



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Annual Security Review Conference
Working Session III:
OSCE and its Neighborhood**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes
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I want to thank the panelists for highlighting a number of issues from terrorism, irregular migration, regional stability, that are shared concerns for all of us. And we welcome the opportunity to address some of these security challenges from the perspective of the neighborhood. I will comment on three general areas.

First - the increasing complexity and evolving nature of terrorist threats requires an expanded, strategic approach to our counterterrorism engagement. And such an expanded, strategic approach to counterterrorism must include efforts ranging from security measures to respect for the rule of law and human rights, to improved governance, partnership with civil society and with the private sector.

Experience in countries around the world has shown that successful national strategies involve close partnerships with local actors – municipal governments, families, neighbors, faith leaders, civil society organizations, youth, and women. Civil society, particularly religious leaders and women, can challenge extremists' distortion of religion and influence communities to embrace a more tolerant worldview. Moreover, our actions should promote tolerance and nondiscrimination and reaffirm civil rights protections for members of all communities, including religious and ethnic minorities, as a way to prevent the marginalization that can drive members of some communities toward violent extremism.

We must also address efforts by violent extremists to hijack faiths for their own violent purposes. And thus a comprehensive counterterrorism response should also include strategic communications and the power of social media to counter corrosive, violent extremist narratives. In this regard, we applaud the OSCE's efforts to promote awareness-raising and capacity-building both at the local and multilateral level. The OSCE's three-day regional workshop in Dushanbe, on promoting regional cooperation as a response to foreign terrorist fighter challenges, which was one of the first of its kind in Central Asia, is a great example of the role that the OSCE can play in an innovative collective approach. And we look to engage our OSCE partners to help us explore other ways to counter terrorism more broadly.

My second point: the United States recognizes that organized crime, and human trafficking and smuggling networks have exploited political unrest in Libya and elsewhere for their own gain, resulting in the tragic deaths of hundreds of migrants. We remain committed to advancing cooperation and dialogue on these issues within the OSCE. We, too, see migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks as challenges for the whole OSCE region. We need to disrupt and stop these networks to save lives while upholding and fully implementing the Helsinki Final Act's principles and commitments. We also need to provide assistance

closer to points of origin so that the desperate refugees and asylum seekers do not put their lives into the hands of migrant smugglers and human traffickers.

OSCE Efforts in Support of Afghanistan

My third point, and then I'll conclude: the U.S. remains a key supporter of the OSCE's work with Afghanistan and its neighbors to build a more stable, prosperous, and democratic environment. The OSCE as a platform for cooperation and facilitator of cross-border private sector collaboration and joint ventures is well-positioned to advance regional security and stability and is doing this in a number of ways. As we emphasized earlier, the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe provides specialized training for border security agencies from across Central Asia, the wider OSCE region, and Afghanistan. And the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, which Mr. Dunay represents, is offering master's level training for the region's next generation of leaders. It's doing great work, and it is partially financed from the Unified Budget. This as a useful model for BMSC resources in 2016. We applaud the OSCE's multi-faceted approach both to strengthen border security, in a way that is consistent with international human rights principles, and to increase regional trade and linkages, including the promotion of integrated border management strategies.

We also encourage the OSCE to align its efforts on Afghanistan closely with the priorities identified by the region through the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process. The OSCE has unique expertise to apply to the action plans of the six confidence-building measure working groups. We remain committed to the New Silk Road vision as a strategic framework for the United States' ongoing engagement in the region, because we believe that the development of trade and transport corridors connecting Central and South Asia via Afghanistan have the greatest potential to transform regional relationships and promote connectivity. The OSCE remains very much an integral part of the "software" side of constructing the New Silk Road.

Mr. Chair, the United States is clear-eyed about the challenges that exist in Afghanistan, as we are about the security concerns that exist throughout the OSCE neighborhood. But we also see clearly the progress made – and the OSCE role in that regard – as well as the great potential for advancement by augmenting our regional partnerships and through greater regional engagement and cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.