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SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN, AT THE
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**Working Session IV: Threats and challenges stemming from the territory
of Afghanistan and the OSCE's contribution to stability in the region**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Conference participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The difficult situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is forcing us to examine the question of an alternative policy in ensuring security not only in that country but also in the region as a whole. Recent experience in combating terrorism in Afghanistan and on the territory of adjacent countries has shown that even the most intensive operations by intelligence services and security bodies have been unable to replace effective political solutions.

For Tajikistan this is of great significance. Tajikistan and the countries of Central Asia are experiencing unprecedented pressure on their security situation. Threats stem from terrorists who have become more active in the region, an increased likelihood of consolidation of the activities of terrorist groups and their use of modern warfare technologies, as well as the problem posed by Afghan drug trafficking.

Another threat is connected with the clear attempts by terrorist formations not simply to influence the State authorities but also to occupy positions of power. The main factors involved in threats to security are non-State organizations, terrorist networks and transnational criminal associations.

In addition to the political, military and ethnic problems, the situation in Afghanistan is complicated considerably by the status of and prospects for military logistics. Thanks to the Taliban, the Khyber Pass, which is regarded as the main corridor for supplying NATO forces in Afghanistan, has in fact proven to be unsafe.

Strategically, the Taliban and their allies are aiming to destabilize the situation throughout Afghanistan. The shift of instability to northern Afghanistan and the "buffer zone" along the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will inevitably have an effect on the nature of the threats and challenges to the security of

Tajikistan, all the Central Asian countries and some States outside the region. The danger comes primarily from bands of international terrorists who treat the Afghan north as a springboard for their incursions into the countries of the region.

Significant terrorist and extremist forces, notably foreign mercenaries from Pakistan, various Arab countries, Central Asia and the North Caucasus, are concentrated in the northern regions of Afghanistan bordering on CIS countries, in particular in the provinces of Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan. As a result, diversionary terrorist attacks in these regions of Afghanistan have increased several times over compared with last year.

In the interests of the security of the countries of the Central Asian region, we cannot ignore the general lowering of the threat threshold as a result of destabilization in Pakistan itself. In view of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, ensuring the security of the Central Asian States involves the solution of specific problems. These include, first and foremost, reducing the risks of terrorist groups acquiring weapons of mass destruction and radioactive materials.

We are pleased that the NATO leadership has reached an understanding on this most important question – the war against an irregular opponent can ultimately be won only with the aid of local law enforcement forces.

In addition to terrorist activity, the cultivation of narcotic drug crops and the production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan pose a serious threat to the countries of the region. In view of the consistently high production volumes, the high level of demand, the enormous financial profits and the ineffectiveness of the efforts to combat this phenomenon in Afghanistan, it is expected that the Afghan drug trade will continue to spread to the countries of the region.

All in all, the aforementioned factors remain some of the main threats and challenges to the national security of Tajikistan and stability in Central Asia. The severity of these problems calls for the elaboration and adoption of effective measures to counter them.

Our experts, together with specialists from partner countries, have drawn up a number of conclusions and assessments as well as proposals and recommendations providing a model for the active participation of interested countries in an Afghan settlement and the subsequent positive development of Afghanistan, and I should like to discuss this in more detail.

1. Resolving economic issues in the context of Afghanistan's needs

The absence of clear goals and plans and even of any real concepts for the country's development are an obvious problem in terms of the effectiveness of investment activities in Afghanistan. The specific political interests of some donor countries may also be the reason for the less than effective donor investment.

We need to identify and agree on common priorities as regards Afghanistan, giving priority to assistance in resurrecting the Afghan economy and not to the donor countries' own commercial and political interests. Only a health economy will be able to effectively eliminate the reasons behind the problems of terrorism and drug trafficking. The benefits to be gained from solving these problems and stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan will exceed any commercial dividends many times over.

Agreement should be reached on the co-ordination of economic operations in Afghanistan in the interests of restoring and developing the country's economic potential, setting aside the interests of individual countries.

To do this, we need to:

- Devise and approve conceptual approaches to joint participation of countries in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan;
- Agree on common principles and draw up projects of interest to all participating States;
- Agree with the main donor countries on specific joint activities in the interests of rehabilitating Afghanistan more quickly.

A healthy economic situation offers the only real chance of overcoming the crisis in Afghanistan. To bring this about, interested countries should, at the same time as solving long-term problems, also begin to implement smaller short-term projects based on co-operation, shared resources and the involvement of donor funds, and aimed at the creation of new jobs for the local population. They should also step up work to restore facilities built during the Soviet period, which are in need of modernization and renovation, and develop economic and commercial relations allowing the supply of vital goods and of equipment and tools that do not require intensive training and are not difficult to use.

In addition, there is a need to:

- Ensure more profitable conditions in the form of tariff preferences for the transit of Afghan exports;
- Make maximum use of the advantages of border trade and establish economic co-operation zones to strengthen the buffer zone (northern Afghanistan) for adjacent countries.

