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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. ZALMAI AZIZ, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN, AT THE
THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Ljubljana, 6 December 2005

Honourable Minister Rupel,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to attend this meeting in Ljubljana, a cradle of civilization, a crossroad of history and now a meeting place of ideas and visions to build a new order so that peace, security and freedom may prosper together.

Allow me to congratulate Your Excellency for the immaculate organization of this meeting and for the warmth of your hospitality.

Not long ago, while we were watching helplessly, Afghanistan was slipping down in the abyss of darkness. Ten years of fighting the Soviet Union's invasion and occupation, followed by more than a decade of factional fighting, foreign interference and the emergence of Al-Qaida and the Taliban impoverished the country, destroyed the infrastructure, devastated our communities and crippled our institutions.

In 2001 at Bonn in an atmosphere of doubt, we and our friends in the international community, made a commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

The Bonn Agreement charted our Road Map and we embarked on an arduous journey to nation building, reconstruction and democratization. The tasks ahead were enormous. But now, four years later, lives in our country have changed in ways people dared not to dream of.

The parliamentary elections on 18 September were the culmination of the Bonn Agreement. I thank you all for your help, because without your support we could not have done it. Afghanistan is your success and I congratulate us all. I thank the Bulgarian chairmanship, the Slovenian chairmanship and the participating States for sending OSCE election support teams to monitor our Presidential and Parliamentary elections. The recommendations of the election support teams will be implemented to improve future elections.

According to the Financial Times newspaper, in the Lower House of Afghanistan's Parliament, 27.3 per cent of the newly elected representatives are women. The paper adds

that percentage-wise, there are more women in the Afghan Lower House than the House of Representatives in the United States or the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairman,

Afghanistan is keen about enhancing its co-operation with the OSCE and wishes to host an "Afghanistan OSCE conference" in 2007 in Kabul. We will rely on the assistance of the Belgian chairmanship of the OSCE, the Slovenian chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group and the OSCE Secretariat to provide support in the preparation for the conference.

We appreciate OSCE's commitment to support the democratic process in Afghanistan and wish to emphasize that the completion of the Bonn Agreement marks the beginning of a new phase in the process of democratization and reconstruction. New commitments are required to preserve what has already been achieved and to deal with the remaining problems. I wish to call on OSCE to support launching this new phase of co-operation. Afghanistan for its part will continue to be an active Asian Partner for Co-operation and will make every effort to enhance dialogue and co-operation between the OSCE and the Partners.

We are also searching for new areas of co-operation with the Organization. There are opportunities to enhance co-operation with the Central Asian participating States in the areas of border control, police training and education.

Mr. Chairman,

We have all fallen victim to the tyranny of terrorism. It has become a direct, constant and long-term threat to peace, stability and interests of all States.

Terrorist attempts to cripple the institutions of freedom and democracy, has only strengthened the resolve of all civilized nations to defend these principles.

The spirit of global co-operation that has emerged as a result of tragic terrorist assaults, symbolizes the supremacy of universal morality that transcends physical and spiritual boundaries. I see this spirit in the OSCE and call on this Organization to get more involved in our fight against terrorism through joint OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

Let us remind ourselves that the campaign against terrorism has just begun. The terrorist threat is multi-faceted, determined and global in scope. The response of the world community must also be multi-dimensional, steadfast and comprehensive. This campaign will be long and hard, and should not be measured in weeks and months, but in years, and fought with every available tool on many fronts.