

Delegation of Uzbekistan

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN AT THE
947th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 April 2013

**In response to the address by Ambassador Patricia Flor,
European Union Special Representative for Central Asia**

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan welcomes Ambassador Patricia Flor, European Union Special Representative for Central Asia, to this meeting of the Permanent Council and thanks her for her informative report.

Since the first years of its independence, Uzbekistan has focused on the development of mutually beneficial and fruitful co-operation with Europe, understanding the important role played by the EU and its member countries in global politics and their enormous economic, intellectual, scientific and technical capabilities.

Uzbekistan has from the outset supported the EU Strategy for Central Asia, has played an active part in the practical implementation of that Strategy, and is prepared to continue to support programmes and projects proposed within it.

We attach great importance to co-operation with the EU on the basis of equal rights in such areas as democratization and ensuring the rule of law, development of civil society and protection of human rights and freedoms. In that context, the concept of further deepening democratic reforms and establishing a civil society provides the basis for our co-operation in carrying out large-scale and fundamental reforms of the country's social and political system. I might mention that Uzbekistan was the first country in the region to initiate a human rights dialogue with the EU, the sixth round of which was held in early November 2012.

Our country is prepared to support specific EU proposals on further developing mutually beneficial co-operation in education and training. With a view to advancing innovative activities and strengthening scientific and technical links, closer co-operation with the EU is important in energy-related matters, information technology, environmentally friendly technologies, effective use of water resources, genetic engineering and the establishment and expansion in the countries of the region of an innovation-oriented infrastructure (science and technology parks and innovation centres).

Mr. Chairperson,

Ensuring peace and security in Central Asia and developing comprehensive co-operation with all the countries of the region on the basis of our common interests are among the most important and consistent priorities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. In that connection, we firmly believe that the existing problems here should be solved by the countries of the region themselves without the interference of external forces.

Uzbekistan remains unalterably committed to an open, benevolent and pragmatic policy with regard to its immediate neighbours. It is in favour of tackling all the pressing political, economic and environmental problems facing the region on the basis of mutual respect for the interests of the different parties, constructive dialogue and the norms of international law. This position of principle is enshrined in the foreign policy concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which was adopted by our parliament in 2012. On that basis, Uzbekistan actively supports the development of co-operation within the framework of regional structures and is making a significant contribution to the resolution of regional and international security problems. In that context, we attach particular importance to interregional co-operation with the European Union, specifically in combating drug trafficking, within the framework of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP), which have become one of the most effective EU initiatives in our region.

With a view to studying European experience, we are interested in continuing to organize short-term courses for Uzbek law enforcement officials at training centres in EU countries on combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs.

The securing of borders and the combating of drug trafficking are equally in the interests of our countries and of the EU. European investments in strengthening border security and in the creation of reliable barriers to stem the unceasing tide of Afghan drugs are in fact investments in the security of the European States themselves. It is better to combat this common threat from a distance than to experience its negative consequences at home.

We regard as pressing problems for international and regional security the threat of radicalism, religious extremism and terrorism. On that point, Uzbekistan is determined that the fight against terrorism should not turn into Islamophobia and that it should not take on the form of an open or hidden confrontation with the Islamic world. We need to pay close attention to the importance of distinguishing between enlightened Islam, on the one hand, and religious extremism and terrorism, on the other.

The situation in Afghanistan is a cause of concern for most OSCE participating States. For centuries the Uzbek and Afghan peoples have lived and worked side by side and have shared common cultural and historical values. Uzbekistan's policy with regard to the Afghan problem comes down to the preservation, development and maintenance of good neighbourly relations with Afghanistan on a bilateral basis. We also favour the creation of a "6+3" contact group to consider the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the socio-economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of neighbouring countries and with guarantees provided by the United States, the Russian Federation and NATO.

The delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan wishes Ambassador Flor continued success in her work as European Union Special Representative for Central Asia.

Thank you for your attention.