruption, the Strategy is in line with OSCE principles.
- A **"Patrol Programming and Leadership"** project started its activities in 2009 by providing training and equipment for border guards in order to better detect and interdict

illegal trafficking across the Tajik-Afghan border by the use of improved human surveillance and equipment. Three 8-week patrol leadership courses with a total of 32 students, and three specialized short trainings in medical skills, winter survival, and alpine search and rescue operations have been completed. An extension of this project is currently under consideration.

- A **customs assistance** project is now in its implementation phase. This project assists the Tajik Customs Service to detect commodities, especially pre-cursor chemicals, illegally entering the country from China and Kyrgyzstan. The construction of a customs terminal in Murgab in the Gorno-Badakhshan region is underway, and expected to be completed by August 2010. This spring, three one-week trainings for Tajik and Afghan customs officers in risk management took place in Dushanbe to be followed by additional three-week courses in Khorog and Murgab on search and detection techniques.
- The Office has also conducted two one-week workshops bringing together high-ranking officers from the Afghan Border Police and the Tajik State Border Guard to study international best practices in **cross-border co-operation**, and especially the latest developments of the so-called border-delegate co-operation model, which is successfully used by many OSCE participating States.
- In 2009, the Office started a project to develop the training system of the Border Guard Academy. A needs assessment covered current training programmes, development of the teaching staff, selection of students, inter-agency and international co-operation, anti-corruption, gender and human rights issues. In 2010, in line with a Needs Assessment Report, the Office assists the **Border Guard Academy** in developing new courses for the curriculum, as well as improving inter-agency co-operation between the Border Guard Academy, Police Academy and the Institute of the Customs Service.

In May 2009, the Office officially launched the **OSCE Border Management Staff College**. With the arrival of the international staff in August 2009, the College has conducted seven training seminars, and workshops on border management-related topics with a total of 118 high and mid-ranking officers from 20 OSCE participating States. A one-month pilot staff course for 25 senior management-level participants will be conducted by the end of 2010.

The Office continues to maintain a matrix of all border and law enforcement activities in Tajikistan, to **co-ordinate and share information** between International Organisations and donors. This information is also made available through UNODC's internet-based donor co-ordination tool ADAM – *Automated Donor Assistance Mechanism*. Moreover, a monthly co-ordination meeting of the “International Working Group on Border and Law Enforcement Training” is organized and hosted by the Office.

### ***3. Supporting Tajikistan's commitments related to law enforcement and anti-terrorism***

The Office continued its **police assistance** project. The objective is to promote legal, administrative, technical and operational aspects of police reform, in order to modernize and strengthen the capacity and institutions of law enforcement.

In 2009, the Office has conducted comprehensive baseline research, which was used to draft a concept paper about **police reform**. In 2010, a police reform and change management assessment was reviewed at a workshop to strengthen the capacity for strategic planning of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In the development of these activities, the Office applies a cross-dimensional approach to mainstream gender, anti-trafficking and human rights issues.

The Office has facilitated training for law enforcement managers on setting strategic priorities in **combating terrorism** while upholding human rights. With the Office support, law enforcement officers have attended regional and international OSCE events promoting democratic principles and best practices in policing. Such training and exposure is essential for strengthening regional co-operation, combating transborder organized crime and terrorism.

Responding to the drug trafficking threat, the Office supported a **drug prevention** project through awareness raising in co-operation with the Drug Control Agency. Furthermore, together with the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit, the Office facilitated two train-the-trainer courses for 35 Afghan counter-narcotics officers.

#### ***4. De-mining activities - supporting Tajikistan's obligations under the Ottawa convention***

The Office developed a regional de-mining initiative, consulting the five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to promote co-operation within **mine action**. In November 2009, a regional OSCE de-mining conference was held in Dushanbe, in which four Central Asian participating States and Afghanistan agreed on the need to establish a *Central Asian Mine Action Co-operation Council* as a regionally co-ordinated approach that will enable the OSCE in addressing cross-border mine clearance.

