



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Right of Reply to Russia on Discrimination in Sport**

As delivered by Political Counselor Gregory Macris  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 19, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We find the focus and timing of the Russian Federation's statement curious. We struggle to understand how this issue is relevant to our OSCE commitments.

In reference to the mention of the United States in Russia's statement, I welcome the opportunity to explain exactly what happened regarding visa interviews for members of the Russian national wrestling team. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow received a request on short notice for a delegation of 35 people. While our Embassy colleagues had recently accommodated other urgent requests, they simply did not have the capacity to process another group so quickly.

Reduced visa services are an inevitable result of the Russian government's cap on our Mission staffing. We regret the Russian government's decision and its impact on our ability to meet the full demand for U.S. visas in Russia. We welcome Russians visiting the United States. Russian nationals, like nationals of other countries, may apply for visas at our embassies and consulates in other countries around the world.

As U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman has said many times, people to people connections forged through two-way travel are the bedrock on which we can build lasting cooperation, discover common interests, and identify common ground. The fact remains, however, that fewer U.S. Embassy staff inevitably means we have a reduced capacity to provide the services the Russian people desire.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.