



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Statement on Return of Uzbek Refugees by Kyrgyz Authorities**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 16, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

The United States is disappointed by the decision of the Government of Kyrgyzstan to return four Uzbek individuals, who had registered as asylum seekers, to Uzbek authorities on June 9 without prior consultation with representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

We welcome the Kyrgyz Government's assurances that it will not turn over any more asylum seekers to the Uzbek government without consultation with UNHCR, and without careful review of whether they might be persecuted upon their return to Uzbekistan.

It is our understanding that twelve other asylum seekers were also removed from the refugee camp and are now being held by the National Security Service in a Ministry of Justice detention facility in the city of Osh.

We urge the Kyrgyz authorities to continue to work closely with UNHCR to provide continuous access to all asylum seekers from Uzbekistan, and to make certain they are given every protection possible.

The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent is also raising the issue of these four repatriated individuals with the Uzbek Government to urge that they be afforded due process and treated in a manner consistent with international law. We are urging the Uzbek government to give the International Committee of the Red Cross or UNHCR access to these individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.