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Canadian Delegation to the
Organization for Security & Cooperation
in Europe

Délégation du Canada auprès de
l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération
en Europe

DELEGATION OF CANADA TO THE OSCE
STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT BY ODIHR ON EVENTS IN ANDIJAN
560TH MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
23 JUNE 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Canada thanks ODIHR for its valuable report, produced and circulated in consultation with the Chairman-in-Office. We support the initiative taken by the OSCE to report on events on the ground, including through interviewing displaced persons. We consider this to be well within ODIHR's mandate. In the absence of an independent, international investigation and given the ability of the ODIHR to visit Andijan after May 13, ODIHR's preliminary findings on events in and around Andijan demonstrate the need for a more complete investigation. The five recommendations outlined by ODIHR at the end of its report offer a considered approach towards further action and meet with Canada's support.

ODIHR's preliminary findings raise a number of points of great concern for the international community. The ODIHR report acknowledges the presence of both unarmed and armed civilians among the crowds that authorities sought to disperse. While we deplore armed attacks on public buildings and the use of hostages as human shields, there are serious allegations that events in and around Andijan also involved the violation of standards for fair trials, the use of excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate force by the authorities and the extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians.

Canada is also concerned by the situation of Uzbek refugees in Kyrgyzstan and shares ODIHR's view that a mechanism is needed to monitor their return, which must in all cases be voluntary. We are particularly troubled by reports that the refugees are being unduly coerced into returning to Uzbekistan, through such means as intimidation of their families left behind and the detention of their leaders. We urge the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure that assistance continues to be provided to these refugees, in an environment free of intimidation, and to allow access for international humanitarian agencies, notably the UNHCR.

Canada supports an independent, international investigation of events in and around Andijan, involving an outside party, such as the UN or the OSCE. Our Foreign Minister has communicated this position directly to Foreign Minister Ganiyev and has strongly encouraged Uzbek authorities to cooperate with such an investigation.

We recall that States are under international obligation -- including through UN, OSCE and NATO commitments -- to ensure that the struggle against terrorism never entails undue use of force or the denial of fundamental rights.

We take particular note of the last recommendation in the ODIHR report, which recognizes that "the fight against terrorism and 'extremism' is being used in a number of OSCE participating States to restrict activities of civil society in violation of their international commitments and thereby limit the effective enjoyment of human rights". These tragic events underline the importance of sustained creative cooperation among all OSCE participating States, over the months and years to come, in the effective promotion of political and economic freedoms throughout the region. Fundamental forms of checks and balances on executive power are one of the values that we aim to defend, in countering terrorism.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media for his recent report on the treatment of the media during and in the aftermath of the events in Andijan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.