



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Kazakhstan's New NGO Law**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 18, 2016

The United States is concerned that Kazakhstan's recently passed law and implementing regulations for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could have a chilling effect on the activities of independent civil society. The new law requires all local and foreign civil society organizations operating in Kazakhstan to provide the government extensive information about staff, assets, funders, activities, and past and present projects. A likely deadline for the first submission is the end of March. If the government deems that an organization has failed to comply with the law's requirements, the organization would face penalties, including fines and temporary suspension of its activities. Kazakhstani civil society representatives are concerned these requirements could restrict their activities. Furthermore, under this law, Kazakhstani authorities could use criminal and administrative penalties to exert pressure on dissenting voices.

Colleagues, at the OSCE Astana Summit in 2010, all participating States reaffirmed "the important role played by civil society and free media in helping us to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and the rule of law." The United States takes this – and all – OSCE commitments very seriously. We understand that Kazakhstan may be amending the implementing regulations to take into account changes recommended by civil society. We urge Kazakhstani authorities to continue to engage in sustained and meaningful consultations with members of civil society as well as international experts, including those from the Venice Commission and ODIHR, to ensure the revised implementation regulations do not infringe on or undermine civil society's operating space and are in accordance with freedoms of association and expression guaranteed under the Kazakhstani constitution as well as Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments and other international commitments and obligations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.