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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Address by Mr. Jan Lundin, Director General, Council of Baltic Sea States

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 10, 2011

The United States is pleased to welcome Director General Jan Lundin to the Permanent Council. The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) has become a beneficial political forum to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation on priority issues in the Baltic Sea sub-region. Your focus on five priority areas closely corresponds to the three dimensions of the OSCE. Your work therefore can serve as a complement to the activities of the OSCE and its field missions. I was pleased to hear in your report that the CBSS, while focusing its mandate on Northern Europe, continues to foster cooperative relations with other regional organizations. We commend the Council's cooperation with the EU to develop an integrated maritime policy that will facilitate economic development, security, and environmental protection in the Baltic Sea region. We particularly take note of the Norwegian presidency's efforts to promote liquefied natural gas in shipping. As you pointed out, sustainable energy and transport are themes for this year's OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, and we thus hope to hear more about your achievements in this field as we look ahead to the EEF meeting in Prague in September.

The United States also commends the Norwegian Presidency's selection of combating trafficking in human beings with a special focus on labor trafficking as one of its top priorities for its Presidency. This is indeed a rising area of concern for all our countries, and one that is being discussed in several multilateral settings. As we speak, a draft ILO Convention is being discussed at the International Labour Conference in an effort to help protect domestic workers from domestic servitude, and labor trafficking will also be the subject of the next conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons.

The OSCE and the United States have a strong political commitment to combat all forms of human trafficking. In a recent address, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Monitoring and Combating Trafficking in Persons Luis CdeBaca called human trafficking not purely "a human rights abuse [but] a threat to national security, public health and democracy."

The CBSS plays an important role in combating this crime, which, as you noted, continues throughout the Baltic Sea states, and indeed, throughout the OSCE region and the world. We appreciate your efforts to develop projects to combat trafficking within the CBSS, and we strongly encourage the successor CBSS presidencies of Germany and Russia to continue prioritizing this important work.

Thank you again for your presentation this morning, Mr. Director General, and please be assured of our best wishes for every future success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.