

**Statement by the
Head of Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan
at the 17th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting
(Athens, 2 December 2009)**

**Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan to welcome the participants of the 17th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting and to express our gratitude to Greece for the excellent organization of this forum.

The well balanced and profound work style of the Greek presidency under conditions of deep divergences in apprehension of the role, mission and future of the OSCE, promoted an active quest for common ground between participating states on a wide range of issues of the Organization's agenda.

In this regard, I would like to draw your attention on several issues which, in our opinion, should be considered in developing the approaches to the future activity of the OSCE.

First. The incompleteness of the institutional construction affects the efficiency of the OSCE. The Organization, which was established almost 35 years ago, still does not have its own Charter, and this is preventing the OSCE from becoming a full-fledged subject of international law. Thereupon, we believe it is essential to focus efforts on the adoption of this fundamental document.

We are convinced that only comprehensive reform of the OSCE will promote strengthening of an equal political dialogue, without artificial division of the participating states of the Organization to "leaders" and "being led".

OSCE should also adapt to the current realities characterized, among other things, by the fact that new countries of Europe and Asia with different historically formed political, economic and social systems have joined its structure.

Second. Today, the threats for environmental security are on the rise. We mean not only the threats arising from the global warming, but also the serious problems and possible accidents and risks of technological character caused by the gigantic hydro-power installations in regions, which could seriously undermine the fragile ecological balance.

We speak about these problems having in mind the man-caused accidents at the largest world-known hydro-power stations and hydraulic installations caused by incompleteness in their design and operation (the example is the accident at the Sajano-Shushenskaya hydro-power station in Russia).

We, who live in Central Asia, are seriously concerned that similar large hydro-installations operate today on water-flows of the largest transboundary Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya Rivers providing water to the population of all countries in the region.

An active manipulation by the public opinion and attempts to attract the wide-scale investments for building of another two new largest hydro-power stations – Ragun on the Amu-Darya river and Kambarata on the Syr-Darya river, are made today without taking into account that glaciers on Pamir and Tien Shan mountains – the basic source of water for these rivers – reduce from year to year and, which is particularly important, without thinking about possible tragic consequences that might occur in case of technological accidents at these installations, knowing that these territories are under seismicity measuring 9-10 and are prone to strong earthquakes.

In this regard, Uzbekistan will continue to insist that all planned construction of largest hydro-power installations in Central Asia must be implemented only after impartial expertise made by international experts under auspices of the United Nations in order to avoid possible catastrophic consequences. Reevaluation of existing large hydro-power stations on Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers that have been constructed in the Soviet period is also of an urgent need.

Third. Uzbekistan supports activization of multilateral efforts in countering the new threats and challenges to security. We hope that decisions that will be adopted during the session will allow to continue more effectively the cooperation in this direction.

It is obvious that the situation developing in Afghanistan continues to pose threat to the regional and global security. Afghanistan remains a source of such threats as drug trafficking, dissemination of weapon, international terrorism, human trafficking, etc.

The problem of Afghanistan and ways of its settling are, without any exaggeration, in the focus of attention of the world's largest powers and international community.

In this regard, the strategy on resolution of Afghan problem announced by the US President Barak Obama on 1 December, in our view, primarily attracts attention by its strive to define a strategy and most importantly a time frame for completion of the military campaign in Afghanistan and in future it allows to leave full responsibility for establishing peace and stability in long-suffering soil of Afghanistan in hands of Afghans themselves.

It is clear that this strategy cannot be implemented without coordination of efforts of all forces interested in earliest possible laying the end to war in Afghanistan lasting for more than 30 years.

In our view, it is particularly topical that without achieving a consensus within Afghanistan and leaning on neighboring countries it is impossible to ensure peace.

We are certain that the settlement of the Afghan problem could be facilitated by creation under the auspices of the United Nations of the Contact Group «6+3».

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov has repeatedly emphasized that implementation of this initiative involving neighboring countries would allow achievement of an accord both in and around Afghanistan.

Fourth. At the moment, the active discussions are taking place with regard to the issue of holding the OSCE Summit in 2010.

As a whole, we believe that it is important to hold a Summit of the OSCE participating States which have not been convened for more than 10 years. At the same time, the absence of consent and consensus on many pressing issues concerning security and humanitarian aspects of the OSCE activity does not allow to adopt during the last years an agreed text of the final document even within the Ministerial Council.

Therefore, before considering the question of holding Summit in 2010, in our opinion, it is necessary to find a compromise in the Organization on the important issues of current regional and world policy.

Dear participants,

The next parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan will be held on 27 December. Candidates from 4 political parties and 1 public organization – Ecological movement of Uzbekistan are running for 150 seats in the Parliament.

As of today, 4 political parties nominated 517 candidates to the seats in the Parliament, 31,9 % of which are women.

Election process is conducted in full accordance with the Constitution of Uzbekistan, national legislation and international commitments of our country in electoral sphere.

In order to ensure complete transparency of the electoral process, participation of a large number of local and international observers at the elections is expected.

Currently, more than 250 representatives from 36 countries and several authoritative international organizations: CIS, SCO, OIC, including ODIHR/OSCE, have confirmed their participation in the election observation activities.

We are convinced that forthcoming parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan will be an important step in developing democratic institutions in our country and will give a fresh impetus to the process of democratic renewal and modernization of our country, further building a state based on the rule of law and strong civil society.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that Uzbekistan stands ready to develop cooperation with the OSCE institutions and participating States as equal partners on the basis of mutual respect, understanding and constructivism.

Thank you.