2. Transformation of the threats and challenges to security from Afghanistan for the countries of the Central Asian region

The continuation of the conflict means continued threats to the region, but these threats are undergoing a transformation. The continuing illegal production of narcotic substances in Afghanistan and their proliferation is undermining the national security of Afghanistan's neighbours and other countries on the Eurasian continent. Against this background, extremist and terrorist organizations are stepping up their activities. The real threat of extremism and the drug trade combining into a single system is resulting in a major problem: ideologically based drug trafficking as an effective tool for political struggle and the criminalization of politics. For the countries of Central Asia, the destabilization of Afghanistan is resulting in a deterioration in their internal security. A strengthening of criminal and extremist structures is creating a threat of their influence on the legal institutions of power and the formation of an unstable and depressed area within the region. Another particular danger is the trend towards Central Asian economies being taken over by drugs.

Most of the threats and challenges facing the countries of the region are of a transborder nature. Religious extremism, separatist movements and international terrorism penetrate the borders of young States and create a whole range of regional social problems. The complex multifaceted nature of this phenomenon makes it impossible for a single State to eradicate it once and for all on its own. In this connection, with a view to implementing effective measures to counter threats and challenges in adjacent countries, the Tajik leadership is proposing the formation of an effective internal security system to create an anti-terrorist security belt. This would be in keeping with the decisions adopted at the London Conference on Afghanistan and should become a priority for the OSCE's work in the near future. Tajikistan is ready to ensure that it plays an active part in the implementation of this proposal.

3. Possible co-operation between Central Asian countries and other external participants interested in an Afghan settlement

It is in the interests of both the Central Asian region and the world community as a whole to help strengthen Afghanistan's statehood on the basis of a Central Asian regional security system in co-operation with neighbouring countries and other interested parties. Multilateral co-operation has always resulted in more tangible benefit than the efforts of a single country or just two parties. There is now a real opportunity to use the potential of the OSCE, the European Union, the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other influential international bodies ready to engage in constructive dialogue and mediation to establish close co-operation.

We need to encourage efforts by the Afghan Government to regularize relations both within the country (notably with Taliban fighters) and with regional neighbours, including Iran, Pakistan and the countries of Central Asia. This should take place both at a bilateral level and within the framework of inter-State organizations and coalitions.

4. Organization of an inter-Afghan negotiation process under the auspices of international organizations and its possible impact

The practice of holding negotiations among the various ethno-political forces has a long tradition in Afghan society. However, the confrontation, which at times takes on the characteristics of a civil war, places the participation of outside forces in the negotiation process firmly on the agenda. The procedure could be based on precedents set both within Afghanistan (the policy of national reconciliation in the second half of the 1980s) and outside it (for example, the experience of the inter-Tajik settlement of the 1990s, in which Russia and Iran participated).

There can be no military solution to the Afghan problem. We need to create a permanent negotiating process, in which all the subjects involved in the current Afghan political process should be involved – State structures, political parties, ethnic communities, regional representatives and religious figures. The formation of new political forces (for example, the National Front of Afghanistan) operating within the framework of the constitution show that there is good potential in the country for a peaceful search for settlement formulas. The groups waging war against the Government and foreign forces are to a large degree heterogeneous and a significant number of them are from Afghanistan and enjoy a certain amount of support among the Afghan population. They must become full participants in the negotiation process. The only reason for excluding particular groups or

movements from the negotiation process would be their links with international terrorist and extremist forces.

One of the most important ways of ensuring long-term stability in Afghanistan is its social and economic integration into the Central Asian region.

To achieve this, it is necessary to:

- Develop more extensive and deeper political, economic and human ties between Afghanistan and its neighbours;
- Improve transport links, provide greater commercial and technical assistance and ensure that Afghan officials have an opportunity to conclude economic and environmental agreements with their neighbours on equal terms;
- Create a single water supply infrastructure for the southern regions of the country with a view to resolving the critical water problem there.

In order to strengthen co-operation with Afghanistan, the following areas must be seen as priorities:

- Politico-military dimension: border security and customs training, combating narcotic drugs and transnational threats;
- Economic and environmental dimension: transport security, integrated border management, combating corruption and promoting legal trade, energy security and water resource management;
- Human dimension: support for electoral reforms, review of legislation, promotion of fundamental freedoms, training of specialists in the justice sector, seminars for journalists, programmes on women's rights, development of civil society, promotion of tolerance and eradication of discrimination.

In conclusion, I should like to mention that the leadership of the Republic of Tajikistan in the person of its President, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, supports the decisions of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid and the London Conference on Afghanistan and is ready to do all it can to help stabilize the situation in Afghanistan, which will make it possible to ensure the countering of existing challenges to security, primarily for the Central Asian region.

With the active assistance of the OSCE and other international organizations, we are carrying out the necessary work to strengthen border management and train the relevant staff, including Afghan border guards, at the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan.

The national border management strategy approved by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and drafted with the help of the OSCE and the Government of Finland is aimed not only at analysing existing threats and challenges to security but also at devising an effective mechanism for countering them.

In this context, we are proposing that consideration be given to the question of establishing an analytical anti-terrorism centre at the OSCE Border Management Staff College to draft proposals on a possible mechanism for resolving the Afghan problem.

The Republic of Tajikistan regards the OSCE body as the most effective instrument for establishing mutually advantageous dialogue and co-operation among the parties to the Afghan conflict in efforts to resolve the problems of international terrorism and religious extremism and to draft effective measures for countering these threats to security. In this connection, Tajikistan may be an effective platform for the implementation of our proposals.

Thank you for your attention.