



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Vikki, Head of OSCE Center in Astana

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 10, 2007

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you Ambassador Vikki, for your report, which was comprehensive, forward-looking and results-oriented, as always.

The Government of the United States is pleased and encouraged by the scope of the work being undertaken by the OSCE presence in Kazakhstan, as well as by the support that the presence continues to receive from the Government of Kazakhstan. This is an excellent example of how the OSCE and a host government can work cooperatively to have a positive impact on the lives of the country's citizens.

You have outlined for us today an ambitious agenda for the Center that covers important projects in all three dimensions. It is critical that the Government of Kazakhstan proceed to implement the broad program of democratic reforms that it has promised, and the OSCE Center has an important role to play in support of this effort.

These reforms include establishment of a local system of self-government, strengthening and developing civil society institutions, improving election legislation, broadening the powers of parliament, promoting judicial transparency and efficiency, securing freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and freedom of religious associations.

The Government of the United States continues to support the work of the OSCE Center aimed at helping the Government of Kazakhstan deliver on these promises to its own people and to this Organization, and we look forward to frequent reporting from the mission in the coming months on how Kazakhstan is doing in making concrete, substantive progress in this regard.

We agree fully with the Center's tri-partite approach to its mandate, which entails working closely with national authorities but also with civil society. It is for this reason that the United States strongly supports the continued, effective operation of an OSCE Office in Almaty—the traditional seat of most of civil society operations—as well as the Center in Astana. We are also encouraged to learn that the Center continues to branch out beyond Astana and Almaty to implement many of its programs and projects, reaching out to the regions.

Ambassador Vikki, you and your staff continue to do excellent work in Kazakhstan. We are confident that your move to Astana, while logistically burdensome, will not detract in any way

from the important and balanced work being done by the OSCE presence throughout all three dimensions and throughout the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.