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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 13, 2014

Thank you, President Kanerva, for your remarks to the Permanent Council. We welcome the opportunity to hear from you directly for the first time, as the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Open communication with the OSCE PA adds value to our work in Vienna, to our field missions, and to our institutions.

At a time with the crisis in and around Ukraine at the top of our agenda, we commend your cooperation with ODIHR during Ukraine's October 26 Parliamentary Elections. We have said before that the PA and ODIHR complement each other in their election observation strengths – the long-term presence and technical expertise of ODIHR, together with the high profile and real world experience of the elected parliamentarians of the OSCE PA. Experience has shown that it is both practical and desirable for the OSCE PA and ODIHR to work together.

Your presence here today coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the Berlin Conference on Combatting Anti-Semitism. The OSCE PA's leadership was instrumental in making the original Berlin conference in 2004 a reality, and we also commend the Assembly's ongoing efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

The United States enjoys close cooperation with the OSCE PA and its officers. We look forward to facilitating a visit to the Detention Facility at Guantanamo Bay for a group of OSCE PA members led by the Third Committee Chair, Isabel Santos of Portugal, at a mutually agreed time. We also look forward to the upcoming OSCE PA Helsinki +40 seminar hosted in partnership with the German Marshall Fund of the United States on November 18. We thank the OSCE PA for observing the United States mid-term elections on November 4.

The United States is fortunate that our delegation receives tremendous support from the United States Helsinki Commission, an independent U.S. government agency that was created by law, and which is comprised of Commissioners from, among other entities, our Senate and House of Representatives from both political parties. We encourage other participating States to work with their parliamentarians, and encourage the OSCE Secretariat and all OSCE institutions to work closely with the OSCE PA.

We look forward to continuing our work with you, President Kanerva, and with the Parliamentary Assembly as a whole.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.