

PC.SHDM.DEL/10/09
10 July 2009

ENGLISH only



UZBEKISTAN

National Human Rights Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan

SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

9-10 July 2009

**UZBEKISTAN:
FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

Tashkent

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UZBEKISTAN – LAND OF HARMONY OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

The ethnic, cultural and religious tolerance of our nation is a deep source of spiritual revival. For many millennia Central Asia has been a meeting-place where different religions, cultures and styles of living have coexisted. Ethnic tolerance and openness became natural patterns that were «necessary for survival and for development».

«It is precisely on this land that reciprocal enrichment of world cultures has occurred for many centuries. For centuries nomadic tribes coexisted with settled nations here, Iranian tribes with Turkic tribes, Muslims with Jews and Christians».

Over the last two centuries, when even states that considered themselves to be "civilized" and "enlightened" stained themselves with massive massacres and religious persecutions, the land of Uzbekistan not only remained a place of peaceful unity for peoples and cultures, but it also gave shelter to persecuted peoples».

President Islam Karimov
«Uzbekistan on the threshold of XXI century»

«All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, individual and social status»

Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The declaration of state independence on August 31, 1991 by President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov was an important milestone in the modern history of the country. Since the very beginning of its independent development safeguarding, cherishing and promoting intercultural harmony has been core principles of Uzbekistan which is home to more than 130 different nationalities.

The attitude towards the national history changed fundamentally after gaining independence. National traditions, holidays and ceremonies have been revived; national self-consciousness, spiritual values and dignity of the representatives of the all nations living in Uzbekistan have been strengthened.

Under the new conditions Uzbekistan, whose territory was once a crossroad on the Great Silk Road has again become a key segment of a renewed highway joining countries of East and West As it was underlined by the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov: **«The national diversity in Uzbekistan, in conjunction with the growth of national self-consciousness and the spiritual revival of the Uzbek people, serves as a mighty impulse for the renewal of society and for its democratization, creating favorable conditions for the Republic’s integration into the world community».**

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF IN UZBEKISTAN

Currently, **2,250 religious organizations and 16 confessions are active in Uzbekistan. Among the organizations, 2,050 (92 %) are Muslim, as 88 % of the country's population consider themselves to be followers of Islam.**

In addition, Uzbekistan has 164 Christian organizations, eight Jewish communities, six Bahavi communities, one Hare Krishna society and one Buddhist temple. While there were only 84 mosques in Uzbekistan in 1990, by 1 January 2008, there were 2,029. As at 1 January 2007, 2,016 mosques had been registered, which means that 13 additional mosques have been registered over the past year.

In accordance with the Uzbek Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations Act, freedom of conscience is a constitutionally guaranteed right of citizens to profess any religion or none.

Uzbekistan is a secular State, and the Government of Uzbekistan places no restrictions on religious organizations as to their size or places where they may operate. Freedom to profess a religion or other convictions is subject only to those restrictions that are necessary for the protection of national security and public order or the life, health, morals, rights and freedoms of other citizens.

Foreign nationals and stateless persons enjoy the same right to freedom of conscience and freedom of belief as Uzbek citizens and are liable under the law for breaches of legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations.

Under the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the imposition of religious views by force is not allowed. **The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations Law** affirms that the State shall maintain peace and harmony among religious faiths. Activities aimed at converting the adherents of one faith to another (proselytism) and any other missionary activity are prohibited. Persons found guilty of violating this rule are punishable under the law.

Uzbek citizens are equal before the law, regardless of their religious views. Reference to a citizen's religious views in official documents is prohibited. Any restriction of rights or the establishment of direct or indirect privileges on the basis of religious views, the incitement of strife or hatred, contempt for the feelings of citizens with regard to their religious or atheistic convictions and the desecration of venerated religious and ceremonial sites are punishable by law.

