

MC.DEL/82/07
4 December 2007

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY THE
HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
AT THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL
COUNCIL**

Madrid, 29 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan to welcome the participants in this OSCE Ministerial Council meeting and to express our gratitude to Spain for its hospitality and the excellent organization of this event.

Recent years have been marked by serious and complex discussions on how to reform the OSCE and adapt this Organization to new challenges and modern trends in international development.

Our Organization, which was established more than 30 years ago, still does not have its own Charter, and this is preventing the OSCE from becoming a fully fledged subject of international law and is having a considerable impact on the effectiveness of its work. This being the case, we believe it is essential to focus efforts on the adoption of this fundamental document, at the latest in 2008.

In today's world, rational and careful use of natural resources is acquiring particular relevance, and greater attention is being paid to pressing environmental problems in the OSCE area.

In that context, we welcome the efforts of the Spanish Chairmanship to step up the OSCE's activities in the environmental security field. International forums held this year under the auspices of the OSCE, including the regional seminar in Tashkent, have made it possible to discuss at a high level such serious problems as land degradation, soil contamination, effective water management and other environmental challenges facing virtually all of the participating States of our Organization.

Uzbekistan is in favour of further strengthening the potential of the OSCE in the economic and environmental dimension.

Mr. Chairman,

The situation currently unfolding in Central Asia demonstrates how many conflicting processes capable of having a negative effect not only on regional security but also far beyond our region's borders are interlinked.

The desire of the Central Asian nations to be integrated into the world community and to create the conditions needed to ensure stability and sustainable development is being seriously tested. Transnational threats such as terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking come together in Central Asia.

Security in Central Asia and the entire OSCE area is today directly linked to processes taking place in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan has been systematically in favour of effective post-war arrangements in Afghanistan. We firmly believe that if we are to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan we need to look not at militarization but at demilitarization, accompanied by the solution of the most serious socio-economic problems and support for the Afghan population with the active involvement and assistance of the international community.

It goes without saying that the most important conditions for this are the achievement of consensus and co-ordinated actions on the part of all the forces that have an interest in the stabilization and revival of Afghanistan and in putting a stop to the drug-related violence emanating from that country, which is taking on threatening dimensions.

In this context, we support the OSCE's plea for Afghanistan's increased involvement in various projects to strengthen security and revive its economy. At the same time, we believe that when preparing OSCE projects and programmes for Afghanistan account should be taken of the specific nature and features of that country and of the difficult and complex processes taking place there.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The problem of forming and promoting the ideology of tolerance, mutual understanding and cultural diversity has become particularly relevant with a view to ensuring peace and security at the regional and global levels.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is making its contribution in support of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, a dialogue which must be conducted within the framework of international law, without pressure and force or attempts to impose unacceptable values and moral norms while preserving a respectful attitude towards the mentality of the people, which has taken shape over the course of many centuries or millennia.

For centuries Uzbekistan has been one of the centres of enlightened Islam, instilling in the consciousness of people such eternal values as a desire for good and peace, tolerance in inter-ethnic and interreligious relations, mutual respect and harmony among peoples regardless of the colour of their skin or their convictions.

It is for this reason that we are seriously concerned at certain negative interpretations of the historical role of Islam and the deliberate misrepresentation of historical facts. We are

categorically against the fight against terrorism being transformed into Islamophobia and turning into a manifest or covert confrontation with the Islamic world.

Uzbekistan is convinced that the OSCE must not remain indifferent to manifestations of religious, ethnic or racial intolerance which, regrettably, are being observed today in some participating States. The promotion of tolerance, mutual understanding and mutual respect among different cultures and religions and the solution of problems concerned with social integration must be among the priorities of the OSCE's human "basket".

Uzbekistan attaches great importance to the rational use of Central Asia's hydroelectricity resources. In this context, we are co-operating closely with all the neighbouring countries in the region.

In that connection, we believe it is of fundamental importance that the activities involved in the building of hydroelectric power stations in the region should be co-ordinated and that their construction should meet the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The construction of any facilities of this kind must be carried out on the basis of conclusions drawn by independent international auditors.

Presidential elections will be held in Uzbekistan on 23 December of this year. Unlike previous elections, the present electoral process has a few important features.

First, four candidates — three from political parties and one independent candidate put forward by a citizens initiative group — are standing for election as Head of State. Second, a woman is standing for election to the highest State position for the first time.

Furthermore, with a view to ensuring complete transparency of the electoral process, it is proposed that a large number of both local and international observers should monitor the elections. To date, more than 250 representatives from 36 countries and a number of authoritative international organizations (the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Co-operation Organization and the Organization of the Islamic Conference), including also the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, have confirmed their participation in election observation activities.

We are convinced that the forthcoming presidential elections in Uzbekistan — as a serious test of the maturity of our country's democratic institutions — will give fresh impetus to the process of political reforms in the Republic and to the building of a State based on the rule of law and a mature civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I should once again like to express our gratitude to the Spanish Chairmanship for the dignified way in which it carried out the tasks entrusted to it and for the constructive approach to matters of co-operation within the OSCE and the European Union.

Thank you for your attention.