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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN AT THE
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 May 2005

Mr. Chairman,

As you all know, at the end of last week tragic events occurred in the city of Andizhan, Uzbekistan, which led to a number of deaths. In this context I should like first to give you a succinct chronological account of the events in question.

During the night from 12 to 13 May 2005 a group of armed criminals attacked a military unit on duty belonging to a battalion of the patrol and security service as well as another military unit stationed in Andizhan. In the course of this attack nine militiamen and servicemen were shot dead. The attackers had purloined a large quantity of firearms and grenades and invaded the premises of a corrective labour colony where they also attacked the soldiers on duty and liberated about 600 prisoners, including persons condemned for terrorist activities as well as ordinary criminals.

Further, the criminals attempted to take possession of the buildings belonging to the provincial directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Security Service, but were prevented from doing so by the law enforcement agencies. They did, however, succeed in taking over the building of the provincial administration.

As they went along the criminals took at least 50 hostages. In the provincial administration premises the terrorists established positions and firing points for snipers on the roof of the building. At the same time many of them used their mobile telephones to get in touch with relatives and urged them to come with their families to the provincial administration building. As a result of this, by six o'clock in the morning the criminals had succeeded in gathering about 300 people in the captured building, including women, old people and children, and thus created a kind of "living shield" around themselves.

The special services also registered international calls by the terrorists to their accomplices in other States, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

With the arrival in Andizhan of I. A. Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan, a special staff was created to free the hostages and bring the terrorists under control. The President had the task of doing everything in his power to minimize the threat to life and to secure the release of the captured hostages. For this reason the military and special service forces surrounding the area were placed at a considerable distance from the administrative building in order not to provoke the terrorists to reprisals against the hostages.

Negotiations were carried on for almost 11 hours. The representatives of the public authorities made serious compromises: they agreed to release six detained extremists and agreed to put buses at the terrorists' disposal to bring them and their weapons to a place indicated by them. However, the terrorists kept bringing forward completely new and clearly unacceptable conditions, notably that the leaders of religious extremist organizations at present in confinement should be freed and brought by air to Andizhan. Thus, by politicizing their demands they brought the negotiations to a deadlock.

At about 8 p.m. the criminals, realizing that the government forces were preparing to storm them and wanting to forestall that attack, left the provincial administration building in several columns covered by the hostages. Pursuit and destruction of the armed criminals continued outside Andizhan on the evening of 13 May and on the morning of 14 May. It proved possible to break up some of the armed gangs within the territory of the province whereas some of them succeeded in filtering through the frontier to Kyrgyzstan.

As a result of this incident completely innocent people perished. Many of those who were duped and deceived by their fanatical leaders and those who were carrying out orders from their patrons and sponsors abroad also perished.

At present the situation in Andizhan and environs is completely under the control of the authorities and the whole local infrastructure has been restored to normal activity.

The Public Prosecutor of Uzbekistan has brought criminal cases against the gangs for armed attacks on militiamen and a military unit, as well as on the corrective labour colony, and for seizure of an administrative building with hostages. Steps are being taken to seek out and capture those who took part in these criminal offences. All who are guilty of perpetrating these crimes will be identified and punished in accordance with the law.

In connection with the events in Andizhan, we should like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the following.

First. All available facts and preliminary evidence indicate that the organizers and perpetrators of this armed foray in Andizhan are members of the Islamic group "Akromia", which has direct connections with the religious extremist organization "Khizbuttakhir" whose activities are prohibited in many countries. Hidden in the Fergansk Valley, the fighters belonging to this extremist group have endeavoured to implement long-cherished plans to subvert the constitutional system and authorities elected by the people and to establish in their place a so-called Islamic caliphate. They hoped that the central and local authorities in Uzbekistan would prove to be weak.

Second. Although the investigations into these events have barely got under way, we can already say with confidence that there exists a link between these fighters and extremist organizations operating in a number of countries of the region, including also terrorist groups hiding in Afghanistan.

Third. Armed assault, premeditated manslaughter and hostage-taking are regarded as the most brutal crimes in all countries of the world and are severely punished by law. Crimes of this kind are investigated under the criminal law by the competent agencies of the Public

Prosecutor's office. This being so, we regard appeals to enter into dialogue with the bandits as completely unfounded and cannot consider any proposals for mediation.

Fourth. Perplexity is our reaction to the incorrect and arbitrary interpretation of the tragic events in Andizhan by the official representatives of some governments. Attempts to describe these armed criminals as "fighters for democracy" reveal once again the tendency of certain States to apply "double standards" in assessing the counter-terrorist operations of OSCE participating States.

This being so, the Uzbek authorities appeal to OSCE participating States and the main institutions of the Organization to show restraint and responsibility in evaluating the events in Andizhan. We also call upon them to await the findings of the official investigation instituted to establish the underlying cause of these events and the degree of responsibility of all those who took part in them.

The leadership of Uzbekistan has given every assurance that the investigations will be conducted in an open fashion. An example of this was the press conference organized by the Office of the Public Prosecutor on 17 May for domestic and foreign journalists and also for representatives of the diplomatic corps. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I. A. Karimov, took part in this press conference. Journalists and diplomats were informed of the course the investigations are taking and of the first evidence regarding the brutal plans of the terrorists; they also received objective information on the current situation in Andizhan.

We hope that the visit to Andizhan on 18 May by representatives of the international media and the diplomatic corps accredited in Uzbekistan will finally put an end to distorted interpretations and speculations regarding the tragic events in Uzbekistan.

Thank you for your attention.