Freedom of belief for Uzbek citizens, as provided for under the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, is realized by extending the same rights and responsibilities to all of the country's religious organizations. Under the Uzbek Education Law of August 29, 1997, one of the basic principles of State education policy is the secular nature of the education system. The State education system in the Republic of Uzbekistan is kept separate from religion, and the inclusion of religious subjects in its curricula is not permitted. Every citizen has the right to a secular education, regardless of his or her religious views. The central governing bodies of religious organizations have the right to establish religious schools to train clergy and the necessary religious personnel. **The Tashkent Islamic University, the Islamic Institute, 10 madrasas, one Orthodox Christian seminary and one Protestant seminary are currently operating in Uzbekistan.** In the 2006/07 school year, 124 students are studying at the Tashkent Islamic Institute, 900 at the 10 madrasas, 49 at the Orthodox seminary and 33 at the Protestant seminary.

Under the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations Law, the central governing bodies of religious organizations are entitled to produce, export, import and distribute religious objects, religious literature and other religious material under the procedure established by law.

If the religious literature was published abroad, it may be shipped and sold after the content of each publication has been reviewed in accordance with the procedure established by national legislation.

In the years following independence, the Koran, Hadith selections from the al Bukhari collection, the Bible, 16 books of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament, a history of the apostles and other religious literature were translated into Uzbek for the first time. In late 2004 the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, in conjunction with the Uzbek Society for the Blind, published the Holy Koran in Braille. Uzbekistan became the third State in the world to carry out such a noble deed. There are some 24,000 blind persons currently living in Uzbekistan. Specialized boarding schools and public libraries and all persons so desiring will be provided with copies of the Koran in Braille.

A Council on Faith Matters has been established under the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Cabinet of Ministers to promote interaction among religious organizations, to assist them in carrying out their activities and to develop joint measures to strengthen interfaith and inter-ethnic peace and harmony. Its membership consists of the leaders of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, the Tashkent and Central Asian diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christian Churches, the Full Gospel Christian Church Centre, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Jewish religious community of Tashkent. The religious organizations of Uzbekistan freely celebrate all religious holidays. Thus, with every year, more and

more Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, Christians Easter and Christmas, and Jews Passover, **Purim and Hanukkah.**

By presidential decrees, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha have been declared holidays.

Every year, believers make pilgrimages to holy sites with the extensive support of the Government: Muslims go to Saudi Arabia, Christians to the Russian Federation, Greece and Israel, and Jews to Israel. During the past 15 years, more than 50,000 Uzbek citizens have completed the hajj to Saudi Arabia and pilgrimages to the holy sites of their religions in Israel and the Russian Federation.

*Official Document (A/61/762) of the 61st
session of the UN General Assembly
Issued on February 26, 2007*

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN UZBEKISTAN: HISTORY, MODERNITY, PERSPECTIVES

Republic of Uzbekistan is a country with multiethnic and multifaith population.

These values have been cultivated for millennia. From the ancient times the representatives of different ethnic groups, nationalities, religious beliefs and cultures inhabited the Uzbek soil. A number of historical and geographic factors have contributed to the diversity of religious palette of this land. Along with the victorious wars and attacks of powerful military and political forces in different epochs, one of the most attractive factors was its convenient regional geographic location, which served as the crossroads of trade routes.

Undoubtedly, the Great Silk Road linking such ancient big cities of Uzbekistan as Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Kokand and Khiva was the most famous. Most of those, who had come here to wage wars or to develop trade relations, settled here permanently. These and some other factors have contributed to the continuous expansion of religious diversity spectrum. On one hand, this provided an additional impulse to the common spiritual and cultural enrichment of the region. On the other hand - accord and peaceful coexistence of different religions turned into vital issues of overall progress of our country, and the region as a whole known as Central Asia in the world community. In the ancient times the mere fact of religious diversity impartially encouraged the best minds of this region to energetic search for the ways of establishing good relations with the representatives of different religions, enhancing mutual understanding among them for the sake of general prosperity of society. Yet in the Middle Ages such Central Asian thinkers as Iranshakhriy, Yakubi and Biruni, speaking in modern language, founded a completely new special science of various people's religious beliefs, by explicating them without polemics, by comparing one religion with the other just to envisage the essence of faiths and of those ideas on which they are based. Spiritual and philosophic legacy of such great Central Asian thinkers as mukhaddis Imam al-Bukhari (810-870, distinguished compiler of stories on deeds and demeanors of Prophet Muhammad), mutakallim Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (died in 333/ 944-945 the Muslim theologian, who founded one of two biggest Islamic theological schools - maturidiya), mufassir Makhmud az-Zamakhshari (1075-1144, famous interpreter of Qur'an and linguist), fakih Burkhanuddin al-Marginani (died in 1197, well-known Muslim lawyer, the author of "al-Hidaya" book), Sufi Bakhauddin Nakshband (one of the founders of Sufi nakshbandiya tarikat), Ahmad Yassavi (1105-66, the founder of Sufi yassaviya tarikat),

