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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER FEDULOV,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT PART I OF
THE 18th MEETING OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Vienna, 2 February 2010

**Session V: Improving security and efficiency of transport connections in
Central Asia and with Afghanistan**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished colleagues,

The Russian delegation would like to take the opportunity once again of expressing its thanks to the Kazakh Chairmanship, the office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE Secretariat for the excellent organization and successful holding of this Forum.

We wholeheartedly agree with the idea of developing co-operation in the area of transportation as an important component of the collaboration between participating States within the OSCE economic and environmental dimension.

The Forum agenda is multifaceted. We have already considered the approaches and best practices with regard to good governance at border crossings and facilitating international transport in the OSCE region. The opinions that have been expressed are without doubt worthy of attention and consideration with a view to putting innovative methods and approaches into practice. We believe that improving the road transport network could facilitate business development and, ultimately, lead to greater prosperity on the part of all the countries in the region. This is an important and noble aim.

In this context, other colleagues in their presentations have touched on the problem of the security of transport connections in the countries of Central Asia and with Afghanistan.

This problem is largely a result of the unstable situation in Afghanistan and the trafficking of heroin out of the country and illegal precursors into it. The illegal cultivation of opium poppies and their processing into heroin is a global problem. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) this drug problem is becoming worse every year. In 2009, 95 per cent of the opium in the world, almost 7,000 tons, came from Afghanistan. This huge amount of opium will be used together with tens of tons of acetic anhydride and other precursors to make almost 700 tons of pure heroin.

Nor should it be forgotten that hemp is cultivated illegally in Afghanistan on an ever increasing scale, resulting in the massive export of marijuana and hashish to neighbouring countries, as also demonstrated by UNODC data.

Why am I mentioning these statistics here? Because every year Afghan heroin and hashish are transported for storage and sale on the black markets of Europe and transit countries primarily by automobile. It is well known that experts and politicians make a distinction between the Balkan route for the smuggling of Afghan opiates into Europe, the northern route, which is unofficially and undeservedly known as the “Silk Road”, and the southern route. And on all of these routes automobiles are the main form of transport, crossing the borders of neighbouring countries. Illegal narcotics and the threat they pose to our societies are transported many thousands of kilometres – in automobiles, containers and railway wagons.

We do not think that it is necessary to speak at today’s meeting about the consequences of the illegal use of narcotics in our countries and the threat to the well-being and safety of our peoples. In this situation, our countries’ border, customs and law enforcement authorities are compelled to make the greatest efforts to stop the smuggling of Afghan opiates, including attempts to transport them illicitly by road or rail.

We are also called upon to do this by the provisions of three international conventions on drug control, which are the principal legal basis for solving the global problem of narcotics, not to mention the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols and the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

At its high-level segment last year, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna adopted a Political Declaration and Action Plan on international co-operation towards an integrated and balanced strategy to counter the world drug problem. In these documents the Member States noted in particular that transit States are faced with multifaceted challenges resulting from illicit drugs being trafficked through their territory and reaffirmed their willingness to co-operate with those States and to assist them in enhancing their capacity to counter the world drug problem. They also resolved to take additional steps to present a co-ordinated and coherent response to trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by land, air and sea, in partnership with United Nations entities and international partners, so as to close jurisdictional gaps in the investigation, interdiction and prosecution of traffickers.

In this regard it is important to ensure that further encouragement and assistance are provided for the sharing of information through official channels in a timely manner, the implementation of border control measures, the provision of equipment, the exchange of law enforcement officers, collaboration between the private and public sectors and the development of practical new methods for effectively monitoring drug trafficking activities.

In the light of these comments, esteemed colleagues, the Russian delegation is especially concerned about the problem of drug smuggling through Central Asia. This represents a threat for all of us. We have already taken practical steps together, such as the international anti-drug operation “Canal” in co-operation with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). We are also taking measures to step up inspections of all means of transport and we are blocking drug transshipment locations and clandestine routes for

transporting narcotics out of Afghanistan. These are just some of the activities we are carrying out together. Much more still has to be done.

Turning to the subject of our Forum, the Russian delegation feels it necessary to point out that facilitating forms of legal transportation, rapid crossing of border points and uninterrupted freight movement are important means of fostering economic development in the Central Asian region as a whole. At the same time, the true state of affairs in the region as it is should not be forgotten. The proximity of the world's largest producer of narcotics places an additional burden on Russia and the countries of Central Asia. In our efforts we must combine measures to improve and simplify transit procedures with activities aimed at increasing security in our countries. This is a very complex but crucial task.

Mr. Chairman,

We should like to request that the consolidated summary of the Vienna segment of the 18th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum reflects the particular concern felt in connection with the threat posed by the smuggling of Afghan narcotics and their precursors and that it includes a recommendation to all interested OSCE countries to take the necessary security measures with a view to fulfilling international agreements and developing international co-operation in full compliance with the objectives and principles of international law and the OSCE documents agreed by consensus, including the 2003 Maastricht Strategy Document for the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension and the 2005 Border Security and Management Concept.

We are looking forward to an objective exchange of views on ways of improving the effectiveness of our collective efforts to combat the threat of narcotics at the next OSCE conference on drugs planned for July this year in Vienna, this time, as we understand it, under the aegis of the Kazakh Chairmanship.