



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Closing Reinforced Plenary: Any Other Business**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Michael Kozak  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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I recently heard a proverb that brought to mind some of the more intransigent problems we confront in the human dimension: a problem makes you forget a problem. While it is certainly appropriate here to raise the most current and timely issues, we should not lose sight of some of the most serious, long-standing concerns that remain without remedy.

The United States for several years has used this agenda item to follow up on the recommendations made by the fact-finding mission resulting from the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism. Unfortunately, we must do so again as little progress has been made in the countries concerned.

Nearly 18 months following the invocation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism to examine the human rights situation in Belarus following the December presidential election on December 19, 2010 and 16 months after presentation of the report of the Rapporteur to the Permanent Council, the Lukashenka regime continues to ignore its comprehensive, yet succinct recommendations. Very little progress has been made by Belarus to address the problems outlined in the report. Instead, the Government of Belarus has continued its crackdown against political opposition, civil society, and independent media. The government arbitrarily arrested, detained, and imprisoned citizens for criticizing officials, participating in demonstrations, and defending human rights, and prevented independent media from disseminating information and materials, while imposing systematic travel bans imposed on opposition activists, human rights defenders and independent media.

We also continue to be concerned about the situation in Turkmenistan, where there has been little progress since the Moscow Mechanism was invoked in 2003. Basic human rights and fundamental freedoms remain severely restricted. Although Turkmenistan is no longer structured as a one-party political system, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs created in August was only established following instructions from President Berdimukhamedov, leaving the government still with no real political opposition. There is no real political pluralism, and virtually no space for civil society to operate. All media is tightly controlled by the government, and the Internet is censored and monitored. There continue to be significant restrictions on freedom of religion. Several religious groups remain unable to register, and the government has placed restrictions on registered groups' ability to own property and print or import religious materials. Current law prohibits foreign missionary activity and foreign religious organizations,

and the private publication of religious literature. Freedom of movement also continues to be restricted.

We remain concerned about the lack of access to persons in prison, including political prisoners. We still await information on imprisoned journalists Annakurban Amanklichev and Sapardurdy Hajiyeu, as well as former civil activist Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, who was arrested in June 2008 after returning to the country from Norway, where he had received asylum. One very concrete step Turkmenistan could take that would be a clear signal of the government's intention to move forward with reform would be to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and independent observers' access to prisons. Finally, as we have for the past seven years, we again request information about, and access to our former OSCE colleague, Batyr Berdiev.

At the close of the 1991 Moscow meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension, co-chairman of the Soviet delegation Yuri Deryabin reflected on the need to "create international guarantees for implementing the primacy of democracy and human rights." To that end, the participating States created the Moscow Mechanism. The fact that it is so rarely invoked speaks, in part, to the exceptional urgency and depth of concern generated by those instances where it has been used. I urge both Minsk and Ashgabat to implement the constructive recommendations produced by the Mechanism experts, and urge all of us around the table here continue to work for the primacy of democracy and human rights.

Thank you.