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

24 March 2011

Regarding racism and xenophobia in the United States of America

Mr. Chairperson,

The fight against various forms of intolerance has a long history that is specific to each of the OSCE participating States. This problem calls for long-term solutions and painstaking, systematic and day-to-day work aimed at suppressing all criminal manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and at developing dialogue with a view to spreading the ideas of tolerance.

Reports from various human rights organizations on the systemic problems that exist in American society in this sphere have been giving rise to increasing concern in recent years. One gets the impression that the enormous volume of anti-discriminatory measures is not helping to solve the problem of racial inequality in such key areas of life as education, employment, housing, public health and the criminal justice system.

For example, this is not the first year that representatives of civil society and specialist international organizations (the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee) are calling attention to the persisting racial segregation in public schools in the United States. According to some figures, every sixth child of African American descent and every ninth child of Hispanic descent attends a school where almost 100 per cent of the pupils are children from these same population groups.

Segregation as regards one's place of residence on the basis of racial, ethnic or national origin is also a cause for concern. According to figures for 2008, less than half of African Americans are property owners. The percentage of homeless people among that population group is also disproportionately high. One of the reasons for this is that they have higher credit interest rates than their white fellow citizens. This being the case, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has initiated proceedings against 15 leading American banks, arguing that African Americans are offered less favourable mortgage conditions.

A similar picture is also observed with regard to employment. According to the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, African Americans are still

underrepresented in employment. Although persons of African descent made up 11 per cent of the workforce in 2009, they accounted for 18 per cent of the unemployed and 25 per cent of the long-term unemployed (persons who have been without work for a period of 27 weeks or more). The most recent figures show no change in this negative trend.

The array of problems that the African American population has been facing for many years now resulted in the introduction by the State of compensatory discrimination measures, whereby in the recruitment of employees or students there are special quotas below which the number of representatives of minorities may not fall. As a result of this policy, employers pay more attention to the racial background of applicants than to their qualifications.

Let me give you one example. On 29 June 2009, the Supreme Court of the United States decreed that the city administration of New Haven (Connecticut) had violated the civil rights of 18 city firefighters (17 of whom were white and 1 Hispanic), having invalidated the results of a test that would have allowed them to receive a promotion (the case of Ricci vs. DeStefano). The reason for the administration's decision was the fact that not a single African American firefighter would have been promoted on the basis of the test results. According to the plaintiffs, and this view was upheld by the Supreme Court, they had been victims of racial discrimination.

The generally tense interracial relations are leading to a rise in the number of xenophobic groups. In 2008, according to figures provided by the Southern Poverty Law Center civil rights organization, there were 926 such groups; this is a 50 per cent increase compared to the figures for 2000. The number of extremist African American groups hostile towards whites and Jews is also increasing.

As for the law enforcement system, whose remit includes combating hate crimes, human rights activists point to disparities in its work.

For example, according to some figures, the number of African American detainees is six-and-a-half times greater than the number of white detainees and two-and-a-half times greater than the number of Hispanic detainees. Two-thirds of all prisoners serving life sentences belong to these population groups. As for crimes involving narcotics, despite a fairly similar level of drug abuse, Americans of African descent are serving considerably longer sentences than white citizens.

Let me now say a few words about criminal offences in the United States police force, which are testimony to use of unjustified brutality during arrests and blatant racism. A report published by the United States Department of Justice on the results of an official investigation into the activities of the municipal police in New Orleans shows that the ratio of black to white detainees in the city is 16 to 1. Between January 2009 and May 2010, police officers used their weapons on 27 occasions and only against African Americans, some of whom were fatally injured. Furthermore, it came to light that New Orleans police officers have committed several murders and have even attempted to burn the bodies in order to cover their tracks. The findings published also refer to the fact that there had been a "conspiracy of silence" in New Orleans and that in the last six years not a single police officer had even been disciplined for exceeding his authority to use a weapon.

Matters have reached an impasse where it is clear that public condemnation of acts of racism and xenophobia and the adoption of legislative measures of an anti-discriminatory nature are not enough to eradicate the existing problems.

We trust that the United States will make additional efforts to rectify the situation in this sensitive and important area in line with its commitments, including those adopted within the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.