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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the OSCE

**STATEMENT BY THE
DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 October 2005

Mr. Chairman,

In reply to the statement by the delegation of the United States of America at the Permanent Council meeting on 20 October this year regarding alleged persecution of human rights activists and journalists in Uzbekistan following the events in the city of Andijan last May, we should like to make the following statement.

In Uzbekistan the activities of journalists and human rights activists are respected and enjoy support. The country has put into place a solid legal basis to ensure the free activities of the media and of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in the protection of human rights. More than ten legislative instruments have been adopted regulating the activities of the media, including among them the following laws: "On the media", "On the protection of the professional activities of journalists", "On guarantees and freedom of access to information", "On publishing", and others. Additionally, a number of laws have been enacted that ensure the activities of public associations, including those engaged in work having to do with the protection of human rights. These laws include the following: "On public associations", "On non-governmental, non-profit organizations" and "On public funds". A law "On guarantees for the activities of non-governmental, non-profit organizations" and a new law "On public associations" are in the drafting stage.

As of today, more than 5,000 NGOs are operating in Uzbekistan, including some 500 offices of international and foreign NGOs.

In this way, the government is ensuring respect for the rights and legitimate interests of public associations by creating for them equal legal opportunities for participation in public life, free of interference in their affairs.

Against the background of these efforts that are being made by the Government of Uzbekistan, assertions as to an alleged "growing practice of a cruel persecution of human rights activists and journalists in Uzbekistan following the May events in Andijan" would appear at the very least to be incorrect.

Unfortunately, religious extremist movements and currents within Uzbekistan and beyond its borders are fairly skilful in using the opportunities provided by modern information technology for spreading disinformation and for misleading journalists and

international agencies for the purpose of discrediting the Uzbek Government's policies for the promotion of human rights and freedom of speech.

We should like to emphasize that all the cases that have been heard in the courts prior to and following the events in Andijan involving local journalists or so-called civil rights advocates are based on real cases in which national laws have been violated. According to generally recognized norms, no one in cases of this kind enjoys immunity from judicial prosecution.

In conclusion, we should like to draw attention again to the fact that Uzbekistan, having at its disposal sufficient means of its own and in full conformity with national legislation and the norms of international law, is taking every measure to identify and bring to justice those persons guilty of having committed crimes during the tragic events in the city of Andijan.

Thank you for your attention.