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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Guantanamo

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 29, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman,

In light of the interest expressed by a number of participating States as well as by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and given the direct applicability to our OSCE standards and commitments, I would like to bring to the attention of the Permanent Council that on January 22, 2009, President Obama signed three executive orders—one which orders the closure of the Guantanamo detention center within a year; one which orders a comprehensive review to identify options for U.S. detention policy, consistent with U.S. national security interests and the interests of justice; and one which requires that Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions to be applied to the interrogation of any individual in the custody of the U.S. Government who is detained in an armed conflict and which requires the Central Intelligence Agency to close any detention facilities that it currently operates.

As President Obama stated: “The message that we are sending around the world is that the United States intends to prosecute the ongoing struggle against violence and terrorism and we are going to do so vigilantly. We are going to do so effectively, and we are going to do so in a manner that is consistent with our values and our ideals.” We think that it is precisely our ideals that give us the strength and the moral high ground to be able to effectively deal with the unthinking violence that we see emanating from terrorist organizations around the world.

Madam Chairwoman. Much has been said over the last few years, including on several occasions here in the OSCE, about the Guantanamo detention facility and the persons who are detained there. More than 520 detainees have already been transferred or released from Guantanamo. Deciding how to deal with the approximately 250 remaining detainees will involve difficult determinations. We look forward to the assistance of OSCE participating States in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you Madam Chairwoman.