



United States Mission to the OSCE

Working Session 1 Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I

As prepared for delivery by Director for European Security and Political Affairs
Gary Robbins, to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Thank you, Madame Moderator.

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On behalf of the United States I would like again to commend the outstanding work of ODIHR, and again to warmly welcome Ambassador Vollebaek in his new position as the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The United States strongly supports the OSCE's important role in addressing national-minority related issues in participating States. The office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities is unique in international security architecture. Its focus on conflict prevention is especially welcome as it entails a far lower human cost when compared to crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. We would also like to reiterate the strong support of the U.S. for the continued autonomy of all the OSCE Institutions, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The regional engagement efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner have been welcome, and the United States has especially supported its engagement in Central Asia. The initiatives to promote respect for minorities' linguistic and educational rights in Kazakhstan and to enhance cooperation between the police and minorities in Kyrgyzstan were excellent. The agreement last November between five Central Asian states to establish four technical working groups to move the cooperation process forward in concrete terms was an important initiative. We encourage all the Central Asian states to continue to engage in this process of cooperation.

The United States believes that important work lies ahead in the area of reconciliation, especially in the Balkans. The international community must support reconciliation efforts to secure a long-term peace and to prevent the reemergence of violence. The unique efforts of the High

Commissioner in this regard with the Kosovo Albanian and Serb communities have been challenging but vital, and should continue. Because the status quo is unsustainable, the United States is committed to finding a resolution to Kosovo's status soon. The United States has agreed to support the efforts of a U.S.-EU-Russia negotiating Troika to try to reach an outcome mutually-acceptable to the parties. The Troika's work will conclude by December 10, 2007 when the Contact Group reports to the UN Secretary General on these efforts. It is in everyone's interest that the parties take seriously this opportunity to find a solution.

If the parties are unable to reach agreement by December 10, then the United States believes the recommendations of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari remain the best way forward. President Ahtisaari's recommendations, developed over fifteen months of intensive negotiations between the parties, offer broad protections for all communities in Kosovo and can best ensure regional stability.

In closing Madame Moderator, I would like to reiterate strong U.S. support for the HCNM and its impending work.