



Press-Release

Despite consistent and dedicated efforts made by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, and the Government of the country over a long period of time, the relationships with the Republic of Uzbekistan have not been developing in accordance with legal norms and agreements. This situation is clearly not in the interest of the two neighborly nations which are bonded together by a common history, culture and religion.

It is utterly regrettable that during recent years the Republic of Uzbekistan has not only been violating and sometimes knowingly ignoring the signed bilateral agreements and documents, but has embarked on unilaterally freezing cultural and humanitarian contacts and purposefully undermining bilateral trade and economic cooperation by introducing multiple artificial barriers. These, particularly, concern difficulties for transiting Tajik goods through the territory of Uzbekistan, the supply and transit of electricity and rational use of water and energy resources.

In spite of numerous attempts by the Republic of Tajikistan to discuss the current state of affairs in the spirit of traditional friendship and good neighborly relationships and mutual efforts aimed at finding ways to remedy the situation, the Uzbek side avoids solving the problems using unfounded excuses. For instance, the first and the last meeting of the Joint Tajik-Uzbek Commission on Trade and Economic Issues was held on 23 August 2002 in Dushanbe, and since then there have not been any other meetings of the Commission despite the offers made by the Tajik side. The issues of delimitating and demarcating the Tajik-Uzbek borders remain unresolved for many years. De-mining of 54 segments of the border, which had been unilaterally mined by the Uzbek side and pose a real threat to the lives and wellbeing of people, also yet to find a positive solution.

Over 10 years that have past since unjustifiable creation these deadly barriers, more than 80 people were killed and another 93 were severely injured, half of which were children.

Over the last years, the water and energy issues have come to the forefront of the Tajik-Uzbek relationships. Unless resolved, these issues could lead in the nearest future to serious socio-economic consequences not only for both countries, but for the entire region. While the Uzbek side verbally shares Tajikistan concerns over the current critical situation caused by a cycle of insufficient water flows experienced by entire Central Asia and supports proposed joint and agreed upon measures to mitigate the risks, in its deeds, the Uzbek side in effect is further aggravating the current situation. In particular, as of 1 February 2009, Uzbekistan has not yet signed an Inter-Governmental Protocol on the Rational Use of Water Resources in 2009 and under the pretext of undertaking repair works on the Karakul electricity transfer sub-station, has stopped transiting electricity from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan since 1 January 2009.

As a result of the unilateral actions of the Uzbek authorities, the Government of Tajikistan yet again (first time in September 2008) had to introduce a strict limit on energy consumption, which covers the entire territory of the country, including the capital city. Currently, electricity supplies in Dushanbe are limited to 15 hours a day, while other regions get from 3 to 4 hours of electricity daily. Due to the lack of electricity, the majority of industrial enterprises had to cease their production. Schools, hospitals and cultural, recreational and sport facilities remain without electricity. As Uzbekistan does not live up to its commitments of a transit-country, and 10-12 mln kw/hour per day of electricity purchased from Turkmenistan is not being supplied to Tajikistan, the Tajik Government has been forced to take a difficult decision to switch the Kairakum Hydro-power Station to an energy generating mode and a premature and excessive utilization of water reserves from the Nurek reservoir to produce additional electricity. The Prime-Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Akil Akilov in his letter to the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Sh. Mirziyaev dated 10 December 2008, pointed out that such developments are highly undesirable as they could lead to the inability of Tajikistan to accumulate water resources in the above-mentioned reservoirs, and as a result, to extremely negative consequences during the vegetation season in 2009. The Uzbek side has once again (first time in September 2008) ignored the call of the Republic of Tajikistan for

cooperation in the field of the rational use of water and energy resources which includes the necessity of maintaining the irrigation mode of the Kairakum reservoir and mutual supplies and transit of electricity to regulate the capacities of the hydro-power stations.

It should be noted that within the framework of the meeting of Heads of Central Asian States in Bishkek (October 2008), an agreement was reached that the needs of the upstream countries for electricity and gas in the 2008-2009 autumn-winter period will be fully covered by the downstream states. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Islam Karimov, supported this initiative about compensating expenses for maintaining reservoirs borne by the upstream countries. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have been fully committed to the reached agreements vis-à-vis Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As for Uzbekistan, it has unilaterally withdrawn itself from implementing these agreements.

In January 2009, the Tajik side came up with a number of initiatives and proposed the Uzbek side to discuss them in an extraordinary joint meeting. The Deputy Prime-Minister and Cochairman of the Tajik-Uzbek Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, Mr. Murodali Alimardon, has offered to his Uzbek counterpart, Mr. R. Azimov, to meet at his earliest convenience sometime between 16 and 31 January 2009. However, the Uzbek side referring to the measures to be taken for neutralizing and minimizing the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the country's economy and the busy schedule of the First Deputy Prime-Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. R. Azimov has proposed to postpone the meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission. A bilateral meeting between the two Deputy Prime-Ministers to discuss the pertinent issues was also rejected.

In these circumstances, in order to supply the population, industries and public institutions of the country with needed minimal amounts of electricity during the winter period, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has no other way, but to fully utilize water reserves of the Nurek and Kairakum reservoirs. Intensive use of the reservoirs will have a negative impact on the water and energy situation in all Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, and may lead to enormous difficulties in the provision of irrigation water during the vegetation season of 2009. The Tajik side has repeatedly drawn the attention of the Government of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries to this undesirable scenario and relinquishes all the responsibility for the current state of affairs.

Vienna, February 03, 2009