By establishing a fully accredited and operational humanitarian mine clearance unit within the Ministry of Defence, the Office continued to assist the host country in establishing a sustainable national **mine clearance** capacity. The unit has been deployed to clear mines at the Tajik-Afghan border. In May 2010, the Office supported the establishment of a humanitarian mine clearance NGO, *The Union of Sappers of Tajikistan*, which will work in partnership with the MoD to clear landmines.

In 2009, the Office launched a **technical survey** of the Tajik-Afghan border, developing a comprehensive digital border mine field database to locate, mark and map mines in this border area. On the ground, the Office provides operational support for mine clearance activities, and, together with project partners, currently trains the crew of Tajikistan's first mechanical de-mining machine, *MineWolf*, on the Tajik-Afghan border.

#### ***5. Reducing risks stemming from SALW and CA***

By the end of 2008, the Office completed its project on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Conventional Ammunition (CA). While earlier phases focused on destruction of surplus SALW/CA and improving stockpile security management, follow-up activities during the reporting period have addressed the need to enhance the national training capacity and to develop a regulatory framework for **SALW incident response**. The Office has conducted physical stockpile and security management seminars with participants from different agencies and from all regions of the country. In 2011, the Office will strengthen the capacity of Tajikistan to take over the responsibility for the SALW/CA and CSBM agenda.

#### ***6. Confidence and Security Building Measures, Vienna Document 99***

The Office continued to promote implementation of OSCE existing instruments on Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM), in particular the Vienna Document 1999, the Code of Conduct on Politico-military Aspects of Security. The Office continued its support of the MoD **Verification Centre** to maintain its connection to the OSCE Communication Network and also supported training of personnel.

## **B. Economic and Environmental Activities**

### ***1. Developing regional trade and transit***

In 2009, in co-operation with the host government, the Office identified **Free Economic Zones** as a platform for promoting investment and cross-border trade. The Office has provided advice and assistance to the authorities on management of the Free Economic Zones, as well as support for co-ordination of international donor and stakeholder activities. A new draft law on Free Economic Zones, which was worked out with technical support from the Office, is now under consideration in parliament.

The Office supported national and local authorities in addressing obstacles to **cross-border trade** with Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan by promoting public-private dialogue and improving good governance at border crossing points, such as streamlining administrative processes and user's access to information. Through provision of legal services to entrepreneurs, the Office contributed to an increase of activity in markets on the Tajik-Afghan border.

### ***2. Improving investment climate***

The Office has supported small and medium enterprises, which have to adapt to ongoing economic reforms, by providing **legal services and training** to entrepreneurs. In 2009, more than 9,000 businessmen and women received training in legal and other business-related issues. The Office also established a partnership with the EBRD. This partnership will contribute to economic security in very remote and mostly rural areas by combining the EBRD's technical expertise and the Office's outreach capacity and local knowledge.

### ***3. Assisting Tajikistan in combating corruption***

In October 2009, the Office carried out a needs assessment to advise the State Agency for Financial Control and Fighting Corruption on best **corruption prevention** practices and a comprehensive plan of action to introduce suitable corruption prevention mechanisms.

In 2010, the Office engaged with government structures and civil society on the implementation of the proposed action plan, to build capacity for preventing and combating corruption, and raise awareness of best practices.

### ***4. Contributing to the improvement of Tajikistan's water management sector***

The Office assisted the improvement of Integrated Water Resources Management at national and regional level in co-operation with the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources.

Moreover, the Office contributed to the creation of a standardized electronic system for water data collection, thus empowering the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources to obtain, analyze, interpret and distribute water information in a reliable and efficient manner. In order to **avoid disputes over water use**, an efficient data collection system is an important step towards an open and transparent dialogue with other countries in the region.

The Office actively supported the development of the Water Sector Development Programme for the period 2010-2025. This document provides a comprehensive analysis of current conditions in the **water sector**, identifies key challenges constraining the effective development of this sector, and recommends activities to address those challenges. The draft programme was handed over to the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources in March 2010 for final review.

The Office supported also the organization of the high-level conference “Water for Life 2005-2015” from 8 to 10 June 2010 in Dushanbe. This OSCE-supported International Water Conference provided a high-level platform to review progress made in the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life 2005-2015". It formed an important opportunity to discuss issues related to accelerating progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals, fostering trans-boundary water dialogue, adaptation to climate change and sustainable financing of water resources management. The outcomes of the Conference have been summarized in the so-called *Dushanbe Declaration on Water*.

