

ENGLISH only

**Speech by the Head of Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting
(6-7 December 2004, Sofia, Bulgaria)**

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

Allow me to greet the delegations participating in the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting and to join those who have expressed appreciation to Bulgarian Government and to the Chairman-in-Office Mr. Solomon Passy personally for the hospitality and excellent organization of the Forum.

Sofia meeting is being held in important, I would say, crucial period for the OSCE. Our organization, established 30 years ago, has played a leading role in preserving peace at the European continent in the times of the irreconcilable ideological rivalry and unprecedented arms race.

Fundamental geopolitical changes over the last few years, new threats and challenges to international community, dictate necessity of OSCE's adaptation to the essentially new conditions of regional and global security, elimination of disbalance among three dimensions of Organization's activity by increasing the role of military-political, economic and ecologic components.

In this regard, we highly appreciate the efforts taken by Bulgarian Chairmanship and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Mr. S.Passy personally, aimed at reforming the basic OSCE structures and institutes, ensuring that Organization's activity meets modern demands.

At the same time, it is obvious that OSCE reforms need an active work of all OSCE Participating countries. The future of the Organization depends on our joint political will to address the basic issues, related, first of all, to the security and stability in the OSCE area.

Dear participants,

Despite the steady and progressive development of the Central Asian countries, relative stability in Afghanistan and its gradual involvement in constructive regional processes, the level of threats and challenges to security and stability in the region remains very high. The region is again turns in to the area for massive expansion of radical religious ideology, aggression by international terrorism and narco-mafia.

Obviously and undoubtedly, international terrorism has challenged all of us and it does not make exceptions for anybody.

We think that for developing a complete strategy on combating terrorism it is important to direct joint efforts against those who train terrorists. I am talking not only about camps where insurgents are being trained and equipped, but also about their spiritual mentors. People are not born as terrorist, their minds are influenced by destructive ideology of hatred and violence, skillfully managed from the certain centers.

Unfortunately, it is the fact, that in some OSCE participating countries extremist movements conduct their activities unimpeded, they spread ideas of religious intolerance, calling to reject ideas of democracy, equality of personal rights regardless of sex and religion, to backward the progress achieved.

In this context, we support OSCE Ministerial Council Statement on preventing and combating terrorism and we suppose that it is necessary to strengthen efforts on creating the AD HOC consulting mechanism in accordance with provisions of the OSCE strategy on preventing threats to stability and security in XXI century. This is also important for coming to common approach in assessing of the activity of extremist organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

Overcoming of existing security challenges in Central Asia and solving of transport-communication, ecologic and other problems directly affect the vital interests of the countries in the region, requires development of close regional cooperation.

We believe that the OSCE is able to assist in deepening the process, particularly, in implementation in Central Asia of Uzbekistan's initiative on creation of the Common Market, aimed at ensuring sustainable development and prosperity of the Region.

Many issues of the Region's development are directly connected to ongoing processes in Afghanistan, which is a part of Central Asia historically and geographically. Involving Afghanistan in regional processes, including within OSCE, will positively influence further strengthening of stability and security in the country and the Region as a whole.

Only by joint efforts, our countries can resist the growing "narco-aggression" from Afghanistan and effectively oppose one of the basic sources of financing of international terrorism and religious extremism – narco-business.

We do believe that the OSCE and participating States' support of Central Asian countries' effort in establishing in Tashkent the Regional Information and Coordination Center on combating narcotics under aegis of the UN would become an important contribution in the OSCE area.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Uzbekistan supports the OSCE aspiration to get actively involved in development of Central Asian countries and to contribute in addressing the existing problems. In this context I would like to highlight the activity of the Organization and its field missions in preparation and holding of elections, including Parliamentary elections to be held on 26 December in Uzbekistan.

It is necessary to note that the upcoming elections are special. As a result of the elections two-chamber professional Parliament will be created in Uzbekistan for the first time. Transformation of Uzbek Parliament related to objective necessity. One-chamber parliament created during the first years of independence under conditions of backwardness of multi-party system and lack of professional politicians has historically completed its mission.

Today, multi-party system has been created in Uzbekistan, sufficient political and legislative experience has been accumulated. Forces, capable to refresh political processes, to make the existing potential more active and to increase positive changes in Uzbek society, has been generated.

We believe, that OSCE constructive participation in monitoring of the forthcoming elections in Uzbekistan will prove preparedness of the Organization to assist in further reforming of political system in our country on the basis of experience of developed democratic countries. It will allow objectively evaluate the level of implementation of national legislation and international standards, to develop recommendations which could serve as an invaluable background for deepening the reforms started in Uzbekistan.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Finally, I would like to confirm Uzbekistan's commitment to OSCE principles and values. We believe that OSCE will continue its role as one of the important elements of regional security and co-operation, and high potential of the Organization would serve for consolidation of our efforts against new challenges.

Thank you for your attention.