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

8 April 2010

**In response to the statement by the Secretary-General of the
United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to the OSCE Permanent Council**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are pleased to welcome the distinguished Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, here in Vienna immediately following his first visit to Central Asia and to the Republic of Uzbekistan as head of his prestigious organization.

We hold in high regard, Mr. Secretary-General, the fact that you began your visit to Uzbekistan by familiarizing yourself on the spot with the complex environmental conditions in the Aral Sea basin and in so doing drew the attention of the international community to one of the global environmental disasters of modern times.

The Aral Sea disaster, which has affected Uzbekistan more than any other country in the region, is one of the events testifying to the catastrophic consequences of climate change and of the disruption of the ecological balance on a global scale.

The Aral Sea is one of the most ancient bodies of water on the planet and until quite recently was the fourth largest lake in the world, famous for its extremely rich natural resources, at the same time that the Aral Sea region was regarded as a flourishing and biologically diverse natural environment. Up until 1960 the area of the Aral Sea totalled 66,100 square kilometres, with a volume of water amounting to 1,083 cubic kilometres fed by the rivers Amudarya and Syrdarya.

Today there has been a more than 13-fold decrease in its volume and a more than 7-fold decrease in its area. The water level has dropped by 26 metres, while the shoreline has receded by hundreds of kilometres.

The consequences of this environmental disaster have affected the living conditions of millions of people living in the Aral Sea basin.

Given the situation that has arisen around the Aral Sea, it is becoming increasingly evident that without joint co-ordinated efforts, principally involving the relevant agencies of

the United Nations and without the rational use of the water power resources of the region, it will be impossible to alleviate the Aral Sea tragedy and the existing socio-economic problems of the local population.

We very much hope that your visit will impart a fresh impulse to the efforts that have been made to solve the most pressing environmental and social problems associated with the situation in the Aral Sea basin and that are aimed at mitigating the consequences of this disaster.

Mr. Secretary-General,

During your visit you had an opportunity to engage in an extensive exchange of views on matters of regional security, regarding which Uzbekistan and the United Nations have gained a fair amount of experience in constructive co-operation.

Today, one of the serious problems, in terms of ensuring both regional and global security, remains the protracted and bloody conflict in Afghanistan. There is no way one can speak of security and stability in the Central Asian region without solving this problem.

With a view to settling this problem with as little delay as possible, Uzbekistan has called for the establishment, under the aegis of the United Nations, of a "6+3" contact group bringing together Afghanistan's neighbours, the United States of America, Russia and NATO as an important consultative-diplomatic body, which might provide the basis for achieving consensus both inside and around Afghanistan. We hope, Mr. Secretary-General, that you will lend your full support to this proposal.

We wish to restate our view that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem. The path to peace is through the socio-economic rebirth of that country, the rebuilding of Afghanistan's war-torn economy, communication links and social infrastructure, and the achievement of internal consensus, harmony and the strengthening of the vertical power structure.

One of the significant results of your visit to Uzbekistan was the signing of the Joint Declaration on Co-operation between the Secretariats of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization and the United Nations. The need for close co-operation between the United Nations and such regional arrangements as the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO) stems from the interconnected nature of regional and global problems.

We are convinced that effectively combining the United Nations enormous experience with the SCO's potential will contribute to the institutional improvement of the organizations themselves and also to the strengthening of regional and international security and the sustainable development of the countries in the region.

An important aspect of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is its international co-operation in the areas of democratization and human rights. Our country is interested in mutually advantageous and constructive collaboration with international organizations and with all the world's countries in matters involving the development of democracy, the establishment of the rule of law, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, the formation of a civil society and the strengthening of a culture of democracy.

As of today, Uzbekistan has acceded to more than 70 international documents dealing with human rights and has ratified all the basic United Nations international human rights treaties, including the international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights, along with the conventions on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, on the rights of the child, on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Uzbekistan has unfailingly fulfilled its international obligations, including those assumed within the OSCE. In accordance with the procedural rules of the convention bodies of the United Nations our Republic has submitted 23 national reports on its implementation of international treaties, 20 of which have already been examined and have received a favourable evaluation.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that Uzbekistan and the United Nations share a fairly full and forward-looking agenda for co-operation and that we are looking forward to further fruitful and effective collaboration.

Thank you for your attention.