Najmuddin Kubro (1145-1221, the founder of kubraviyya tarikat), Khoja Ahror Vali (1404-90, one of the prominent leaders of nakshbandiya tarikat) and many others adequately reflect the overall spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of accord and compromise existing in relations among different nations and religious representatives of our region for centuries.

Hence, the religious and socio-philosophical thinking of Uzbek people has been refined over the centuries, and became a strong foundation for fostering and progressively developing the culture of tolerant interreligious relations. Therefore, in reviving those spiritual values much work has been accomplished in modern Uzbekistan, as it was highlighted by President Islam Karimov "if we want to build a just state, free society, we have to remember that the ways to accomplish these noble objectives go alongside with millennial religious beliefs". It is acknowledged that the wide majority of population of Uzbekistan practices Islam, which has been propagated strongly since the beginning of VIII century. Rich syncretic culture and very old multireligious traditions of people in Mavarannahr, Arabs' naming of present territory of Uzbekistan, presented various elements of local religious-ethic values, legal norms and customs to the Islamic practice. In effect, from the start of its expansion Islam has been accumulating specific features. Due to this, Hanafiy mazhab (denomination) of Islam could adjust to Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia. Almost half of the world Muslim population is recognized as the adherents of Hanafism.

However, Uzbekistan could preserve its multinational and multifaith status despite such difficulties. Uzbeks - the representatives of titular nation constitute about 78 percent of population of modern Uzbekistan (over 27 million people). Nevertheless, more than 130 nationalities of various beliefs live in here as well. Nowadays, officially over 16 religious associations operate in our country. It is essential to mention that the affiliations of various nontraditional faiths such as Krishna, Behais and others also operate here along with traditional Islam and historically rather extensively represented Judaism and Christianity. It would be interesting for our audience to know that the religious organizations of such confessions as Christian-Presbyterian, Evangelist, Protestant and Buddhist are widely represented in the religious life of modern Uzbekistan. In total there are about 60. From the first days of its independence (September 1, 1991) as the strategic goal of new Uzbekistan was announced the creation of democratic legal secular state and civil society based on pluralism. Such critical issue for the state did not endure a straightforward approach to religious questions. Establishing social relations and defining an actual place of religion as one of potential social levers controlling the actions of individual developed into the principal of state policy. It was clearly reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan

adopted on December 8, 1992. Article 31 of the Constitution wholly guarantees the freedom of conscience, prohibits propagation of religious ideas in forceful manner. Article 57 forbids the formation of associations and parties on the basis of national and religious differences. Finally, Article 61 of the Constitution declares the separation of religion from the state. In regard of this principal issue, all of the above-mentioned along with the firm personal stance of the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov addressed in his public speeches had a great effect over the general evolution of religious situation in the country, and especially over the state of interethnic and interreligious relations. Obviously, all of these were not reached at once. There were difficulties on the way of achieving present harmonic situation of interreligious accord, which turned into one of the main factors for intensifying democratic processes in Uzbekistan.

Occasionally they were tragic, in the form of bloody terror and destructive extremism covered up by the religious slogans.

The recent significant growth in the activity of nongovernmental noncommercial organizations (NGOs) shows the progress in this sphere. They have made a valuable and effective contribution to religious education, and to fostering significance of the idea of unity amid the multiplicity of the various parts of population. The Republican Center of al-Imam al-Bukhari is one of such organizations actively participating in various similar projects. **In 1999 international interreligious political forum on "Religion and Democracy" was held in Uzbekistan** under the initiative of our Center and the Fund of Conrad Adenauer in cooperation with some other Uzbek and foreign partners. As a result of this important international event the **"Tashkent Resolution against international terrorism and extremism"** was adopted, which called UN to declare the year 2001 "Year of enhancing interreligious accord in fight against international terrorism and extremism". Document received a proper international resonance but, unfortunately, its main idea was left without realization.

