

OSCE develops co-op with Turkmenistan to address different aspects of energy - official (INTERVIEW)

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By Jeila Aliyeva – Trend news agency:

The OSCE has developed a successful co-operation with Turkmenistan to address different aspects of energy diplomacy and build the capacities of relevant institutions to promote energy security, the Head of OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, Ambassador John MacGregor told Trend.

As MacGregor noted the OSCE's work complements and supports Turkmenistan's National Program for Development of Energy Diplomacy for 2021-2025.

"The promotion of energy security is one of the priorities of the foreign policy of Turkmenistan, as the country is a major producer and exporter of natural gas," he said.

"In the last ten years, we have organized a number of training courses, seminars, and lectures on cross-border gas trade and natural gas price formation mechanisms, among other important topics," he noted, adding that these activities have provided opportunities for Turkmenistan to exchange best practices with other states, discuss national priorities and learn from the experiences of other energy-exporting countries.

Earlier, the OSCE and Turkmenistan discussed possible steps to develop a program in Turkmenistan for boosting energy diplomacy.

The main activities of the center in the field of security issues are arms control, border security and countering terrorism, human trafficking and illegal drug trafficking, economic and environmental issues, human rights protection, good governance and the rule of law, as well as elections and media freedom.

OSCE's main objectives of cooperation with Turkmenistan in 2021 include promoting renewable energy, energy security and environmental protection.

The objectives of cooperation with Turkmenistan also include: expanding long-term assistance in the area of preventing and combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.

"Our joint work strengthens the regulatory framework governing investments in initiatives to combat climate change, e-commerce and

small- and medium-sized enterprises and promotes regional economic cooperation," he said.

As he said, for 2021, in the politico-military dimension, OSCE will place special emphasis on providing support in the area of strategic trade control, enhancing cybersecurity capacities, countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, and promoting the role of women in conflict prevention in Turkmenistan.

"We have also designed projects to strengthen the security of critical energy infrastructure against terrorist attacks and to promote intelligence-led policing," MacGregor said.

"For the 2021 objectives in the human dimension, we have attached special importance to assisting the Office of the Ombudsperson and the implementation of Turkmenistan's new action plans on national human rights and gender equality. We also have joint initiatives with the government for promoting the rule of law, strengthening criminal justice and penitentiary systems, as well as facilitating multilingual and multicultural education. Supporting interactions between state institutions, media and the public in healthcare emergencies is also high on our agenda," he said.

MacGregor also noted that OSCE's main objective for Turkmenistan, like with other participating states hosting an OSCE mission, is to support the country in turning its OSCE commitments into concrete actions.

"We base our objectives on the priorities of the host country while also aspiring to maintain balance in all three dimensions of security," he concluded.

He also noted that one of OSCE's flagship projects aims at strengthening capacities of Turkmenistan's State Border Service, which also involves Afghanistan.

As an OSCE Partner for Co-operation, Afghanistan benefits from the OSCE field presences in Central Asia, including the Centre in Ashgabat, particularly given that the two countries share a common frontier, MacGregor said.

"We organize regular workshops that bring together a staff of border services, which contributes to enhancing their transboundary co-operation. These events provide an opportunity for them to improve their skills in patrolling procedures and surveillance techniques, as well as helping them to establish cross-border contacts and informal networks," he said, adding

that the OSCE's assistance to Afghanistan is part of the efforts to contribute to security and stability in the Central Asian region.

As MacGregor noted, it is also worth mentioning its long-term cooperation with the Turkmen State Energy Institute in Mary (TSEI), which features a variety of joint activities addressing energy diplomacy, alternative energy, and other topics.

"Last year, we inaugurated the Centre for Energy-Saving Technologies at TSEI to support the implementation of the National Programme for Energy Saving 2018–2024," he added.

"I am also pleased to note the expanding co-operation between Turkmenistan and OSCE institutions in the human dimension. Recently, the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan and the Office of the HCNM signed a Memorandum of Co-operation to promote multilingual and multicultural education," MacGregor added.

He also added that OSCE has also assisted with the implementation of Turkmenistan's National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016-2020 related to media freedom. For this, OSCE facilitated the development of a university curriculum for journalism faculties on freedom of expression and prepared a pool of national trainers on the rights and duties of journalists.