

DUSHANBE, 22 October 2008

Press Release – English

Enhancing border management and drug control in Central Asia were the focus of a two-day high-level conference that ended in Dushanbe today.

The event was hosted by the Government of Tajikistan and co-organized by the European Union/European Commission, Finland, the French Presidency of the European Union, Germany, the OSCE, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon opened the conference. "We anticipate that this conference will review lessons learnt from international experience regarding co-operation between states, international organisations and other institutions and agencies, and will also develop new ideas for co-ordinating mutual efforts aiming at increased security and stability in the Central Asian region," he said.

The EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Pierre Morel, spoke in the opening session on behalf of the international sponsors of the conference. He reminded that drug trafficking through Central Asia is a common threat for the countries in the region and for countries beyond. He called on conference participants to work towards closer co-operation on the management of common borders between the countries in the region, for more efficient co-ordination among the international donors and between the Central Asian countries and called upon the international organisations that support the fight against drugs in the region.

The Minister of Interior of Finland, Anne Holmlund, and the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Khamrokhon Zarifi, as well as the Secretary of State of the Kyrgyz Republic and Chief of the Counter Narcotics Directorate of Afghanistan, other top representatives of the international sponsors and high-level officials and experts on border management and drug control from Central Asia and Afghanistan took part in the conference.

Expert and senior officials from Austria, China, the Czech Republic, India, Iran, Japan, Poland, the Russian Federation and Turkey, as well as representatives from the Central Asian Regional Information and Co-ordination Centre (CARICC), the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the EuroAsian Economic

Community (EURASEC) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), also took part.

The participants from international organisations and individual countries sent strong messages of support to the countries of the region regarding strengthening of border management, as a prerequisite for successful fight against drug trafficking.

Tajik Foreign Minister Khamrokhon Zarifi chaired the conference, which focused on managing resources effectively, the need to enhance the impact of technical assistance, and on strengthening donor co-ordination in these fields. Participants discussed the role of national border management strategies and the core counter-narcotics elements of an operational border strategy, as well as co-ordination among donors and governments at the regional level.

The Central Asian countries and participating international delegations presented their national and regional priorities, and the conference concluded with the official delegations' agreement a practical and forward-looking Partnership Declaration. In the declaration, the participants agreed on the importance of strengthening cross-border co-operation and developing and implementing national border management and national drug control strategies.