

PC.DEL/227/13

12 April 2013

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 947th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 April 2013

**In response to the address by Ambassador Patricia Flor, European Union
Special Representative for Central Asia**

Mr. Chairperson,

Our delegation is pleased to welcome Ambassador Patricia Flor, European Union Special Representative for Central Asia, to today's meeting of the Permanent Council. We are grateful for her detailed assessment of the situation in Central Asia and the EU's plans to develop co-operation with that region.

For Russia, Central Asia represents an area of special, historically traditional interests and an important part of our shared cultural and humanitarian space. The objectives of our policy in the region are clear and simple – security, economic integration, development and the prosperity of our more than 5 million compatriots who live there. We are interested in the stable development of the Central Asian States and of the surrounding countries. Russia is prepared to contribute significant resources through bilateral channels and within multilateral institutions to the development of the region, to the strengthening of its security and, no less important, to the preservation of the unique identity of Central Asian societies with their many different ethnic groups and religions. The recent visits to the region by the Russian President Vladimir Putin made it graphically clear that our country is prepared – not in words but in deeds – to stimulate economic growth in the Central Asian countries. We are talking now by no means simply of trade in raw materials but of the structural strengthening of our partners' economies, especially in sectors that are critical for their economic growth.

Russia has established strategic partnerships with most of the Central Asian countries. A significant part of the region falls within the area of responsibility of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Measures are being taken within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and on a bilateral basis to ensure common defence, to strengthen our borders and to combat drug trafficking. These measures are also in the interests of the security of other countries far away from the region, including European countries.

The Customs Union and Common Economic Space are being extended to Central Asia as the most advanced form of integration. As part of this integration process, trade barriers have been removed and trade has already increased by more than 30 per cent. There

is guaranteed freedom of movement for capital, labour and services. A single market has been established, which is strengthening the competitiveness among those participating in it and is making the area attractive to investors at a time of global economic risk.

Mr. Chairperson,

We share the view that 2013 and 2014 will be a period of testing for Central Asia, among other things because of the challenges posed by the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan.

Given that fact, more effective use should be made of the potential for co-operation with regional organizations such as the CIS, the CSTO, the Eurasian Economic Community and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which together with the United Nations should continue to “play first fiddle” in responding to threats to the region. The last CSTO summit meeting saw the adoption of decisions calling for specific steps to counter threats emanating from the territory of Afghanistan, including measures to strengthen the southern borders with that country. Security issues will be at the focus of discussions at the forthcoming CSTO summit meeting to be held in Bishkek in May.

Russia is prepared to strengthen practical co-operation in Central Asia with the OSCE, the European Union and other players from outside the region so as to confront the common threats of terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking, illegal migration and transborder crime. We are in favour of combining in a reasonable manner the complementary efforts of these organizations in the interests of the sustainable and conflict-free development of the Central Asian countries. Co-operation of this kind must be based on transparency, consideration of the interests of the different parties and respect for the work of the structures already established in the region. It is important to avoid a duplication of the extensive efforts of these structures in different areas, aimed as they are at enhancing the ability of the Central Asian countries to withstand economic and politico-military “shocks”, *inter alia* in the light of the “2014 factor”.

In conclusion, I should like to wish Ambassador Flor every success in her work.

Thank you for your attention.