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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Kyrgyzstan's Rejection of Restrictive NGO Laws

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 19, 2013

The United States commends the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan for rejecting recent efforts to limit certain activities of citizens and civil society in Kyrgyzstan. On November 27, 2013, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan rejected a draft "treason law" that would have unduly tightened controls over citizens' organizations. The bill would have amended the country's criminal code, broadening the definition of treason to include routine nongovernmental organization activities such as international advocacy or briefing foreign counterparts.

Another restrictive piece of legislation was tabled indefinitely in the Parliament just over a week ago. It would have required domestic nongovernmental organizations in Kyrgyzstan that receive foreign funding and engage in political activities to register as so-called "foreign agents." We have seen the chilling effect the enforcement of similar laws has had on NGO activity in other OSCE participating States.

By rejecting these laws, the Parliament has shown that it recognizes the importance of an active civil society in Kyrgyzstan. We encourage all OSCE participating States to follow Kyrgyzstan's example by rejecting restrictive laws that unduly limit the activities of citizens and civil society and undermine our OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Madam Chair.