

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Events in Tunisia

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 20, 2011

The United States continues to closely monitor the rapidly evolving events in Tunisia, where an interim government has been formed. We have condemned the use of violence against citizens peacefully voicing their opinion in Tunisia, and applaud the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people. We urge all parties to maintain calm and avoid violence.

Clearly this is a moment of significant transition in Tunisia, and through this period and beyond it is important that the Tunisian government respect the right of its people to peacefully assemble and express their views. We hope the Tunisian government will build a stronger foundation for Tunisia's future with economic, social, and political reforms, and call for free, fair, and transparent elections in the near future that will reflect the true will and aspirations of the Tunisian people. We are encouraged by recent remarks by the interim government indicating a willingness to work with Tunisians across the political spectrum and within civil society to build a truly representative government based on transparency and accountability. We have no doubt that Tunisia's future will be brighter if it is guided by the voices of the Tunisian people.

During Secretary Clinton's trip to the Middle East this past week, she heard people everywhere yearning for economic opportunity, political participation and the chance to build a brighter future. These are the same issues faced by many participating States as well. Young people especially need to have a meaningful role in the decisions that shape their lives. Addressing these concerns will be challenging, but the United States stands ready to help. We would encourage Tunisia, our Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation, also to consider the expertise and experience of the OSCE, which could serve as an additional resource for our Tunisian partners.

The United States has a long and historic relationship with Tunisia. As the transition proceeds, we would like to see an open process, meaningful dialogue between the government and significant groups that want to play a role in Tunisia's future. Governments are hard pressed to create political, social, and economic opportunity for their people. We want to be a partner in this process, but clearly it is important for governments to listen and respond to the aspirations of their people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.