



**Opening speech by Claus Neukirch, Director of the Directorate of Programme  
Co-ordination, Council of Europe**

**Conference “Mechanisms for ensuring human rights protection in Tajikistan in  
the light of European and international standards”**

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 1 December 2022

Minister, Ambassador, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the Council of Europe, I take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this conference dedicated to mechanisms for ensuring human rights protection in Tajikistan in the light of European and international standards.

We very much appreciate the initiative of the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan to hold this conference with us. It is a testimony of the willingness and openness of Tajikistan to deepening co-operation with the Council of Europe.

Today’s event is organised in the framework the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme, which is a joint venture between the European Union and the Council of Europe. I wish to seize this opportunity to thank the European Union Delegation to Tajikistan for the continuous co-operation in the implementation of the Programme in the country since its launch in 2020 and to stress the importance of this partnership in the region.

Let me express my regret of not being able to participate in person this time due to other conflicting commitments. Nevertheless, I am delighted to make this contribution to this important event.

The Council of Europe is the leading human rights organisation in Europe. Through its unique mechanism of human rights protection embracing the European Court of Human Rights and a number of multifaceted legal instruments, a great majority

of which are open to non-member States, it provides a significant contribution to the international order and global governance.

In this regard, through its Policy towards neighbouring regions, our Organisation aims at extending co-operation beyond the continent based on Council of Europe values and instruments in order to promote the stability and democratic security of both Europe and its neighbouring regions, including in Central Asia.

The European Union and the Council of Europe work closely together through the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme. Launched in 2020, this joint initiative offers a regional framework for co-operation to reinforce human rights, rule of law and democracy in all Central Asian countries. It is achieved by offering assistance to reform processes, in accordance with European and other international standards, based on a demand-driven and tailored approach.

For this, the Council of Europe has put at the disposal of partners in Central Asian countries its expertise based on its legal instruments – the Council of Europe Conventions and best practices of its member States and beyond.

Importantly, the programme has a regional dimension which can complement in a meaningful way bilateral co-operation to advance on reforms by facilitating knowledge sharing and lessons learnt at a collective level and among peers of the region.

Let me highlight some national reform efforts currently supported by the Programme:

- In the field of Constitutional justice, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe provided expertise on the role of the Constitutional courts in shaping the rule of law as a fundamental constitutional principle and ensuring the protection of individual rights during a conference co-organised with the Constitutional Court of Tajikistan in May 2022;



- Efforts are pursued to raise awareness about international standards to prevent and fight economic crime. In particular, recommendations aimed at improving national legal safeguards and procedures to protect the rights of entrepreneurs were developed and presented to the relevant Tajik authorities in July 2022;
- The implementation of the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) in the region is under way to further enhance the capacity of judges, lawyers and prosecutors to apply the European human rights standards in their daily work. Discussions on how to further engage the legal community of Tajikistan in the use of this useful tool are ongoing.

It is not by coincidence that this conference takes place during the annual international campaign "16 days of activism against gender-based violence" and precedes the Human Rights Day (10 December). The issues that we will discuss during the event are directly related to upholding human rights in Tajikistan through strengthening relevant human rights protection mechanisms, including in the areas of fighting domestic violence and violence against women and in the domain of extradition.

In addition to this, my colleagues will also speak today in greater detail about the Council of Europe tools that the programme put at the disposal of the Central Asian countries.

I hope that the discussions at the conference as well as the expertise brought by the Council of Europe will be useful for the esteemed participants of the conference and contribute to ensuring a better human rights protection in Tajikistan.

I would like to reiterate that the Council of Europe always stands ready to provide assistance upon demand of the national authorities and remains open to any



suggestions and requests for co-operation within the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme.

Thank you very much, and I wish you all a fruitful work today

*The conference “Mechanisms for ensuring human rights protection in Tajikistan in the light of European and international standards” was organised in the framework of the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme (2020-2023) which is a joint regional initiative, co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe. The Programme aims to reinforce human rights, rule of law and democracy in Central Asian countries in accordance with European and other international standards by offering assistance to reform processes, based on a demand-driven approach.*

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