



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security, Keisi Seferi**

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 17, 2020

Thank you, Ms. Seferi, for your detailed report. The United States warmly welcomes you for your first address at the Permanent Council in your role as the *Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson in Office on Youth and Security*.

The United States recognizes the vital and diverse role young people play in shaping a secure and prosperous future through collaboration with governments, civil society, and international organizations. Indeed, the focus on *youth, peace, and security* today is timely as we strive to develop sustainable resolutions to conflicts and respond to the many challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The recent Ministerial Council, which included a great youth side event, underscored the need for sustained efforts from all sides to engage constructively to advance our commitments.

The United States welcomes the Albanian Chairperson's efforts to integrate a *Youth, Peace, and Security* agenda into OSCE activities and planning. The OSCE's comprehensive concept of security provides a framework for meaningful youth participation across all three dimensions. We encourage OSCE missions to establish Youth Advisory Groups, following the model set by the OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE's Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, to address many of these interconnected challenges we currently face, we need to hear your voice, given youth represent thirty percent of the OSCE region's more than one billion people.

It is not just in the OSCE that we recognize this vital linkage. In July, the *UN Security Council* unanimously adopted *UN Security Council Resolution 2535 on Youth, Peace, and Security* to recognize the unique role of youth in strengthening national, local, and community-based security initiatives.

The 20th anniversary of *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security* was a chance to reaffirm the important role of women—including young women—in improving security and achieving peace. We deeply regret the failure to achieve consensus on a 2020 *Ministerial Council Decision* on this topic but commend the principled stance of the 52 nations that issued a joint statement last week. The United States will continue work on this agenda in the *Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC)*, particularly during our upcoming Chairpersonship.

Promoting a safe environment for civil society actors, including youth human rights defenders and peacebuilders, is a shared responsibility. The United States remains concerned about the limitations on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and movement in some participating

States, as well as reprisals against individuals, including young civil society activists, for exercising those freedoms. We stand with the courageous youth in Belarus voicing their demands for democracy and calls for free and fair elections. We condemn the Belarusian authorities' expulsion of students for participating in peaceful protests and their broader violent crackdown. All young women and men should be allowed to fully participate in public life without retribution or discrimination. We appreciate your coordination with ODIHR to promote the role of youth in countering the scourges of anti-Semitism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia.

We appreciate your participation in the *August International Youth Summit* organized by Uzbekistan and encourage your continued support of OSCE's flagship youth engagement project, *Perspectives 20-30*, and its core group of experts.

The United States supports the education of OSCE's next generation of leaders through another plus-up of funding for OSCE Academy in Bishkek. Finally, we thank Spanish Ambassador Louis Cuesta for his leadership of OSCE's *Group of Friends on Youth and Security* and his inclusion of youth in OSCE's work.

Despite these efforts, challenges to youth engagement across the OSCE area remain. In addition to the weakening of social, economic, educational, employment and health institutions due to conflict or disaster, the coronavirus pandemic is triggering multiple, interlinked crises impacting hundreds of millions of young people. These crises can fuel mistrust, erosion of confidence in institutions, and contribute to conflict within and among societies. In this context, the United States thanks the Albanian Chair for its work to highlight youth not only as beneficiaries, but also as resilient innovators and as agents of positive social change.

Mr. Chairperson, just and peaceful societies elicit and incorporate the opinions and aspirations of all of their people. As we turn our thoughts to 2021, the United States encourages the incoming Swedish Chair to continue to support initiatives which promote meaningful youth participation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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