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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Uzbekistan's Andijon Trial Verdicts

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 17, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States has taken note of the prison sentences handed down by the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan against 15 persons found guilty of organizing and participating in the unrest that took place in Andijon on May 12 and 13. We condemn again - and will continue to do so - the violent attack and hostage taking by armed individuals on government facilities in Andijon. There is simply no justification for such acts of violence.

We are extremely disturbed by the way in which this trial was conducted. We do not believe that it has accurately shed light on those tragic events. We express grave concerns about the credibility of the evidence presented and the fairness of the trial. We believe some of the witnesses' testimony to have been coerced and scripted by the prosecution.

Many aspects of the way this trial was conducted raise disturbing images of the political show trials of another era - one we had all hoped was long gone - rather than of the legal processes expected of an OSCE participating State committed to upholding OSCE principles. According to the 1990 Copenhagen agreement all those charged with crimes are entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal.

We understand that the Government of Uzbekistan has said that the reaction by the international community to the Andijon events was largely shaped by what they claim were sensational media reports that exaggerated the government's use of force. The Government of Uzbekistan has claimed that security forces employed all possible options to avoid casualties among civilians. Unfortunately, the clearly scripted nature of the show trials has done nothing to lessen our concerns regarding the numerous and broad-based domestic and international accounts that reported the excessive use of force by government troops.

We have on previous occasions taken note of OSCE reports in June that Uzbek authorities may have used indiscriminate and excessive force in quelling the protests in Andijon. If the Government of Uzbekistan's version of events is accurate the best way to alleviate international criticism would be to conduct an impartial and transparent international investigation into those events. This would be the most credible way to establish what actually happened in Andijon.

The Government of Uzbekistan has rejected repeated calls for the establishment of an independent investigation into the Andijon events. However, eyewitness reports of indiscriminate and disproportionate force used by government troops to quell the demonstrations suggest that a particularly serious threat to the fulfillment of Uzbekistan's

human dimension commitments as a participating State exists, and an independent investigation is indeed warranted.

All countries must promote respect for human rights and democracy as the only source of long-term stability. We again call on the Government of Uzbekistan to allow for a full, credible, and transparent international investigation into the events, with OSCE or other credible and appropriate international participation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.