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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN AT THE 1210th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 December 2018

**On the United Nations General Assembly resolution
“Enlightenment and religious tolerance”**

Mr. Chairperson,

At its plenary session on 12 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a special resolution on “Enlightenment and religious tolerance”. The document, drafted by Uzbekistan, received unanimous support from all UN Member States.

The adoption of the resolution marked the practical implementation of the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, presented in New York in September 2017 at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly.

Speaking from the podium of the UN, the head of Uzbekistan said that the main goal of the resolution proposed by Uzbekistan was “to promote universal access to education, eradicate illiteracy and ignorance.” The document was designed “to promote tolerance and mutual respect, ensure religious freedom, protect the rights of believers, and prevent their discrimination.”

The resolution was supported by all UN Member States and was co-sponsored by more than 50 countries.

The resolution adopted on the initiative of Uzbekistan underlines the importance of promoting education and recognizes the importance of inclusion, mutual respect, respect for human rights, tolerance and understanding, in order to build a more secure and peaceful world.

The document welcomes all international, regional and national initiatives aimed at promoting interreligious, intercultural and interfaith harmony and combating discrimination against individuals on the basis of religion or belief.

It urges Member States to step up their efforts to protect and promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief, and to this end:

- (a) To promote, through education and other means, mutual understanding, tolerance, non-discrimination and respect in all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief by encouraging, in society at large, a wider knowledge of the diversity of religions and beliefs and of the history, traditions, languages and cultures of the various religious minorities existing within their jurisdiction;
- (b) To support various types of intercultural engagement and peacebuilding at the national and international levels;
- (c) To support research activities.

The aims and provisions of the resolution are in full compliance with fundamental documents adopted in the UN, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and also the provisions of the resolutions on this topic passed by the UN General Assembly in the past.

At the same time, the resolution invites Member States to implement appropriate communications strategies, such as wide-scale awareness-raising campaigns in national and international media, as well as through the Internet, and to disseminate educational information on tolerance, non-violence and freedom of religion or belief.

It calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and for the diversity of religions and beliefs.

The resolution also recognizes the key role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in contributing to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture.

Mr. Chairperson,

Freedom of conscience and belief is guaranteed by Uzbekistan's Constitution and national legislation, creating the necessary basis for meeting the religious needs of all of its citizens. Government policy in such an important sphere is reflected in the five priority areas of the Development Strategy for 2017–2021 initiated by the President of Uzbekistan.

Among the priority areas in government policy are the development of a culture of tolerance and humanity and the strengthening of inter-ethnic and civil harmony.

There are currently 2,256 religious organizations representing 16 different religious confessions active in Uzbekistan. All told, there are 175 Christian organizations, 8 Jewish and 6 Baha'i communities, Jehovah's Witnesses, a Hare Krishna community, a Buddhist temple and, also the interconfessional Bible Society of Uzbekistan.

The Centre for Islamic Civilization and the Imam Al-Bukhari and Imam Tirmidhi International Research Centres have been established in the country. The Centre of the Full Gospel Church, the Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Uzbekistan and other organizations are also active.

Uzbekistan has opened its doors to constructive co-operation with international partners, notably the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and to internationally renowned non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

In general, it has also been possible to establish an effective religion policy thanks to the organization of practical feedback from the population, public discussion of problems of concern to people and the adoption of systematic measures to deal with them.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, I should like to thank all of the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation for supporting the special UN resolution “Enlightenment and religious tolerance” and to emphasize once again that Uzbekistan will continue to work actively at the national and international levels to safeguard interreligious harmony and protect the rights of believers.

Thank you for your attention.