*by Professor, Dr. Zahidulla Munavvarov,
Chairman of the Republican Center of al-Imam al-Bukhari*

THE UZBEK LAND IS ONE OF THE WORLD CENTRES OF ISLAM

Allow me to welcome you on behalf of Muslims of the Republic of Uzbekistan and to regard you their kind wishes of success to our blessed meeting. Islamic religion by its most nature is directed to a peacemaking service to the mankind, it condemns bloodshed, especially shedding of innocent blood, war and aggression. Great Allah in the sacred Qur'an says: «And do not make mischief in the earth after its reformation, and call on Him fearing and hoping;» (7-56). Tendency of Islam to a peaceful life for people is reflected in its secret essence as this religion belongs to not one sort that tribe, the nation or people, but granted by the Creator to all people for their unification with each other in a brotherhood, mutual knowledge and love: «O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of *bis* duty); surely Allah is Knowing. Aware» (49-13).

In the comment of this ayah it is tqid that the principle of a brotherhood of people is understood here very widely. Words of this ayah are turned riot to only believers, but to people in general, in fact they are members of a family, and their division into the nations, tribes and families should conduct not to alienation, but to the best knowledge of each other. The superiority of ones above others in this extensive brotherhood does not depend on a nationality, richness or a social belonging - it depends only on diligent performance of a duty or moral greatness of a person.

We know that religious figures are directly connected with broad masses, clerics of all religions work among people and for people. Behind each of them hundreds, thousand, tens of thousand of believers, who listen to the words with trust. And if religious figures of the world will constantly explain to the brothers about belief, importance of the peace, harmony and the friendly attitude among the people, it is possible to reach a greater effect in solving many problems of a social, religious and national character.

Believers of different religions and their spiritual heads on own experience have understood that similar dialogue or seminar which we are holding, can play a significant role in achievement of mutual understanding between religions and all people of good will. The more the public opinion of different countries understands the necessity of preventing a disagreement by any cost, keeping calmness on our planet, the more it will be difficult for evil people lo settle a disagreement, enmity and discord. We, the followers of different religions, were enough convinced that, peacekeeping unites us. On this point there cannot be a

misunderstanding, in this occasion we can testify to the entire world a full unity of views. And in this unity of views, demonstrating this unity, we have merged in uniform through inter-religious meetings and relations. Therefore, the more widely we shall use these opportunities of such dialogues and meetings, the more strongly we shall participate in efforts of peacemaking, and our sights on the near and far world will be even more and more effective.

Within many centuries on the ancient land of Uzbekistan there lived representatives of various nationalities, professing different religions. Recently in the capital of our country the 15th anniversary of formation of the Republican international cultural centre was held. In his congratulatory message our President I. Karimov particularly told: «... It is difficult to estimate opportunities that, on one hand, preserves a diversity and identity, and on the other hand, interpenetrating and cross-fertilizing our historically generated ethno national cultures, art and national creativity, our traditions which have developed during centuries and the customs creating an atmosphere for mutual understanding and respect among various national diasporas, living in our country. This atmosphere of respect among people, whatever languages they speak, is the major basis and guarantee of the peace, stability and order in our big home which we name Uzbekistan».

The greatest wealth of people of Uzbekistan is the atmosphere of friendship, the peace and mutual understanding that is prevailed in our society. Interethnic and religious tolerance are the qualities from old days inherited by Uzbek people, brought up on humanistic traditions of great ancestors. Today having an equal rights and opportunities representatives of all nations and the nationalities of our country live in peace. Assured in their fixture, they work in the most different branches of economy, spheres of a science, religion and culture. All we know that by the decision of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) at OIC Tashkent was declared as one of four capitals of Islamic culture in 2007. It was a great historical and cultural-educational event as recognition of growing authority of our country in the Muslim world. Tashkent has received such a high rank owing to its huge contribution to the development of Islamic culture, philosophy, science, and presence of numerous monuments of history and the architecture, rich assembly of unique east manuscripts, and restoration among the efforts that has the great attention paid by our state. Undoubtedly, acceptance of such decision has rendered a big influence and spent by the policy of the government of Uzbekistan on maintenance of freedom of worship, revival and development of Islamic culture, studying and propagation rich scientific and cultural heritage of our ancestors, as well as. restoration and accomplishment of Islamic relics.

