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**STATEMENT BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY HAMROKHON ZARIFI,  
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TAJIKISTAN, AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE  
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 December 2012

First of all, I should like to express my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Eamon Gilmore, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Ireland, for the excellent organization of our work and also to congratulate His Excellency Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, for his election to the high-ranking position of future Chairperson-in-Office of our Organization.

We continue to regard the OSCE as the largest regional security organization focusing on early warning of conflicts, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. While not having a complete institutional framework and despite being called an organization the OSCE is nevertheless an important platform for sharing views and searching for mutually acceptable solutions to security issues of mutual interest to all its participants. We believe that we need to undertake efforts to complete the process of transforming the OSCE into a fully fledged international organization able to effectively realize its goals. This can be done by accelerating the reform process and adapting our Organization to the current realities.

We believe that the Helsinki+40 process initiated this past year by the Irish Chairmanship will make a positive contribution to a better understanding by all of us of the nature of modern-day challenges and the identification of the main ways of countering these threats.

We continue to advocate an active role by the OSCE in the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms. We reaffirm the need for a timely response to the rise in racial and religious intolerance and xenophobia in the OSCE area. It is inadmissible to ignore the activity of extremist groups and neo-Nazis.

The Government of Tajikistan is committed to its obligations within the OSCE as regards democratization, the observance of human rights and freedoms, the rule of law and the development of civil society. At the same time, we might mention that the problems surrounding fundamental human rights, including religious freedoms and freedom of the media, should be examined in a balanced manner, taking into account the interests of ensuring security and stability in society.

This year we continued our dialogue and contacts with our main partners on human rights issues. The latest round of the Human Rights Dialogue between Tajikistan and Switzerland took place in April, and in October the country successfully defended its national report on implementation of commitments and the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Torture. A broad spectrum of human rights issues were discussed during the meeting of the European Union-Tajikistan Co-operation Council at the foreign minister level held in February in Brussels and during the annual political consultations between Tajikistan and the United States of America that took place in May of this year in Washington.

One of the most important areas of the OSCE's work for Tajikistan is its economic and environmental dimension. Climate change and environmental disasters are having a growing impact on economic development, energy supply and regional security. We firmly believe that these problems are not only a matter of concern for individual countries but also the collective responsibility of the international community, including the OSCE.

The current shrinkage in the area and volume of glaciers on the territory of Tajikistan is a result of the overall temperature increase in the region and the change in the precipitation pattern. The results of research conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) show that glaciers in Tajikistan lost more than 20 cubic kilometres of ice during the twentieth century. According to UNECE forecasts, by 2050 the area of all glaciers in Tajikistan will have decreased by 20 per cent, the volume of ice by 25 per cent, and the glacial run-off of many rivers will be significantly reduced. With a view to promoting joint efforts by the international community in this area, we are hoping for support for Tajikistan's initiative to establish an international fund for glacier preservation as mentioned at the Copenhagen summit on climate change. It might be mentioned that the Government Programme for the Study and Preservation of Glaciers for the period 2010–2030 is currently being implemented in Tajikistan. The goal of this Programme is the adoption of measures to improve the monitoring and study of the country's glaciers.

The melting of mountain glaciers and the desiccation of the Aral Sea highlight the close link between climate change and the problems of water supply, energy security and the development of Central Asia. The drying out of the Aral Sea, in particular, is caused by an environmentally unfriendly water policy and excessive economic activity by man. This crisis can be overcome only through joint efforts and a fundamental change in the existing outdated approaches.

Unfortunately, over the last few years the average rate of water consumption in the Central Asian countries has been extremely high because of inefficient agricultural methods. According to the World Bank's highest estimates, around 80 per cent of the water used for irrigation purposes is quite simply irretrievably lost. The rate of water use per capita in the region is considerably higher than in most other parts of the world, and this seriously hampers socio-economic development.

Hydropower and renewable energy sources are important spheres of the economy on which sustainable development and the well-being of the population of the entire OSCE region will depend in the future. Tajikistan has huge hydropower resources but, given the absence of other types of energy resources, it has continued in recent years to experience chronic electricity shortages during the winter period, which affect the population, social infrastructure and industrial production.

Unfortunately, the region's current hydropower issues and problems, which are essentially economic issues, are heavily politicized at present and are seriously hampering the development of regional co-operation. Only through collective efforts by all the countries of the region will it be possible to achieve appreciable success in this area. This was in fact the goal of the initiative by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon, to create an international hydropower consortium to construct the Rogun hydroelectric power station.

Faced with the most severe electricity shortages during the winter period, Tajikistan, which does not have significant hydrocarbon reserves at its disposal, is focusing on the development of hydropower as a priority task for the country in the immediate future.

Tajikistan's national hydropower projects, including the construction of the Rogun hydroelectric power station, will be carried out in an open manner, taking into account the interests of all the countries of the region, as can be seen by our idea of inviting the World Bank to conduct a comprehensive technical, economic and environmental expert evaluation of the Rogun project. We trust that during the evaluation by the World Bank the interested parties in the region will refrain from hasty and ill-conceived statements and actions that may run counter to international agreements or contravene the spirit of friendship, co-operation and good neighbourliness.

