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United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement on the Arrest of Uzbek
Opposition Leader**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 22, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States notes with concern the arrest of Uzbek opposition leader Nodira Khidayatova on December 18 in Tashkent. Although we cannot comment on the merits of the specific case against Ms. Khidayatova, past government attempts to use the Uzbek legal system in order to blunt political opposition are disturbing, and we fear this practice is continuing.

The United States hopes that Ms. Khidayatova will be treated according to international norms and that she will have full access to her lawyers and family. We again remind the Government of Uzbekistan of its human dimension commitments and treaty obligations, which include due process protections, prohibitions on torture, arbitrary arrest or detention, and the freedom of peaceful expression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.