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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN  
TO THE OSCE

**Statement of the Head of Delegation of Tajikistan  
Ambassador Nuriddin Shamsov at the OSCE Supplementary Human  
Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief  
on 10 July, 2009**

*In response to United States Delegation  
Statement on status of Religious or Belief Communities  
Session 2*

Chairperson,

I thank Delegation of United States interest regarding status of religious or belief communities and Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations adopted recently. We recall that before adoption the draft Law was discussed actively with the OSCE Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief and representatives of all religious communities as well as many parts of proposed recommendations were accepted by Tajik lawmakers.

The Constitution of Tajikistan offers a more tolerant stance regarding religious freedom and provides for freedom of religion. Government respects this right in practice. The previous Law of Tajikistan on Religion and Religious Associations was established on December 1, 1994 and amended in 1977. Since that time Tajikistan has gone through crucial and substantial changes in socio-political and socio-economic life of the Country. Regarding motivation for new Law, Government of Tajikistan strongly believes that it is needed to consolidate civil society, address current challenges and combat religious radicalism and nihilism.

New Law provides the right of individuals to choose religion and practice their religion of choice, affirms the equality of all faiths before the Law, non-interference of the State in religious community's activity, the right of religious communities to manage their own affairs and select their leadership, rights of individuals and religious communities, to conduct worship, teach religion and use religious literature. The Law does not specifically declare that religious communities must have registration to be able to function.

Tajikistan, where Muslims represent 95 % of inhabitants based mostly on Hanafi Islamic tradition. Giving tribute to great role of Imomi A'zam in the history of Islam Tajikistan this year celebrates 1310 of his birth. My Government is making efforts to ensure religious tolerance and to treat respectfully with wide-range groups of religious minorities, such as Orthodox and Catholic Christians, Bapists, Seven-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Korean protestants, Bahai's , Zoroastrians and Krishnaitis. In accordance with information provided by the Ministry of Culture, Christian missionaries from Western countries, Korea, India and elsewhere are present in Tajikistan and functioning freely.

Regarding the Jewish Community, I have to note that a new building of Synagogue has been recently donated by Tajikistan authorities to the city's Jewish congregation in the center of Dushanbe. As it was stated by local Rabbi, he and his community believe the new Synagogue is an improvement over the old one. The opening of one of the World modern Ismailit Cultural Centers in my capital is on the way also.

Government of Tajikistan continues arrangement of several round-table discussions on new Law together with representatives of state institutions, religious communities and leading mass-media. I assure you that the issue of religious conscience and freedom will remain on the agenda of open dialogue between my Government and it's partners, in particular United States, European Union and the OSCE.

Thank you, Chairperson.