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**STATEMENT BY DILMURAD TILLAHODJAEV,  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION TO PROTECT THE  
RIGHTS OF NATIVE MINORITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Distinguished Chairperson,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I represent the Association for the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities in Central Asia, which is based in Brussels, Belgium.

In my statement I would like to touch on several of the topics that will be discussed at subsequent sessions of this conference.

Twenty years ago, I witnessed violence and bloodshed of unprecedented cruelty, when thousands of Uzbeks – old men, women and children – were ruthlessly killed and maimed.

Twenty years of irresponsible policies by government authorities in the “island of democracy in Central Asia”, as Kyrgyzstan has been called, the intertwining of all of the branches of the government with organized crime, and the promotion of ultranationalist slogans by the country’s leading politicians, led to a tragedy even more appalling in terms of its scale.

It is my duty to be here today to express my regret to the thousands of victims of the events in July of this year in southern Kyrgyzstan, for the insufficient actions taken by international institutions, including the OSCE, which have still not ensured the protection of basic rights and freedoms of the Uzbek minority, the second largest ethnic group in the country.

Even three months later, every day, in the streets, in courtrooms, in holding cells, in government institutions and on the State border, ordinary people are subjected to humiliation, insults, torture and all sorts of violations of their fundamental rights, the principal one of which is the right to life. All because they are Uzbeks. The cities of Osh and Jalalabad are justifiably considered among the so-called historical preserves of the national and religious culture of Uzbeks, of their social and scientific thought, and not a hotbed of terrorism and religious extremism, as some people frequently try to portray them to all of us.

Leaders of the diaspora, politicians, human rights activists, journalists and public figures have been forced now to flee the country because of politically motivated persecution and the desire of local authorities to place the blame on them for the crimes against humanity which those authorities themselves committed.

We would like to express the hope that the OSCE observation mission that is leaving in a few days to monitor the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and you, distinguished ambassadors, will take note of one of the key reasons for the participation of the Kyrgyz army and police, side by side with the nationalists and criminals, in the ethnic cleansing that occurred. And that is the desire on the part of certain high-ranking individuals to intimidate and prevent the Uzbek community and political elite, who are citizens, just as representatives of the Kyrgyz ethnic group are, from participating in these elections, which have a serious potential to influence the political scene in the country.

In our opinion, only the immediate deployment of a peacekeeping mission and the launching of an independent international investigation without delay will ensure protection of the rights of all ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan and will foster the conditions for interethnic dialogue and national reconciliation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The possibility that hundreds of thousands of people who were forced to abandon their historical homeland will be able to return also depends on your decisions, among other things.

Thank you for your attention.