



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC
OF UZBEKISTAN TO THE OSCE

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**Statement of the Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan delivered
to the 852nd Meeting of the Permanent Council**

*In response to the Statement of US Mission
to the OSCE on the Freedom of
Religion in the OSCE*

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened with a great attention the statement of US Delegation on the “Freedom of religion in the OSCE area”, and shall inform our Capital on particular matter.

In regard to the situation in our country, let us inform you that Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic state of secular nature. This proposition is enshrined in the main law of the state – the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which states: “Religious organizations and associations shall be separated from the state and equal before law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations” (Article 61).

The country has adopted a Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”, which provides equal legal conditions for coexistence of various religious confessions.

Proceeding from requirements of the Vienna Declaration, guarantees of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and with an aim of ensuring interethnic accord and inter-confessional solidarity, one of the main priorities in reforming our society became ensuring and protecting rights and freedoms of citizens, enshrined in our Constitution, and their equality before law irrespective of race, sex, nationality, language, social origin, creed, religion, personal and social status.

At the moment, there are more than 2000 religious organization of 16 various confessions in Uzbekistan. Of them Muslim organizations comprise 2051, Christian organizations –159, Jewish communes – 8, Baha’i communes – 6, society of Krishna –1 and Buddhist temple – 1.

The state registration of religious organizations is carried out in accordance with a Resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan “On the Procedure of State Registration of Religious Organizations in the Republic of Uzbekistan” dated June 20, 1998. According to provisions of registration of religious organizations envisaged in this Resolution, there are no limitations in the number of religious organizations or terms of their activities.

It is also necessary to note that Part 3 of Article 5 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” bans actions directed to converting believers of any confession into another confession (proselytism), and any other missionary activity.

Despite dominance of Muslim organizations, other confessions, including Christian ones, do not have any restrictions on their activity in the country.

Along with religious holidays of other confessions, Christian Easter and Christmas are ever-widely celebrated from year to year in the country. Christians of Uzbekistan are provided with the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the holy places in Russia, Greece and Israel. During the years of Independence the Bible Society of Uzbekistan translated and published in the Uzbek language 16 books of the Old and the whole New Covenants.

Many activities are carried out in Uzbekistan according to which we can verify that the country not only in words but in action is complying with its international obligations in the sphere of religious freedom.

For the complete coverage of the Republic's religious life a number of newspapers and magazines are being issued, including such Christian publications as the "The Word of Life" newspaper, "East from Above" Journal, etc.

For the close cooperation with religious organizations, assisting in the activity of various confessions, joint development of proposals and measures for interreligious and interethnic peace and accord in society, development of interfaith dialogue culture there has been created a Council for confessions under the Committee on Religious Affairs. It consists of the heads of Board of Muslims of Uzbekistan, Tashkent and Central Asian Diocese of the ROC, the Roman Catholic Church, the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Center of Full Gospel Churches, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Jewish community of Tashkent.

The issues of ensuring the compliance with the Law of the Republic, rights of the religious organizations and believers, as well as other vital issues are openly and actively discussed at the meetings held by the Council for confessions.

Experts in the country and abroad have concluded that today the population of Uzbekistan practicing a particular religion is provided with a required number of religious organizations and granted every opportunity to perform religious rites.

In conclusion, let me also note, that Uzbek delegation is concerned and puzzled by ranking Uzbekistan as an authoritarian state.

We would like to once again inform our esteemed colleagues from US delegation, that the Government of Uzbekistan is systematically carrying out reforms for further implementation of its international commitments, including in the frame of the OSCE.

Few days ago, following to the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, made last year in November during the plenary session of Oliy Majlis, Lower Chamber of Parliament approved amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed to deepen democratic changes in the political life of country.

In addition, the country is introducing norms for hearing and discussing the PM's reports on topical issues of social-economic development by the Lower Chamber and members of the Upper Chamber, which significantly expands the powers of the bicameral parliament in exercising its supervisory functions.

Thank you, Chairman.