Obvious example to the foresaid is that the government of Uzbekistan has made a decision about revival of the most ancient Muslim relic that the architectural complex of Hazrati Imom located in an old part of Tashkent.

*by Azizjon MANSUROV, Vice Chairman of
Uzbekistan Board of Muslims
(London, May 31, 2007)*

**THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF GOOD-NEIGHBORHOOD COEXISTENCE OF
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND ISLAM IN THE TERRITORY OF CENTRAL ASIA
AN EXAMPLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION OF FAITHS**

The given report has not special survey character, but has also a scientific component that raises the level of the resulted argument.

Two world religious have century's old history: the Christianity totals already more than 2000 and Islam -more than 1400 years of existence. The first records of penetration of Christianity to Central Asian states are about the evangelical sermon of Apostle Thomas, who had a chance to go to India. During the travel and on his way Thomas preached Christ teachings to people and has put the first hierarchs of Church in Central Asia Later, in 16th century here there were already powerful dioceses and metropolis of Orthodox and others Christian directions. Historical chronicles tell us that after 5th century Central Asian Christians grasps Nestorian teachings convicted by 3rd Universal cathedral as heresy, but alongside with Nestorians did not stop its existence Orthodox Christianity which followers named Melchites. The rests of the Christian communities of Nestorian sense remained until Russian Orthodox Church came to Central Asia in 19th century. It is especially necessary to tell about one factor. At the beginning of its existence, Sunni Islam began to develop in the form of four basic legal directions - "madhabs" or schools that miscellaneously approached to formation of external and internal policy, and also household norms of a life of the followers. During polemic of Muslim scholars, each direction has been recognized equally authoritative, that allowed a devout Muslim make a choice between them. By divine providence, in Central Asia has got accustomed madhab of Abu Hanafi or Hanafi school of law, differing by its wide liberal views and tolerance in approaches to various vital aspects. Similarly the absence of radicalism has served one more component in the subsequent favorable succession of events.

The modern condition of mutual relations of Islam and Orthodoxy in territory of Central Asia is possible to be expressed, in a stage of high-rise and constructive interaction in solving various problems of the society. In a scale of given action it is not meaningful to result details illustrating the given statement.

Proceeding from resulted above the analysis of history and the present, it is possible to offer as a conclusion of several practical advice, adhering which as we were convinced, it is possible to reach really peace and friendly existence of different religious systems in one territory. As,

1. Each faith should adhere first of all to policy of non interference to internal affairs

people of different confession, living beside.

2. During development of mutual relations it is necessary to study fundamental bases of ideology of the neighbors, revealing thus most close to own moments - both in dogma, and in ceremonial and in a household practice. And then, in the contacts giving them the priority rate, necessarily emphasizing their mutual generality.

3. It is necessary to show limited respect for representatives of faiths without fail, regardless of their appearance, and exoticism or singularity of other external aspects of partners at individual relations.

4. The history shows, that for the help in case of various disasters and deprivations rendered even at a humanitarian level, people of any creed long and with gratitude remember the shown care and in appropriate way build the altitude.

5. Wishing rapprochement, the authority of faiths should take carrying out of regular meetings for a rule and not stop constant dialogue among them.

6. Joint display of an active civic standpoint consultations and statements on various problems of a society essentially raise a level of friendliness of mutual relations.

7. Not the secret, that a shortsighted method of inter-confessional rallying through search of external gentile enemies considerably aggravates inter-religious mutual relations. Ideological translation from external opposition on struggle against internal earthliness among relatives and themselves, in the shortest terms can normalize attitudes between adjoining religious communities.

8. At a political level the religion should not prove to be auxiliary institute of authority, but to be a social service which essential component of peace-making activity. Here it is necessary to make a principle inadmissibility of Introduction or influence on the government and this practice should be eradicated.

9. The hierarchical religious authority should inspire the flock from temple faculties about necessity of mutual respect and respect of religious feelings of believers from other faiths and also to conduct the sermon of reverence of a duty to relatives, and as duty to the God.