In addition, we believe it necessary and advisable to conduct a comprehensive expert evaluation of the impact of the completely outdated and ineffective water resource management system in the region.

We see a key role for the OSCE in promoting political dialogue in Central Asia with a view to resolving disagreements on an entire range of water and energy problems, creating an integrated water resource management system and assisting the countries of the region in achieving a long-term solution to this issue through compromise. We urge the OSCE to deal seriously with these problems, using the experience already gained by European countries through co-operation in the Danube river basin.

Tajikistan is making considerable efforts to protect its borders from external transnational threats. We tend to regard our border with Afghanistan not simply as our own but also as one of the common boundaries of the countries of Central Asia and the OSCE participating States. We welcome the progress made in the implementation of OSCE border-related projects in Tajikistan. We are awaiting with great interest the continuation of the Organization's activities to further strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border. We regard the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe as an effective OSCE counter-terrorism and training centre in Central Asia. We express our gratitude to all the donors for their active support for the OSCE College and urge everyone to support the proposal to include the financing of the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe in the OSCE Unified Budget. This would enable us to ensure the long-term stable operation of this important OSCE structure.

In view of the forthcoming withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force contingents from Afghanistan in 2014, we believe that socio-economic development in that country will be an important factor in ensuring sustainable peace in Afghanistan. International assistance to Afghanistan should be aimed primarily at economic reconstruction

in general, further strengthening of the social sphere, creation of new jobs, etc. A comprehensive approach is required that would provide for the simultaneous solution of all the important problems, especially the prompt socio-economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan and the drafting of a comprehensive plan for its development involving the neighbouring Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan.

In this context, particular importance is attached to the implementation of projects to construct railways and highways, install power transmission lines and lay gas pipelines connecting Afghanistan with Tajikistan and other countries of the region. These projects were presented during the fifth Regional Economic Co-operation Conference on Afghanistan in March of this year in Dushanbe. We hope for support by OSCE participating States in the implementation of the decisions adopted at that conference.

Tajikistan is continuing to provide Afghanistan, with which it enjoys friendly relations, all kinds of practical assistance in restoring the economy in its northern regions on a bilateral and multilateral basis. These projects involve the construction of high-voltage power lines, the training and professional development of civilian and military personnel, and the construction of railways, highways and bridges linking our countries.

We firmly believe that the development of Afghanistan requires the country's electrification and the construction of transport corridors and bridges linking it with Central Asia and other parts of the OSCE region. Our country continues to make its contribution to resolving this issue. This includes in particular the completion of a 220-kilowatt power transmission line from Tajikistan to Afghanistan, the construction of five bridges and the start of construction work on a new bridge on the Panj River. The support of the OSCE participating States is necessary for the implementation of the Central Asia South Asia Regional Electricity and Trade (CASA-1000) project, the creation of free economic zones, the promotion of border trade, the training of Afghan civilian and military personnel and much more.

Amongst the transnational threats, combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs remains a matter of great urgency for the OSCE region. The threat of the spread of narcotic drugs emanating from Afghanistan affects not only the neighbouring countries but also Europe as a whole. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, given the consistently high drug prices, the area cultivated and the production of opium in Afghanistan this year are expected to remain at the same level as last year. The predicted growth in the north-eastern and north-western parts of the country is cause for particular concern. In this connection, we welcome the adoption of the OSCE Concept for Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs and the Diversion of Chemical Precursors this year and call upon the participating States and the Organization's partners to co-operate in order to achieve the goals set out in the Concept.

Despite the progress achieved so far, landmines continue to pose a threat in Central Asia, resulting in the deaths of innocent civilians. This is a matter of serious concern for us. More than 800 persons have been injured as a result of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Tajikistan since 1992, including 367 fatalities.

Much work is still required to clear large areas of our territory of mines. Over the next eight years 191 minefields with a total area of more than 7.6 million square metres need to be cleared of mines and other explosive devices. We advocate the further strengthening and

expansion of the OSCE's activities in Central Asia in this area. Reaffirming our interest, we once again call on the OSCE and the future Ukrainian Chairmanship to make the necessary efforts to open an OSCE Regional Mine Action Co-ordination Council office in Dushanbe as soon as possible and begin large-scale practical operations in this area. The adoption of the initiative to declare Central Asia a mine-free zone would also help to achieve the goals in this area.

We welcome Mongolia to the OSCE as the 57th participating State and hope that it will make a contribution to the Organization's development.

We have an opportunity to improve the main objectives of the Organization, which remains a platform for broad-based and open dialogue on the basis of equal rights and for the identification of common ground on security and co-operation issues. Tajikistan expresses its readiness for constructive and fruitful co-operation with the incoming Ukrainian Chairmanship of the OSCE and with all the participating States of the Organization.

In conclusion, I should like to express our hope for continued effective and constructive co-operation with the OSCE, which is an important partner for Tajikistan. I wish you all every success and productive work in further strengthening the stability and prosperity of our region.