



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Program Office in Dushanbe, Ambassador Valeriu Chiveri

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 18, 2019

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to welcome Ambassador Chiveri to the Permanent Council for the first time in his new position.

The United States believes the Program Office in Dushanbe should assist Tajikistan in addressing issues across all three OSCE dimensions. We also urge the Program Office to increase its collaboration with members of civil society, academia, and other OSCE-supported structures in carrying out its activities.

We support the Office's work to promote democratization, rule of law, and human rights, which are integral parts of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. It is important that programs on torture prevention and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) encompass a cross-dimensional approach that protects human rights. We also welcome projects related to police reform, community policing, and combating corruption.

The United States supports the work of the Women's Resource Centers, which, among other things, address the needs of victims of domestic violence. We value the Office's work to promote women's political participation, and we welcome the emphasis the Office has placed on involving youth in the broad spectrum of its activities.

The United States strongly supports the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe. We continue to believe that the BMSC should be included in the OSCE Unified Budget in order to put it on a more stable and predictable financial footing. BMSC training programs benefit participants from many OSCE countries, and its activities should be financially sustainable.

Madam Chair, we are concerned about several negative developments in Tajikistan over the past year, some of which we raised earlier this month in our response to OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Desir. This included a call for Tajikistan to allow unrestricted access to the online news media, and on its authorities to investigate reports that family members of journalist Humayra Bakhtiyar have been subjected to intimidation. We stress the importance of media freedom. We believe Tajikistan's long-term prosperity, security, and stability require the government's full commitment to protecting freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and the ability of journalists to work without threat of censorship or reprisal.

We remain concerned about constraints on religious freedom in Tajikistan, including excessive government restrictions on religious practices; rejection of attempts by minority religious organizations to register; restrictions on the religious education of youth; harassment for wearing religious attire; and undue limitations on the publication or importation of religious literature. In November, Secretary of State Pompeo re-designated Tajikistan as a Country of Particular Concern (“CPC”) for engaging in or tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom. We hope the OSCE can do more to assist Tajikistan in implementing its commitments concerning freedom of religion or belief.

The United States has repeatedly raised its concerns about the rule of law, the elimination of political pluralism, and the targeting of defense lawyers, such as Buzurgmehr Yorov, and we urge Tajikistan to avail itself of OSCE assistance in addressing these issues.

Ambassador Chiveri, thank you again for your report. We appreciate all you do to assist Tajikistan to implement its OSCE commitments in all three dimensions and address the common challenges we all face.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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