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Delegation of Uzbekistan

**STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF
UZBEKISTAN TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1213th MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 January 2019

Mr. Chairperson,

On 28 December 2018, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev delivered his annual message to the Oliy Majlis. The address was of a programmatic nature and defined the goals and priorities of Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policy in the near future.

I should like to acquaint the distinguished colleagues with the main provisions of that statement, which was driven by the interests of the people and the principle of ensuring openness. The full text of the message will be distributed after today's meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council.

With a view to continuing the wide-ranging socio-economic and political reforms embarked on in the country, the members of Parliament supported the President's proposal to make 2019 the Year of Active Investments and Social Development.

With that in mind, the main task of the Government is to create even more favourable conditions for attracting foreign investments, which will have a positive impact by creating thousands of new jobs and improving the well-being of the nation. The focus will be on improving the life of people, the social welfare of women and young persons, and also the development of science and expanding the system of lifelong learning.

In order to achieve these goals, the President has ordered the elaboration of a number of programmes and plans of action. In particular, 2019 will see the adoption of the Concept for Comprehensive Socio-Economic Development until 2030, the National Concept for the Digital Economy, the National Programme for Food Security for 2019 to 2024, and a number of road maps on important aspects of the country's socio-economic development.

In foreign policy, Uzbekistan seeks to strengthen co-operation with fraternal countries in Central Asia and continue to actively develop friendly and co-operative relations with all of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in particular the Russian

Federation, and also with the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the countries of the European Union, the Republic of Korea and Japan.

I should like to draw your attention to one of the first measures in this regard, the decision by the Uzbek leadership to abolish entry visas from 1 February 2019 for citizens of an additional 45 countries, including all of the EU Member States, and to introduce online visas for citizens of a further 70 countries in the world.

In his message, the President also stated that particular importance will be attached to further strengthening co-operation with Muslim countries, with which we are linked by common historical, cultural and spiritual values.

In its foreign policy, Uzbekistan will continue to pursue on a clear and precise strategic vision of ways of safeguarding security and sustainable development in Central Asia.

An important priority is the establishment of constructive and mutually beneficial relations with neighbouring countries, and also with Turkey, India, Pakistan and Iran.

Afghanistan has a particular place in this strategy. The President urged the international community to promote the need to start the process of peace negotiations led by Afghanistan.

For its part, Uzbekistan has held a number of important events, such as the organization in March 2018 of the high-level Tashkent International Conference on Afghanistan and negotiations with the Afghan leadership and representatives of Afghanistan's leading political forces, including the Taliban movement.

It is well known that an important prerequisite for stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan is its economic renewal. In that connection, Uzbekistan has set about the joint implementation of large-scale projects in Afghanistan in the areas of transport and infrastructure, energy, trade and education.

The President stressed in particular that Uzbekistan will continue to provide all possible assistance in resolving the Afghan problem. The main aim is still to commence peace negotiations and to achieve national reconciliation.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to conclude my statement with the words of the great Central Asian thinker Najmuddin Kubra, whom the President quoted in his message: "I am convinced that success and good fortune are a result of action, and failure of carelessness and laziness." In that context, the Republic of Uzbekistan intends to continue to work actively to strengthen the country's independence, democratize society, develop trade and economic relations and investment co-operation, and safeguard peace and stability in the region.

We hope for the full support of the OSCE and its participating States in achieving the worthwhile goals set by the Uzbek leadership.

Thank you for your attention.