



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on the U.S. migration record

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 9, 2016

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I reserve my right to come back to this topic at a later time, but allow me to make some brief initial remarks today.

Just to begin, colleagues, I'd like to point out, that this seems to be the recurrence of a pattern, whereby whenever concerns are raised in good faith about the Russian Federation's upholding of its OSCE commitments and the effects that that might have on all of our comprehensive security, the following week there is a statement delivered about whichever state raised their concerns as a kind of attempted (though ineffective) retribution. I don't think that is a constructive way to have dialogue, but obviously it is the prerogative of any participating State to raise issues under current issues.

Whether or not the concerns in this case are genuine, the issues raised, at least some of them, are real issues and we therefore welcome the Russian Federation's raising the important issue of migration and its questions regarding U.S. policies and practices with respect to the tens of thousands of men, women and children from other countries who every year seek to come -- whether by irregular migration routes or through regular migration processes-- to live and/or work in the United States, as well as those who seek political asylum from repression in their home countries.

I would point out the many citations of NGO reports in the statement delivered by the distinguished Russian ambassador-- several of them are from NGOs which in my personal capacity I support with contributions, and so I welcome that our distinguished Russian colleagues are reading those. Some of those organizations also write about countries other than the United States. I would encourage a broad reading of their work.

And, as I said, I want to be able to come back to this and provide a fuller response at a future time to give the subject the attention that it deserves. But just in closing I want to say that the United States is committed to upholding our international obligations and to treating individuals fairly in the context of migration and immigration. I think that the track record of the United States—and this is something that has been to the benefit of the United States over two centuries, close to two and a half centuries—the track record of the United States is overall a good one, not one without problems, but overall a good one. And, I am reminded of President Reagan's farewell address to the American people, when he talked about America as a city, a shining city on a hill. And he said: "I've spoken of the shining city all my political life ... And how stands the city on this winter night? ... After 200 years, two centuries, she

still stands strong and true to the granite ridge, and her glow has held no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home."

And I am grateful that even today there are still pilgrims from lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.