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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 May 2010

**In connection with the statement by the Secretary General of the
Organisation of the Islamic Conference**

Mr. Chairperson,

We warmly welcome Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the head of the largest and most authoritative Muslim organization, which brings together many States, including some that are members of the OSCE. For the Russian Federation, which is steadfastly committed to the promotion of co-operation based on equal rights and mutual advantage with the Islamic world, relations with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) are of crucial importance. We share such fundamental principles as the need to forge a just and democratic world order relying on the central role of the United Nations and the recognition of cultural and civilizational diversity in the modern world. Russia and the Islamic countries are allies in the fight against terrorism and extremism. We also share similar approaches to the settlement of many other global and regional problems. In addition, we have a common interest in reducing the potential for conflicts in various regions. The Russian Government is actively helping to bring about a resumption of the peace process in the Middle East with the aim of achieving a comprehensive and just settlement in the region that envisages the creation of an independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and co-operation with Israel.

It is gratifying to note that the relationship between Russia and the OIC continues to be a dynamic one. This has largely been the result of the granting of observer status with the OIC to Russia in 2005. A reflection of the growing importance of our collaboration can be seen in the establishment of a Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation at the OIC's headquarters in Jeddah.

We highly value your important contribution, Mr. Secretary General, to the strengthening of the OIC's constructive role in world affairs and to the enhancement of its authority, something that received a powerful impetus following the adoption at your initiative in 2008 of a new Charter.

We know you to be an active advocate of expanded ties with Russia. A vivid example of this approach can be seen in your contacts last year in Moscow with President Dmitry Medvedev, your participation in the Special Conference on Afghanistan

held under the auspices of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization, and also your meetings with representatives of Russian Muslim organizations.

Russia is taking active measures to step up its dialogue with the Islamic community at both the State and non-governmental levels. The year 2006 saw the establishment of a Centre for Islamic and Arabic Studies, in addition to which the Foundation for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education is actively functioning. Their main goal is to support Russia's Muslim entities and the projects in which they are engaged. Useful work is continuing on the part of the strategic vision group "Russia – the Islamic World", which in December 2009 held its fifth meeting. Mention should also be made of the representative international conference "Russia and the Islamic World: Partnership for Stability", which took place in September of last year in Moscow.

Mr. Secretary General,

We have taken note of the fact that in your statement you spoke with concern about the danger in the growth of Islamophobia, particularly in European countries. We share this disquiet and take the view that this phenomenon is to a large degree a reflection of an intensification of extremist and nationalist manifestations. It is particularly regrettable that such phenomena are occurring 65 years after the Victory over Nazism, with the eradication of which we hoped that we would never again see a fascist swastika. For it is precisely on the breeding ground of racial hatred and theories of racial superiority that the seeds of the Second World War were sown.

It is highly symbolic that today of all days we are officially opening here, in the Hofburg Congress Centre, a photo exhibition devoted to the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the countries of Europe from fascism. Peoples of different nationalities and religious faiths stood shoulder to shoulder in fighting that evil. And today it is extremely important that we pool our efforts to counter the common threats and challenges to which you justly referred as extremism. The shared task of the OSCE and the OIC is to do everything possible to prevent a rise in xenophobia, intolerance and neo-Nazism and, above all, to inculcate in the younger generation a culture of respect for peoples of different nationalities and religious beliefs.

In that context, we fully support the present Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE, which has proclaimed as one of its key priorities the promotion of tolerance. We are convinced that when they take over the leadership of the OIC in the 2011, our Kazakh colleagues will also make every effort to advance the cause of tolerance and non-discrimination. A policy of this kind will find the full support of Russia as a country in which for centuries representatives of different peoples and religious faiths have lived peacefully side by side.

Thank you for your attention.