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

26 May 2011

Regarding the verdict against Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev

Mr. Chairperson,

We are obliged to invoke our right of reply to the statements we have heard from the distinguished representatives of the United States of America and the European Union regarding the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev.

We are surprised by the calls by our colleagues to “demonstrate determination to establish a society based on respect for the rule of law”, and by the accusations of insufficient transparency and independence on the part of Russian courts.

The review by the Moscow City Court of appeals regarding the guilty verdict handed down by the Khamovnichesky court in the criminal case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev was in fact as open as could be. The court sessions were broadcast live on the website of the Russian Legal and Judicial Information Agency, and journalists from various countries also had an opportunity to observe the proceedings. The judges reviewing the case were governed by the provisions of the Russian legislation in force. Disregarding the rules of law that establish responsibility for the commission of economic crimes would have led precisely to the violation of the principle of the rule of law.

Also unclear is what “political interference” is being referred to. In response to a question from journalists during a recent press conference, Mr. Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, noted that “Mikhail Khodorkovsky’s release poses no danger to society”.

As regards the concern raised by the verdict itself, we should like to recall once again that the determination of the punishment to be imposed is the prerogative of the Russian judicial authorities, and not of certain representatives of civil society or the international community. To the best of our knowledge, in the United States and the countries of the European Union, the laundering of illicitly obtained proceeds is one of a number of criminal offences whose commission is punishable by imprisonment. The case of the American financier Bernard Madoff provides a telling example of this.

Thank you for your attention.