

## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Session 16: Human Dimension Activities**

*Presentation of activities at ODIHR and other OSCE institutions and field operations to implement priorities and tasks contained in the OSCE decisions and other documents*

As prepared for delivery by Casey Christensen  
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
October 8, 2009

Mr. Moderator,

The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned its place as a key institution in the OSCE's efforts to promote democratic development, human rights, free and fair elections, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

At a time when core human dimension commitments are increasingly being called into question, as was so convincingly argued in ODIHR's 2006 Report, "Common Responsibility", the role played by ODIHR in promoting respect for human rights, providing objective assessments of the conduct of elections and supporting the development of democratic institutions, is even more crucial. The United States encourages ODIHR to focus on those core elements of its mandate. In doing so, the United States suggests that ODIHR should prioritize those areas where OSCE commitments are the most clearly defined, and that ODIHR projects should focus on those countries where the gap between commitments and implementation is the greatest.

The ODIHR should continue its valuable reporting, as is exemplified in its joint assessment with the HCNM of the human rights situation in the war-affected areas of Georgia. Serious human rights and humanitarian concerns remain in the zone of conflict, and will continue if not promptly addressed. Accordingly, we encourage ODIHR and the HCNM to return to Georgia, and especially to the Akhalkalaki region of South Ossetia, to monitor efforts to implement the report's recommendations.

All participating States have an interest in opposing any effort to undermine ODIHR's autonomy and impartiality, including its election observation missions, as well as any attempts to turn back the clock on the progress we have made in democratic practices within the OSCE region. The United States has been, and will continue to be, in the forefront of States protecting ODIHR from political interference. In this regard, we believe that ODIHR has done an excellent job in fully responding to the taskings given in Brussels Ministerial Decision 19/06.

OSCE's well-deserved reputation for election monitoring is directly attributable to its well-known, objective criteria and procedures for election observation. We strongly

support the election observation work of both the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We continue to believe that both of these OSCE institutions play a critical role each providing unique and necessary expertise, and that our Organization is best served when we all speak with one voice and work together in a spirit of complementary partnership, cooperation and collaboration.

The universally respected OSCE objectivity, expertise and professionalism in election monitoring can and should be made available to countries outside the OSCE, especially to our Partners for Cooperation, whose fate greatly matters to our common security. We were pleased that the OSCE has been able to support the Presidential Election process in Afghanistan this year, as it had in 2004 and 2005. We encourage the Chairmanship and ODIHR to further develop this interaction with the government of Afghanistan.

The Democracy program projects are well designed and implemented and provide emerging democracies with much needed technical assistance in promoting the rule of law, developing transparent legislative processes, and building civil society. With our increased focus on strengthening democratic institutions and respect for the rule of law in 2009, on the basis of Helsinki Ministerial Decision 7/08, we anticipate much greater activity by this program.

In our view, the Human Rights program should focus more on core fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion. The Human Rights program should develop technical assistance and training programs for the emerging democracies on how to ensure that fundamental freedoms are respected. We also believe the Director of ODIHR should be prepared to highlight key concerns and current issues that may arise in areas covered by ODIHR's mandate.

In our view, the ODIHR effort to deal with hate crimes should focus on realistic, specific, targeted initiatives that will help address the problem of basic definitions, model legislation to meet OSCE commitments, data collection methods based on this model legislation, and a sharing of best practices. We commend ODIHR on the release of the 2008 hate crime report which provides a good starting point.

Civil society participation is the foundation of the effective review of the implementation of human dimension commitments by participating States. ODIHR must continue to set an example of inclusiveness of NGOs and transparency at all ODIHR-organized events and meetings. We also look to the upcoming Kazakhstani Chairmanship to ensure that OSCE events remain open to NGOs, in accordance with the provisions of the Helsinki 1992 Summit IV/16.

We continue to look forward to working ODIHR and the participating States in the implementation of our OSCE Human Dimension commitments. We applaud ODIHR for its excellent work. You will continue to have our full support in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.