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PRESS RELEASE

10-th Anniversary of General Agreement on Peace and National Reconciliation in Tajikistan

10 years ago General Agreement on the establishment of peace and national accord in Tajikistan between the Tajik Government and the United Tajik Opposition had been signed in Moscow on 27 June 1997 which put an end to the long-lasting confrontation. The idea of peace was launched in context of Inter-Tajik Dialogue, which led to sustained Dialogue and negotiations produced a peace.

As a result of Dialogue an official negotiations between sides initiated by Russia began on Summer 1993 with support of Iran and Afghanistan governments. During next three years 16 rounds of negotiations and consultations in different places have been conducted and finally, on 27 June 1997 General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was signed in Moscow by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, the Leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), Said Abdullo Nuri and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Gerd Merrem.

The signing of the General Agreement concluded successfully the Inter-Tajik negotiation process on national reconciliation between the Government of Tajikistan and UTO. It put a formal end to four years of armed conflict in Tajikistan, marked by civil war, thus closing one of the most tragic chapters of the country's new history.

Both the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition have agreed that *“the signing of the General Agreement marks the beginning of the phase of full and interconnected implementation of the agreements reached, which will put an end ones and for all to the fratricidal conflict in Tajikistan, ensure mutual forgiveness and amnesty, return the refugees to their homes, and create the conditions for the democratic development of society, the holding of free elections and the restoration of the country's economy destroyed by the many years of conflict. The highest national priorities of the country are peace and the national unity of all nationals of Tajikistan, regardless of their ethnic origin, political orientation, religion or regional affiliation”*.

The President Emomali Rahmon and Mr.Said Abdullo Nuri, Head of UTO have stated their full commitment to the earliest achievement of peace and national accord in Tajikistan through the comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the General Agreement.

The international organizations and countries – guarantees while aware of the main responsibility of the Tajik parties and the people for the implementation of the General Agreement, have expressed their readiness to assist and support Tajikistan

throughout this new stage of national reconciliation, as they have done during the negotiating process. Great role between played the States-guarantors and International organizations like UN and OSCE, Organization of the Islamic Conference. Today with honor we do remember names: Livio Botta, Darke Shilovich, Ramiro Peres Ballon, Yan Kubis, Ivo Petrov, Gerd Merrem, etc.

The General Agreement includes creation and function of Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR), which protocol was signed yet on December 1996 in Moscow by President Rahmon and Mr. Nuri. CNR dealt with all issues relating to national reconciliation in Tajikistan and was a provisional body created for the transitional period and was to cease its activities after the convening of a new Parliament and the formation of the latter's governing bodies. CNR played a significant role on Peace Agreement implementation. An important role of members of CNR, their tolerance, intelligent communication and sense of national dignity played great role for implementation of General Agreement.

Thus, Tajikistan became the first among the Central Asia CIS countries, where activity of religious political parties, like the Tajikistan Islamic Revival Party, is legalized.

Since independence the Government of Tajikistan declared its openness to dialogue with civil society. On March 11, 1996 an Agreement on National Conciliation was signed between the government and civil society representatives. The Agreement included the creation of the Public Council, a body tasked with stimulating and organizing dialogue between the government, political parties and public organizations with the aim of reaching a broad agreement in order to find solutions of important social issues. The Agreement on National Conciliation was renewed on March 11, 1999 and on March 11, 2002 – up to this time without term. The Public Council had in the meantime become an effective tool to continue open dialogue between the government and representatives of civil society in order to discuss the key points of issues for promotion of democratic principles.

The Public Council as a logical result of the General Agreement played significant role on peace process in Tajikistan. It is national high level tribunal ensuring open dialogue for all political forces in country. It allows finding mechanism of peaceful political solution of problem. The idea of Public Council belonged to the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon.

10 years ago Tajikistan was in the midst of civil war and on the brink of economic, social and humanitarian collapse. Today, the Government of Tajikistan has achieved a level of stability, enabling it to focus on strengthening democracy and pursuing economic development.

On line with UN the OSCE has contributed to this outstanding transformation and Tajikistan became a participating State of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1993. Since the CSCE Mission to Tajikistan was established in early 1994, the Organization has been co-operating closely with the Government in building a lasting peace and promoting stability.

The Mission assisted in the implementation of the peace process and has acted in support of the United Nations as a guarantor of the Peace Agreement since June 1997. At peace within, Tajikistan is now actively promoting a stronger regional

framework for security and economic co-operation with its immediate neighbors in Central Asia and beyond.

We now see that Tajikistan, at the most Southern border of the OSCE, is stepping out of a troubled phase and defining itself - at peace, but severely challenged and in need of international assistance.

After the re-election of the President E. Rahmon, it is observed that the Government of Tajikistan launched a new, more assertive phase of political development in Tajikistan. From the point of view of the juncture of the 10-year anniversary, as a milestone of achievement celebrated this month, Tajikistan has moved beyond the phases of conflict and post-conflict peace-building to focus on consolidating stability through economic development, and more resolutely defining a role for Tajikistan in the region and the World.

The new initiatives of Tajikistan aimed at further strengthening of OSCE position in Central Asia and intensified dialogue reached a productive culmination when a joint OSCE-Tajik Task Force met on 27 March 2007 in Dushanbe to identify priorities and needs of Tajikistan and to ensure their reflection in future activities of the OSCE in the country.

Tajikistan wants to engage the United Nations and OSCE closer in the region and has proposed to establish an OSCE regional economic and environmental structure in the country. Discussions are ongoing on the possibility of Tajikistan to host a regional structure on border management and security and another regional Center on land degradation in Dushanbe.

While the borders pose risks, the construction of bridges across the river separating Tajikistan and Afghanistan also open new opportunities with new transport routes and new trade opportunities for Tajikistan and its neighbors. Having a direct security interest in a stable and prosperous southern neighbor, Tajikistan has offered itself as a gateway for support to Afghanistan with whom it advantageously shares language in addition to a long border.

This includes the development of democratic political institutions and processes, and help Government in combating religious extremism, terrorism and narcotics.

Taking into account above mentioned points it could be concluded that the Inter-Tajik Peace Agreement is unique case in modern history how to solve the political conflict. It was a peaceful junction of two different ideologies like religious and secular to ensure strategic development in order to put ground for democratic civil society.

Unfortunately, today number of conflicts and “hot spots” in the World is not decreasing, on the contrary a tendency of their increase is observed. From this point of view, lessons learned from the Tajik peace process are worth being used in practice by the international community for solving certain problems.

Vienna, 20 June 2007