### **5. *Enhancing environmental legislation, policy and environmental security***

In the period under review, the Office has been collaborating with both the government and parliament in supporting the development of two key environmental laws, and also addressing the issue of radioactive waste:

- On 1 March 2010, the President signed into law the **National Environmental Action Plan** that provides direction and instructions for the implementation of environmental policies. Since 2008, the Office has assisted a national working group with expertise and has also collaborated with the Committee on Environment and National Resource Protection of Tajikistan on legislative matters throughout the period.
- The Office is presently assisting parliament with expertise on amendments to the **Waste Management Law**.
- The Office has collaborated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) on the issue of **radioactive waste** in northern Tajikistan. The Office facilitated a mission of IAEA-endorsed experts to assess the extent of radioactive waste threats. Moreover, the Office has supported a final assessment of the cost of rehabilitation of selected areas contaminated by radioactive waste, as well as advice to the host government on practical steps for remediation. In co-operation with the GTZ, the Office is supporting an expert assessment on the possible construction of a waste recycling industrial complex.

In order to build national capacity and expertise, the Office has facilitated a transfer of the OSCE-supported **Aarhus Centre** in Dushanbe to the Committee on Environmental Protection. This enhances the co-operation between government institutions and civil society in implementing the pillars of the Aarhus Convention and addressing environmental challenges.

## **C. Human Dimension Activities**

### **1. *Justice sector reform strategies***

The Office has supported the Human Rights Ombudsman institution, established in May 2009, raising the new institution’s nation-wide profile and laying the groundwork for a co-ordinated programme of **capacity building for the Ombudsman** and his staff. The Ombudsman's own work plan for that institution has helped shaped the Office’s plans and programs in a substantial way.

Through a strategic litigation project, the Office has increased the capacity of judicial bodies and legal aid providers to **respond to individual complaints** of human rights violations. The

Office also supported efforts to raise awareness of the importance of independent monitoring of penal institutions.

## ***2. Raising awareness about human rights and democratization principles and commitments***

The Office raised awareness of **human rights** principles and commitments among students, educators, representatives of government, civil society and the mass media. The wide representation of Tajik civil society and many government representatives, including high-ranking officials, at Tajikistan's preparatory Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Dushanbe and at the later HDIM in Warsaw, showed increased awareness of human rights and rule of law issues and readiness to engage on these issues. In December 2009, a **Human Rights week** coalition, including the Ombudsman and the Office, organized more than 20 events nation-wide, promoting debate and dialogue.

## ***3. Assisting Tajikistan in conducting elections in line with OSCE commitments***

The Office supported voter education in preparation for **Parliamentary Elections** held on 28 February 2010 through a series of activities, such as:

- In order to encourage informed choices by voters, the Office facilitated nation-wide research on voter knowledge and attitudes, carried out under the aegis of the Centre for Strategic Research. The results were presented to political parties prior to elections to strengthen their capacity to develop political platforms, which could better reflect the needs and concerns of the electorate.
- To support better dissemination of election information, the Office built the capacity of TV stations to create programs that would support electoral debate and dialogue.
- The Office translated into Tajik and distributed key OSCE documents relating to the exercise of civil and political rights, including the Copenhagen Document.
- In co-operation with the Central Committee on Elections and Referenda and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Office supported the production of four TV and four radio public service announcements on voting procedures, as well as non-partisan voter education materials. Eleven newspapers – with a total issue circulation of 68,000 – ran the voter education materials for five weeks. As a result, 340,000 pieces of voter education materials reached potential voters. Another 32,000 items – posters and calendars about elections and on exercising informed choices – were distributed.

Once the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report is released, the Office stands ready to follow up and assist the Tajik authorities in fulfilling its recommendations.

## ***4. Promoting pluralistic, free, independent and competitive media***

Under the auspices of the Office, the media community developed a code of conduct, and established a **media self-regulation body** that had been eight years in the making. Moreover, the Office has supported the Republican Press Centre, which has become the central service centre for official press conferences of ministries and state authorities in Dushanbe. The Office assisted 27 newspapers to print an additional 1.5 million copies, equal to ten per cent of the total newsprint output. With the assistance of the Office, a professional newspaper distribution system has also been developed. As in previous years, the Office is continuing its support of management- training for media representatives.

