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Delegation of the Russian Federation

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

2 September 2010

**Regarding foreign assistance in extinguishing the forest fires on the
territory of the Russian Federation**

Mr. Chairperson,

In July and August of this year Russia was subjected to a serious test – as a result of freakishly high temperatures extensive forest and peat land fires broke out in the central part of the country. It was the first time that we faced a natural anomaly of this magnitude. An area of 800,000 hectares in 22 republics and territories of the Russian Federation caught fire. There were more than 500 major seats of fire alone. The situation proved so difficult that President Medvedev introduced a state of emergency in seven regions of the country – the Republic of Mari El, the Republic of Mordovia and the Vladimir, Voronezh, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod and Ryazan oblasts.

Despite the measures taken, 50 persons died as a result of this raging of the elements, at least 3,500 citizens were left homeless and some 2,000 houses went up in flames.

The authorities employed 166,000 persons in the efforts to put out the fires – staff from the Ministry for Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior as well as volunteers. Some 26,500 pieces of specialized equipment were involved, including 44 aircraft.

Various countries held out a helping hand to us. In the difficult battle against the wildfires, Russian firefighters were supported by 551 persons with 100 pieces of technical equipment, including 13 aircraft – six airplanes and seven helicopters.

I am citing just a few statistics to highlight the scale and importance of the assistance offered to us. Fires were extinguished with the aid of helicopters kindly provided by Azerbaijan, Belarus, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Turkey. In view of the scale of the fires, special aircraft sent by France, Italy, Ukraine and Armenia were needed to help put them out. In the Ryazan oblast detachments from Poland, Belarus, Armenia, Ukraine and France selflessly worked side by side with the Russian firefighters. A total of 107 rescue workers from Bulgaria and Latvia offered important assistance in extinguishing peat land fires in the Moscow region. As you will know from the news, these fires resulted in an

extremely unpleasant environmental situation in the capital. Firefighters from Armenia provided much needed help in the Volga region and Nizhny Novgorod oblast. Airborne firefighters from Italy provided invaluable assistance in fighting the flames in the Samara oblast.

We are also grateful to Lithuania and the United States of America for providing equipment – firefighting pumps, hoses, respirators, breathing apparatus and special fireproof suits, as well as financial assistance to those who had suffered in the fires.

We should like to say thank you to Germany and Montenegro for their offer to provide assistance in the rehabilitation of those involved in battling the elements.

We perceived the extension by a number of countries of visas for Russian tourists as a gesture of goodwill.

Mr. Chairperson,

We did not ask for help and that is why it was of particular value to us for it was provided from the heart, with compassion for the people in need and with a sincere desire to lend a shoulder at this difficult time. We are grateful to the governments and rescue workers who helped us battle the elements. Something like this is not forgotten. It is true, as the saying goes, that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Thank you for your attention.