10. The disaster for whole world is spiritual illiteracy of people that is one of the consequences of secularization. The educational activity including the historical and cultural review of other beliefs which should be spent by each faith without fail, should show the present situation of the religion and religion of neighbors, that certainly helps to cope with this problem and a problem of mad fanaticism.

11. Radicalism in discussions begins to show at an insufficient educational level and narrowness of an outlook. Each faith with a view of stability of existence and stability of mutual relation with gentile surrounding should conduct a corresponding professional training of clergy, authorities of spiritual institutes, seminary students and the religious teachers, called to train in bases of dogma of «ordinary» believers.

12. In realization of stated above principles, it is important to find opportunities attracting participation of the state dial is interested in the stability and peace

*by Father Sergey Stasenko,
Vice-Chancellor of Tashkent Orthodox Christian Seminary
(London, May 31, 2007)*

THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD-NEIGHBOURHOOD COEXISTENCE OF JEWISH AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA

In one of his speech the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov has emphasized that representatives of more than hundred nationalities and nations live in Uzbekistan and development of national culture of each of them is very important. Especially would like to note words of Mr. I. Karimov that the voice of spiritual leaders is audible to millions of people.

In Uzbekistan, with its many centuries old history, the interethnic consent, respect for religion always was held in high esteem. Uzbek people always differed in hospitality. The history of the Jewish Diaspora in Uzbekistan counts more than two thousand-year history and that fact, that Jews, living here, could keep the national culture, traditions and religious beliefs eloquently speaks for itself.

I was born in Uzbekistan, grow up here, have received my education, some years studied in Moscow in postgraduate study, then have returned to Tashkent and worked on one of the enterprises of the city. In the middle of 80-ies I often could visit central cities of other republics of the former Union as Leningrad, Moscow, Smolensk, Minsk, Brest and I had an opportunity to compare the attitude to radical nationalities in these republics and in Uzbekistan. And I should tell that this comparison always was in favor of Uzbekistan.

During the study at school and in the institute, work at the enterprise in Tashkent, I never felt on myself, any attributes of household anti-Semitism or national aggression.

In Uzbekistan there was always a special attitude to the religion. Even during Soviet time when a religious person or simply person occasionally visiting a synagogue, a mosque or a church was considered almost as an enemy of the people, in Uzbekistan such people even were held in respect. My parents told me that in the beginning of 70-ies we in one of apartments had small improvised, actually underground synagogue, and local policeman Rustam-aka himself watched that while praying there were no troubles.

Finding its independence Uzbekistan in the beginning of 90-ies became a new mark in the development of interethnic attitudes and blossoming of national tradition and culture of all nationalities living here. There were huge opportunities on development of a national, cultural and religious life of all representatives of the nationalities living in Uzbekistan. 16th anniversary of the independence of multinational people of Uzbekistan meets in conditions of stability and tolerance of inter-confessional and interethnic consent. Representatives live in

the republic are more than hundred nations and nationalities. All of them give an opportunity in the development of national cultures, traditions and languages.

On the example of Jewish Diaspora I can tell that we publicly and massively spend the Jewish holidays. Each-year at the central theatres and concert halls of Tashkent and other cities the dramatized representations devoted to the Jewish calendar holidays are held. Since 1996 in Tashkent a grammar school with the profound studying of Hebrew and die Jewish traditions works began its work. In park «Boghi Eram» was held a grandiose show with participation of several thousand people devoted to the Jewish New Year. Leading celebrities of Uzbek Estrada have taken part in the concert program. Reconstruction of two synagogues in Tashkent is over; the reconstruction of Central synagogue of Tashkent is at the stage of its end. Old synagogues in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara are restored.

