

Delegation of Uzbekistan

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

31 March 2011

**In response to the statement by Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan**

Mr. Chairperson,

The delegation of Uzbekistan welcomes Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, to this meeting of the Permanent Council and thanks him for his interesting report.

Since time immemorial, the Uzbek and Tajik people have been living side by side in peace and harmony and have sufficient wisdom and good sense to reach an agreement among themselves on the pressing issues that affect the interests of the two countries.

It should be noted that a number of the proposals mentioned by Mr. Zarifi have the support of our delegation, including the reform of the OSCE and the need to draw up a basic legal document as well as the approach to resolving the situation in Afghanistan.

One of the most serious problems at the present time is the rational use of natural resources, first and foremost water and energy. Various conflicting approaches in this area hinder development and lead to serious disagreements and sometimes environmental disasters.

The drying out of the Aral Sea, which is having tragic consequences not only for the peoples of Central Asia but also for a huge subregion and even Eurasia in its entirety, is one such example.

While addressing a plenary meeting of the United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in New York on 20 September 2010, President Islam Karimov noted the following: "A clear example and graphic evidence of an irresponsible approach to environmental problems can be seen in the tragedy of the Aral Sea. During a single generation it has gone from being one of the most beautiful and unique seas to a body of water that is drying up and disappearing".

Today a highly complex set not only of environmental issues but also of socio-economic and demographic problems of global proportions has emerged in the

Aral Sea region. The consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy can be discussed indefinitely and at length, as everyone present here knows only too well.

In view of the continuing exacerbation of the Aral Sea crisis and the associated environmental situation in the region, priority should be given to the rational use of the water of Central Asia's principal transboundary rivers – the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. These rivers have always met the vital needs of the population living in the Aral Sea basin. Any reduction in the flow of these rivers will cause major damage to the already fragile environmental balance throughout this vast region.

This being the case, any attempts to implement hydroelectric projects that were drawn up 30 to 40 years ago during the Soviet period to build large-scale hydroelectric installations with huge dams along the upper reaches of these rivers may cause irreparable damage to the environment and result in terrible man-made disasters, particularly if we factor in the eight- to nine-point seismicity of the region where the installations were to be built.

In this connection, Uzbekistan is in favour of a mandatory comprehensive expert analysis of projects for major hydroelectric installations, including the Rogun hydroelectric power station. An international independent expert evaluation is needed to confirm that these projects are safe both from the point of view of environmental, social and man-made risks and from the point of view of preserving the volume and flow of the Amu Darya river. In this regard, it is essential to ensure the transparency of the comprehensive expert evaluation under the auspices of the World Bank of the Rogun project.

Moreover, it would make far more sense to proceed as recommended by many international environmental organizations and respected experts and build less dangerous but more economical smaller hydroelectric power stations to obtain the same energy-generating capacity from these rivers.

This should not be interpreted as a demand for special rights for Uzbekistan to the priority use of the water resources of transboundary rivers. Our position is not only fully in line with the norms of international law and the rules in force in this field, but also, and this is no less important, is based on them. We are referring primarily to the two main mechanisms under international law – the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes of 17 March 1992 and the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 21 May 1997.

We firmly believe that strengthening mutual understanding between the countries of the region and their respect for the norms of international law regulating the use of the water resources of transboundary rivers will help produce a successful resolution to the water and environmental problems of the region and ensure progress and security in the interests of all the countries of Central Asia.

In conclusion, we should like once again to point out that the Republic of Uzbekistan is in favour of joint approaches agreed upon by all the parties to resolving the aforementioned questions so as to prevent a disruption of the environmental balance in Central Asia and mitigate the negative impact of the man-made factors on the environment and the population's health.

Thank you for your attention.