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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Reply to Belgian Foreign Minister De Gucht's Opening Address

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 12, 2006

Thank you.

And thank you for your and Belgium's willingness and enthusiasm to pilot the OSCE ship for the next year. Be assured - the United States remains dedicated to working closely and in a true spirit of cooperation with you, and all of our OSCE colleagues to ensure that this organization remains effective and true to the core principles to which we have all committed.

We welcome your intent to focus on settlements of the so-far frozen conflicts. As we continue to examine ways to increase the OSCE's effectiveness, I urge all OSCE delegations to view this as a time of great opportunity for this organization. We need to look at ways to meet today's challenges such as counter-terrorism, energy security, organized crime, illegal and forced migration, and arms control, without tacking off course on the way to advancing freedom, security and respect for human rights.

The OSCE's most important assets are its institutions and the 17 field presences on the freedom's front lines. The United States will continue to support the day-to-day efforts of OSCE presences in promoting democratic values and international human rights standards. We are further committed to preserving ODIHR's ability to operate in an objective and impartial manner and atmosphere.

Peace depends on the spread of freedom, and the work of the OSCE is directed to that objective. We hope that 2006 will be a year of significant progress in the resolution of regional conflicts, further movement toward democratization, political and economic cooperation in Europe and Eurasia, and the broader development of civil societies throughout the OSCE community.

Mr. Minister, dear and brave Belgian colleagues, we wish you much luck, much patience, and *bon courage* as you lead the OSCE at this critical time.

Thank you.