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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 933rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 November 2012

**In response to the address by the Secretary General of the
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Mr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu**

Mr. Secretary General,

We are pleased to welcome you once again to a Permanent Council meeting. We are grateful for your statement, which provides a detailed presentation of the activities of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the key tasks of its work.

Great significance is attached in Russia to the development of relations with the OIC. The granting of observer status in that organization to our country in 2005 has helped to strengthen bilateral collaboration. The establishment in 2008 of the Permanent Mission of Russia to the OIC was a further step in consolidating this co-operation. As part of the development of direct ties with the OIC Standing Committees, representatives of a number of Russian ministries took part last year in the meeting of the Committee for Economic and Commercial Co-operation and also of the Committee on Scientific and Technological Co-operation. The contribution by leaders of constituent entities of the Russian Federation and spiritual associations of Russian Muslims has also fostered the development of links with the Islamic countries and the OIC in general.

Your repeated visits to Moscow, during which you met with the presidents of Russia, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Russian religious leaders, have also contributed in no small measure to the development of our relations. We know that you have been made a doctor honoris causa by Kazan University, have an honorary doctorate from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and that a number of your books have been published in our country.

Summing up the current state of our bilateral co-operation, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, noted three days ago that for us the OIC is a traditional partner in solving important problems of international life, including the resolution of conflicts, the fight against international terrorism and other new threats and challenges, ensuring fair foundations for the world economy and international relations in general, and the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. We see our collaboration with the OIC and all its member States as an important component of the efforts to establish a new democratic polycentric system of international relations.

With regard to the topic of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict mentioned by you, I might add that Russia is determined to achieve at the earliest opportunity a resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement in general on the existing international legal basis, including the Arab Peace Initiative, which was supported by all the OIC member States. In the event that Palestine applies to the United Nations for non-member State status with that organization, Russia will support such an application, as we have already stated repeatedly and clearly.

As for the reference in your statement to the situation in Syria, Russia is categorically against external intervention in what is happening in that country, especially intervention involving the use of force. We are making every possible effort to put a stop to the bloodshed and bring the parties to the negotiating table, in the course of which the Syrians themselves should agree on the parameters for the future political order of their country. This is precisely what the leading States agreed upon at the meeting in Geneva on 30 July. We believe that all the other external players wielding influence in Syrian affairs should also press for all the parties to follow the approach agreed upon at the Geneva meeting.

Mr. Secretary General,

We noted the point made in your statement regarding the rise of intolerance and racial discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs and faith in Western countries. We share your concern that the OSCE should pay the necessary attention to this topic, especially with respect to all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, including neo-Nazism and neo-fascism.

We agree with your assessments that recent anti-Muslim incidents such as the screening of the film "Innocence of Muslims", which resulted in mass protests around the world, not only testifies to irresponsible behaviour on the part of the media, but also raises the question of the consequences of the abuse of freedom of expression. I think that it is timely to mention this problem today given the fact that the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, will be taking the floor after you.

In this connection, Russia condemns the increasingly frequent cases of intolerance, persecution and discrimination on the grounds of religious affiliation and the desecration of holy places. The mocking of the feelings of religious people is sacrilegious and cannot be justified in any way or form by references to the protection of freedom of speech. It is for that reason, for example, that the screening of the film "Innocence of Muslims" on the territory of our country was prohibited by the ruling of a Moscow court.

The interrelationship between human rights and traditional moral values could well become an important area for collaboration between the OSCE and the OIC. In this regard, we share your idea of drawing up and adopting a common strategy on religious intolerance. This issue is extremely relevant as a means of strengthening harmony among civilizations and tolerance towards the representatives of all the major religions. In that context you may count on Russia's active participation in the discussion of these issues, not least given our country's centuries of experience in the peaceful coexistence of representatives of different nationalities and religions.

Thank you for your attention.