



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Reply to Ambassador Ahmet Erozan, Head of Center, Tashkent**

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 18, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I should like to begin by joining others in welcoming Ambassador Erozan to the Permanent Council this morning and in thanking him for his thorough, albeit discouraging report. I say discouraging because, despite the considerable efforts of the OSCE Center -- and let me say we have to commend the range and breadth of the Center's work at Ambassador Erozan has outlined today -- and despite the efforts of other organizations in Uzbekistan, progress on much needed and promised reforms is not proceeding at a pace that we would consider adequate. Indeed, in some instances, most notably on curbing the use of torture, Uzbekistan has not made progress at all that we would have hoped to see.

Regrettably, in the last year alone there have been at least four suspicious deaths in custody, and we still await credible accountability of these deaths. We urge the Uzbek authorities to implement immediately the recommendations of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture, especially the introduction of habeas corpus.

With elections on the horizon as Ambassador Erozan and the European Union have noted, we also urge the Uzbek authorities to lay the foundation for free, fair and multi-party elections and to reform electoral legislation. Successful elections this December that conform to international standards and Uzbekistan's OSCE commitments, will send a powerful, positive message to the international community that Uzbekistan is serious about democratization. In this regard we were deeply disappointed to learn that the opposition parties Ozod Dehkon (Free Farmers) and Birlik were recently refused registration.

Mr. Chairman, we all have a common interest in helping all participating States to maximize their potential. This includes working together to create conditions conducive to economic development, democratization, and protection of, and respect for, human rights. We are all investing in Uzbekistan's future: the Bulgarian chairmanship, through its focus on education, the Center in Tashkent with its well-chosen priorities and targeted activities, and the OSCE at large, with its institutions and bodies, and its participating States through their individual bilateral efforts.

For this investment to grow and to pay dividends, Uzbekistan's support and active involvement is required. The status quo is not sustainable, and, if political and economic reform efforts are stalled much longer, there will be little to convince Uzbek youth that they have a future in Uzbekistan.

So in closing, allow me to thank Ambassador Erozan once again as well as his entire team in Tashkent for their fine work on behalf of the principles I have outlined above. Thank you.