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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Turkmenistan's Perennial Absence from the HDIM

As delivered by Political Counselor Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 15, 2009

The United States wishes to join the EU in expressing its regret that the Government of Turkmenistan, once again, chose not to participate in this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. The 2009 event saw a record number of participants at HDIM from across the OSCE region and proved to be an important occasion for the frank exchange of ideas, recommendations, criticisms and even commendations.

We valued the opportunity the U.S. Delegation had in Warsaw to meet with a variety of civil society groups from Turkmenistan, but this is no substitute for attendance by government officials. Participation at the HDIM would provide the Turkmenistan Government a further opportunity to exchange views and experience with both government and non-governmental organizations that could likewise contribute to Turkmenistan's fulfillment of its OSCE commitments.

We do appreciate the Turkmenistan Government's stated intention to implement international standards with regard to respect for human rights, and we recognize that ongoing efforts in legal reform and engagement with processes such as the UN Universal Periodic Review are constructive steps in that direction. We look forward to seeing concrete results in the near future resulting from those stated intentions and legal reform efforts.

In line with the Government of Turkmenistan's stated commitment to freedom of movement and educational reforms, we still hope the Government will allow students to leave the country to study abroad at institutions of their choice.

Thank you Madam Chair.