I would like to welcome everyone to the conference, and to thank the organizers for their work. Renewable energy is a very important subject in Central Asia, and this is a very timely conference.

As you know, President Obama has made development of renewable and alternative energy a high priority for the United States. I am pleased to note that this focus is shared by Tajikistan as well. Both of our countries have supported the establishment of IRENA – the International Renewable Energy Association, with headquarters in the United Arab Emirates. I would like to applaud the government of Tajikistan for its work to support and foster the development of alternative energy – not least through its participation in this conference.

Tajikistan, like much of Central Asia, has huge hydropower resources. But these resources are cyclical: for half the year, the population of Tajikistan faces serious energy rationing. This affects not only individual families, but commerce and industry as well. It is difficult to run a factory, for example, on just a few hours of electricity a day.

While there are a number of new hydropower projects under development, diversifying Tajikistan’s energy production is an important step in developing its economy and its human potential.

Fortunately, Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries are endowed with great potential in other areas, including solar power, wind power, biogas, and wider use of small and mini-hydro power stations:
- Many parts of Tajikistan, especially in the south, receive a good deal of sunshine, making them ideal locations for solar heating and electricity generation;
- As anyone who has taken the flight to Khujand knows, the winds blow strongly in the north, and many areas of Sughd have good potential for wind generation;
- A largely agricultural country, bio-gas is a promising technology for much of Tajikistan;
- Throughout the country there are numerous fast-flowing streams and small rivers that make ideal sights for mini-hydropower stations.

- These sources of energy have many advantages:
  - They are clean, releasing no greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere;
  - They are flexible and can be developed on small or large scales as appropriate for individual applications;
  - Much of the technology involved is relatively simple, and costs are coming down;
  - Greater use of renewable and alternative energy solutions helps relieve pressure on the grid.

- One roadblock to the effective use of alternative energy in Tajikistan has been the lack of clear rules governing small-scale energy producers. I am pleased that a draft law dealing with these and other issues is being developed and now rests, I believe, with the Energy Committee in the lower house of parliament.

- I hope that the passage of this law will accelerate the development of new alternative energy projects. The development and diversification of Tajikistan’s energy sector is truly a win-win scenario: It will provide more power for citizens and businesses, contribute to the country’s overall economic security and give Tajikistan experience in a new sector that will grow substantially in importance in the years to come.
  - Although the United States is focused on development of alternative energy resources, I want to emphasize that this sector has great potential for other countries. India, for example, has become a leader in producing small-scale alternative energy inputs. Tajikistan has similar potential.
Despite this great potential, at present there is relatively little understanding among the population of Tajikistan about alternative energy. I hope this conference will be a starting point for Tajikistan’s population to gain more knowledge about many of the relatively inexpensive techniques available for harnessing renewable sources of energy.

Once again, I would like to welcome you to the conference. I am certain that you will find it useful and productive.