### ***5. Promoting gender awareness and equality, preventing domestic violence***

Gender awareness and equality continue to be a priority for the Office, with a broad range of activities, such as:

- Programming in the area of **gender awareness and equality** has had a strong and important partner in the State Committee for Women and Family Affairs, which has demonstrated its willingness to co-operate with all relevant stakeholders, at all levels, on policies and programmes.
- Co-operation is also strong with the Civil Servants' Training Institute, with which the Office also has a longstanding partnership. In 2009, 136 civil servants were trained in leadership skills and a gender-sensitive approach in state administrative work, such as gender analysis, monitoring and evaluation and gender responsive budgeting and planning.
- Training in community mobilization provided by the Office to the staff of eleven Women's Resource Centres and the Khujand shelter for victims of domestic violence, has helped them better serve the 10,000 people seeking assistance and advise during the reporting period.
- In February 2010, renovations of Khujand's comprehensive care shelter - the only one in Tajikistan – were completed, thus doubling its capacity to shelter victims of domestic violence.
- In November 2009, the Office, together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Open Society Institute, co-chaired a round table on prevention of gender-based violence, providing an opportunity for participants to comment on the report on Tajikistan by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

With the aim to ensure adequate treatment of victims, registration of cases of domestic violence and conviction of perpetrators, the Office has provided technical support and expertise in setting up of specialized domestic violence units within police stations in Khujand, Kulyab, Kurgan-Tyube and two police stations in Dushanbe.

### ***6. Assisting national authorities and civil society to combat human trafficking***

The Office has continued to build capacity in **anti-trafficking**, such as:

- Nineteen representatives of the Interagency Commission on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and NGOs were trained to design a more effective National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking.
- In early 2010, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection established a National Referral Mechanism Co-ordination Office within the Ministry.
- The Office supported the Ministry of Internal Affairs to improve investigation and identification expertise by including a course in the curriculum of the Police Academy.

## **IV. FIELD ACTIVITIES**

Five Field Offices are directly involved in all phases of programming, implementing and monitoring projects. The regional outreach of the Office was enhanced through improved

implementation of activities and projects, addressing the specific needs in each area of responsibility.

The **Khujand Field Office** has strengthened the capacities and co-operation with local partners in the area of economic and environmental activities, with a focus on development of cross-border trade, small entrepreneurship and capacity building for the Free Economic Zone in Sughd region. In other dimensions, the Field Office is involved in a survey assessing the potential for violent extremism and radicalization. The Field Office has supported and followed up monitoring of the Women Resource Centres and the first Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence in the country. The Field Office continued to strengthen co-operation with the OSCE Field Office in Osh, Kyrgyzstan.

The **Garm Field Office** covers the remote Rasht Valley. The region is characterised by frequent natural disasters, which regularly damage an already weak infrastructure and agriculture. The area experience problems with poverty, unemployment, access to media, and labour migration to Russia. The Field Office works to improve the business and investment climate in a region that has a potential for transit and trade with Kyrgyzstan.

The **Field Offices in Kurgan-Tyube, Kulyab and Shaartuz** support the Office's activities within border management, cross-border trade and transport development in southern Tajikistan. The region has an OSCE-supported Free Economic Zone at Nizhnyj Pyanj, where the Office promotes trade at the Tajik-Afghan border. The field offices facilitate political dialogue and also raise awareness about environmental issues through support of a local Aarhus Centre.

## **V. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Since the last report in May 2009, following a period of significant expansion of activities, the Office has undergone a period of consolidation, especially in the last six months. The projects are fewer, but more sustainable, with long-term impact.

Most of the personnel, both international and national, are now in place after several rounds of vacancy announcements, especially for key international staff. Emphasis will be put on capacity building for all our staff.

Looking forward, the Office will continue to focus its activities around priority areas where we can make a tangible difference. We will constantly seek to improve the quality of all programmes within the framework of stable resource requirements.