



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 12, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary General Pejčinović Burić, the United States welcomes you in your appearance here at the Permanent Council. We appreciate the overview of your priorities, particularly the priorities that you have set down in your opening remarks—we are very grateful for that—and we should be fully considering our cooperation between our organizations and the achievement of those priorities, as well as the reassessment of our own.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe must work together to defend a rules-based international order. Protecting human rights and fostering democratic societies are the foundation of our shared approach to comprehensive security. The OSCE and the Council of Europe must work in concert to protect and promote our common values and principles, as reflected in the Helsinki Final Act, as well as the Statute of the Council of Europe.

The OSCE at this point must continue to assess the commitments to the Helsinki Final Act, and to the Helsinki Accords, and reaffirm firmly and strongly our commitments to those principals, as they seem to be under challenge from time to time here in this Organization. The United States is firmly committed to those principles that were negotiated and agreed to. States contravening their commitments and violating their treaty obligations should be held accountable. Russia continues to undermine this order, spurring conflict in eastern Ukraine, occupying and purportedly trying to annex Crimea, and occupying over 20 percent of Georgian territory.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant, complementary roles to play in strengthening respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democratic government. We are pleased with our organizations' coordinated efforts on election observation. Our joint election observation missions and reports illustrate our strong commitment to helping states achieve their democratic aims with outcomes that reflect the will of the people. The joint legal opinions of the Venice Commission and the OSCE can strengthen the rule of law by assisting countries to uphold their international obligations and commitments.

Cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe on election observation and on legislative reviews is well known. Cooperation at headquarters-level and through our

institutions, while often less visible, is also valuable. The United States has been an active observer of the Council of Europe for almost 25 years, and we would like to see more collaboration between the OSCE and the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, the Group of States Against Corruption, which is known as GRECO. We are proud to be full members of the Venice Commission and of GRECO. The United States values the Venice Commission for its contributions to promoting the rule of law and believes addressing corruption begins with countries sharing a common vision and a strong commitment to taking effective, practical steps to prevent and prosecute corruption. Now, we believe all OSCE participating States would benefit from this system of peer review and holding each other accountable.

Together, the OSCE and Council of Europe work on numerous other issues, including combating money laundering, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and promoting inclusive societies through tolerance and non-discrimination and respect for the human rights of members of minority groups. Our field offices have strong traditions of collaboration, particularly in the western Balkans and Ukraine. We hope the OSCE and the Council of Europe will find meaningful ways to bolster your work in Georgia and in Armenia, as the OSCE's Armenia Cooperation continues to grow.

The United States was pleased this fall to join the Council of Europe's 24/7 Networks of Contact Points on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and on the Exchange of Information Regarding the Legal Standing of Victims of Terrorism. These networks, which are open to all countries and international organizations regardless of Council of Europe membership, help connect the relevant authorities to counterparts for sharing threat information or helping victims of terrorism access another country's criminal justice system.

In conclusion, we thank you, Madame Secretary General, for your appearance here at the Permanent Council, and we value cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe – past, present, and future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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