



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**52nd Joint Meeting**  
**of the Forum for Security Co-Operation**  
**and the Permanent Council**

**Challenges Linked to Afghanistan after 2014**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Robbins  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
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The United States warmly welcomes Under Secretary General of the United Nations Fedotov, Ambassador Kubiš, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan, and Ambassador Pesko, Director of the Office of the Secretary General to this special joint meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council. We thank you for your thoughtful and comprehensive presentations today on the challenges and opportunities facing Afghanistan and the OSCE region after 2014.

A core OSCE tenet is that shared challenges require a collaborative, comprehensive response. Achieving a stable and prosperous future for Afghanistan is no exception to this principle. In Afghanistan, three defining transitions are currently underway: a political transition, including presidential elections next April, a major security transition with the drawdown of ISAF forces, and an economic transition that could see Afghanistan serve as the bridge between the markets of South and Central Asia. 2014 will be a critical year in all three transitions. An Afghanistan that successfully navigates these transitions has the potential to end the decades-long conflict among its people and to contribute significantly to the entire OSCE region. The OSCE's support for Afghanistan should, likewise, encompass the entire spectrum of comprehensive security.

It is clearly in the interest of every participating State to help Afghanistan overcome the challenges these transitions represent. The OSCE has much to offer in assisting Afghanistan and the region, including improving border management and business practices, countering corruption, promoting democratic values, transparency, and human rights; reducing illicit trafficking; and promoting legitimate trade and economic development. The OSCE's comprehensive security concept, directly linking political-military security to economics, the environment, and human rights and fundamental freedoms, makes it a unique mechanism for the 57 participating States to advance our shared interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

We welcome Afghanistan's formal invitation to the OSCE to provide support for the 2014 presidential election. We expect that, as it has in the past, the OSCE will respond positively to this assistance request. This Organization has deployed Election Support Teams (EST) to every national election in Afghanistan since 2004 and has provided a number of recommendations on electoral reform. The United States encourages Afghanistan to implement these recommendations fully.

Since 2007, the OSCE has supported a number of initiatives designed to support Afghanistan and its neighbors. The United States has consistently supported the OSCE's efforts to share its expertise with Afghanistan and the region to build a more stable and democratic Afghanistan. As a platform for cooperation and facilitator of cross-border private sector collaboration and joint ventures, the OSCE is well-positioned to support and advance regional security and stability.

The OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe is a key tool in this ongoing effort. As we saw in last month's independent assessment report, the College is providing excellent specialized training for border security agencies from across Central Asia, the wider OSCE region, and Afghanistan. This training has direct relevance for all of the participating States because the development of professional, robust, and transparent border operations in the region adds to our common security, aids in the prevention of transnational terrorism, and helps to ensure the growth of regional trade that is essential to Afghanistan's economic development.

However, the assessment report also highlighted the sustainability problems facing the BMSC. As an extra-budgetary project reliant on ad-hoc contributions, the College lacks the fiscal certainty needed to make the sort of medium- and long-term plans that any educational institution needs to maximize its effectiveness. In order to give the College the secure financial footing necessary to continue its vital support for Afghanistan, last year the OSCE Office in Tajikistan requested that the OSCE fully fund the BMSC as part of the Unified Budget. To the great misfortune of this Organization, opposition from a very few participating States blocked that request. We should rectify that mistake this year and fully fund the BMSC under the 2014 Unified Budget.

The OSCE Academy in Bishkek is another important part of the OSCE's existing efforts to support Afghanistan. The Academy's master's degree programs for the next generation of leaders for Central Asia and Afghanistan foster the vital people-to-people contacts that will underpin future regional cooperation. Its newly proposed Afghanistan Security Research Center will provide vital information on the security linkages between Afghanistan and its neighbors in Central Asia.

We encourage the OSCE to align its ongoing efforts on Afghanistan closely with the priorities identified by the region through the "Heart of Asia" process. The OSCE has unique expertise to apply to the action plans of the six confidence building measures working groups and can serve as an important supporting partner organization for the Heart of Asia process as we generate closer ties and enhance our collaborative efforts.

We remain committed to the New Silk Road vision as a strategic framework for the international community's ongoing engagement in the region, because we believe that the development of trade and transport corridors connecting Central and South Asia through Afghanistan has the greatest potential to transform regional relationships and promote regional stability. Regional governments have made notable progress toward establishing a more integrated market, and the United States will continue to support those countries that embrace connectivity and collaboration.

The OSCE operates important programs designed to facilitate legitimate trade between Afghanistan and its neighbors by building capacity and developing relationships between Central Asian and Afghan businesses, notably by empowering and engaging women

entrepreneurs. Programs like these show that the OSCE can and should play a role in building the New Silk Road.

We fully support the Chairmanship's proposal to have a Declaration of Support for Afghanistan at the Ministerial Council in Kyiv. This Declaration should emphasize the multi-dimensional nature of the support the OSCE can provide. It should also focus on our shared goal of helping Afghanistan become fully stable and secure.

The United States is clear-eyed about the challenges that exist in Afghanistan and the wider region. But we also see clearly the progress made, as well as the virtually unlimited potential for advancement through greater regional cooperation. We remain committed to supporting stability in Afghanistan and to augmenting the regional relationships that will help make this possible. In this regard, the United States remains prepared to conclude a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) that supports the shared objectives of both our countries. We believe that the benefits the BSA will deliver to Afghanistan – the partnership that it will cement – are clear and significant.

The United States considers good relations between neighbors a vital indication that our shared objective of cooperative and indivisible security is being realized. In that regard, we call on all participating States and Partners for Cooperation to redouble their efforts to support the OSCE's response to assistance requests from the Afghan government, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate more closely with all our partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.