



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**Response to the Minister of Foreign  
Affairs of Estonia and Chair of the  
Council of Europe Committee of Ministers  
Marina Kaljurand**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 26, 2016

Madam Foreign Minister Kaljurand, the United States warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council and it is nice to see you again, and thanks for your insightful and constructive remarks. The United States shares Estonia's conviction that the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are the foundational components for a sound foreign policy. Last month, the United States and the Council of Europe marked the 20th anniversary of U.S. observer status and our cooperation on common values. During those years, we have learned that defending the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons, online and offline, is at the core of both the OSCE's and the Council of Europe's important work, as demonstrated, for example, through US and Estonian membership and participation in the Freedom Online Coalition. We welcome Estonia's priorities during its second chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and today I will speak about two of them: defending human rights on the Internet and promoting gender equality.

First, Madam Minister, we share your concern about the increasing need to protect the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms online, and believe that supporting civil society organizations is a key to protecting those rights and freedoms. We appreciate your willingness to work together with all partners to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the online environment, contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe Internet Governance Strategy, and promote relevant Council of Europe standards. In particular, we are pleased to note that the Committee of Ministers and the German Chairmanship of the OSCE will co-host an event on Internet freedom in Strasbourg on September 9.

Second, Madam Minister, the United States is also of the view that achieving gender equality is critical to the equal enjoyment of human rights and is a critical component of the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law, economic growth, and sustainability. This concept is both simple and powerful: that we are all safer, that our efforts at peacebuilding are stronger, that systems of government, judicial systems, and peace agreements are more inclusive, just, and lasting when women have a say in how societies reform and develop, rebuild peace, and prevent and recover from conflict. The United States recognizes the influential role the empowerment of women can play in advancing international security, and continues to support implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender

Action Plan and ongoing implementation of UNSCR 1325. We applaud the Council of Europe's Transversal Program on Gender Equality, including the Gender Equality Strategy which takes action on combating gender stereotypes and sexism, preventing and combating violence against women and girls, guaranteeing equal access of women to justice, achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

In closing, Madam Minister, let me reiterate our support for the work undertaken by the Council of Europe, which, like the OSCE, is an essential element of our international security architecture. Such institutions form the foundation of the rules-based international order that is essential to our common security.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.