Now under the initiative of the Main Rabbi of Central Asia Abe David Gurevich work on creation of the Rabbinate -the maximum spiritual management of religious Jews is carried out. Under control of the Rabbinate it is planned to open yeshiva - the maximum religious educational establishment. In it yearly edition of a regular newspaper of the Jewish community of Uzbekistan is also planned. In Uzbekistan, thanks God; there is such understanding. The state helps all religious communities to revive and adjust to the work. As the representative of the Rabbinate of the Republic of Uzbekistan and on behalf of the Jewish community I consider as my duty to emphasize that never before for all history our community we did not see such support and understanding from the state. «Our regular communications with the members of our community living in Uzbekistan, testifies absence of any cases of an encroachment on the rights or restriction of activity of the religious organizations, including Jewish, -is written in the letter. - We with a full responsibility can declare that inter-religious and intercultural tolerance always were distinctive feature of the Uzbek society. I will not exaggerate if tell that Uzbekistan by maintaining inter-religious and intercultural dialogue can be ranked as a tolerant societies of the world. We consider that behind the charges of infringement of the religious rights in Uzbekistan obviously lays the interest of the certain circles, trying to lead into error the international community by imposing erroneous conclusions».

In the 20th century during decades in the former Soviet Union militant antireligious propagation was held. Now the government has begun to cooperate with communities of believers on the first places. And it gives its results. Uzbekistan today is the country that can be set as an example in the world of reasonable interaction of the stale and religion, and religious communities among themselves.

Spiritual leaders of different faiths often help each other cooperate in the decision of important state problems, such as struggling against, xenophobia and extremism. The state that builds its policy on the interethnic consent, preservation and development of national and a cultural heritage has a great future.

*by Dr. Roman Bensman,
Vice-Chairman of Tashkent Jewish Religious Community
(London, May 31,2007)*

**COUNCIL ON CONFESSION AFFAIRS AT THE COMMITTEE ON RELIGIONS
OF THE CABINET OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

Council on confession affairs is established within the Committee on religions according to the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 23, 2004. Main objective of this Council is the close interaction with the religious organizations which located in the republic, rendering assistance to various religious faiths in realization of activity, making joint proposals and measures on maintenance of the interreligious and interethnic world and the consent in a society, development of culture of inter-confessional dialogue. Council on confession affairs assists the state bodies and public organizations in realization of policy in the field of interreligious relations, maintenance of the consent and cooperation of representatives of the various religious confession which operating in Uzbekistan. Council on confession affairs consists of leaders of the most representative religious confession in the republic, including:

- Chairman of Management of Uzbekistan Muslim, mufti Usmankhan Alemov;
- Archbishop of Tashkent and Central Asian Vladimir of Russian Orthodox Church;
- Ordinary of Catholic church in the Republic of Uzbekistan, bishop Yeje Matsulevich and heads of other religious confessions.

The primary goals of Council on confession affairs are: Development and realizations of the joint efforts on the prevention of penetration of ideas of religious extremism and fanaticism on the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

- Coordination of joint activity of the traditional religious organizations in the issues of strengthening and development of their dialogue, support and maintenance of the interreligious and interethnic world, achievement of the consent and stability in a society, prevention of possible conflicts on ethno-confessional ground, statements in a society of traditional cultural wealth, dialogue with the government of Uzbekistan;

- Stimulation, coordination and encouragement of initiatives of the religious organizations directed on the statement of principles of the interreligious and interethnic consent, development of culture inter-confessional dialogue;

- Studying is religious-spiritual needs of representatives of the various religious confessions which living on the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan with a view of their fullest satisfaction according to the Law «On a freedom of worship and the religious organizations»;

Development of the recommendations directed on maintenance of a continuous communication of Council on confessions affairs with bodies of the government on the places;

- Holding general press conferences to inform public with objective information on the religious life in the republic;
- Council on confession affairs is competent to accept consideration and other questions entering into its competence.

The state adviser of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the issues of interethnic relations and affairs of religions also is chairman of Council on the affairs of confessions.

Constantly operating agency of Council on confessions affairs is the Secretary which is headed by the head of secretary. Duties of the Secretary include realization of the basic directions of the activity.

*by Dr. Roman Bensman,
Vice-Chairman of Tashkent Jewish Religious Community
(London, May 31,2007)*

LIST OF CONFESSIONS IN UZBEKISTAN

- Islam
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Roman Catholic Church
- Evangelical Christian Baptists Church
- Full Gospel Christian Church
- Seventh day Christian-Adventists Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church
- New Apostolic Church
- Jehovah's Witnesses Church
- Armenian Apostolic Church
- God's voice Christian Church
- Korean Protestant Church
- Jewish Religious Communities
- Baha'i Faith
- Hare Crishna Society
- Buddha Temple