



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 17 Human Dimension Activities

As prepared for delivery by Avis T. Bohlen
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The United States strongly supports the work of the OSCE structures and institutions to assist participating States with implementing their human dimension commitments. ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the three Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, and the other OSCE institutions and field presences, are to be commended for their reports, activities, and engagement.

As these various OSCE institutions carry out their human dimension activities, we encourage greater coordination among them in order to avoid duplication and strengthen their abilities to build on and reinforce one another's work. This should include planning for seminars, workshops, and other meetings. We believe this would facilitate engagement by both participating States and civil society.

As we have heard over the past two weeks, the implementation of many of our core human dimension commitments remains challenging, making OSCE activities more important than ever.

ODIHR's work providing objective assessments of the conduct of elections, promoting respect for human rights, and supporting the development of democratic institutions remains crucial. ODIHR's autonomy must be preserved and its operations and activities remain free from political interference.

In these times of budget constraints, we encourage ODIHR to focus its attention on the core elements of its mandate, and to direct its efforts to those situations where the gap between commitment and implementation is the greatest. As economic conditions continue to affect participating States' funding, it is ever more important that the OSCE as a whole, in addition to ODIHR, direct its energies to those areas where its activities can have greatest impact and allocate its resources accordingly. We urge the Director of ODIHR to highlight key concerns and timely issues that may arise in areas covered by ODIHR's mandate.

OSCE's reputation as the standard-bearer in election monitoring reflects its established, objective criteria and procedures for election observation. Indeed, the OSCE's methodology has become the guiding example for international election observation. We strongly support the election observation work of both the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and continue to believe that both of these OSCE institutions play a critical role. Our collective ability to assess

the conduct of elections in our region, and improve the conduct of future elections, stems from the unique capabilities of the ODIHR and the ODIHR-OSCE Parliamentary Assembly partnership for election observation.

Such a unique perspective is not available through any other mechanism. In contributing to a broader effort of international observation, ODIHR can make important recommendations and appropriate technical assistance to improve future elections. The United States welcomes OSCE observation of our own elections in November as provided in the Copenhagen Document. We also believe that follow-up to the recommendations made by OSCE observation missions is extremely important. We continue to work to address issues raised by previous observation mission final reports and urge all other OSCE States to do the same.

In July 2012, at a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “Democratic Elections and Election Observation” in Vienna, our delegation proposed a process for the OSCE to continue to provide assistance even after its observation activities have ended. Under this process, ODIHR would make follow-up visits shortly after the publication of observation mission final reports and work with authorities on the implementation of recommendations. With domestic input, a participating State could compile a plan of action and timeline for enhancing the electoral framework based on the outcome of that visit. The concerned participating State could then make a presentation on the progress made during sessions of the Permanent Council or the Human Dimension Committee. In regular reports to the PC, the Director of ODIHR should also report on the measures taken by participating States to comply with their election related commitments. The United States looks forward to working with other participating States to develop a meaningful election follow-up process as proposed in our recommendations from the SHDM.

The United States also places great importance on the work of the three Personal Representatives on tolerance and non-discrimination.

In the face of growing intolerance in the region, we support ODIHR’s expansion of the Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement program to include prosecutors. Importantly, this training can also address anti-migrant and other prejudices held by members of the law enforcement community and can address concerns related to ethnic profiling that may hamper responses to hate crimes and other acts of discrimination. We also urge participating States to utilize the 2012 OSCE “Gender and Labour Migration Trainer’s Manual” and OSCE/IOM “Training Modules on Labour Migration Management – Trainer’s Manual” in their development and revision of labor migration policies and programs. Both manuals include information on addressing prejudice and discrimination faced by migrants and methods to facilitate integration, in addition to sustainable policy recommendations that could assist in promoting more positive views of migrants.

The United States continues to support the work of the OSCE field missions. We encourage the field missions – as well as ODIHR – to strengthen activities aimed at supporting the rule of law and judicial reform. Bearing in mind the Allied Forces’ completion of transition to Afghan security lead by the end of 2014, we support the OSCE’s heightened attention to Central Asia

and Afghanistan in areas across all three dimensions, to advance security, prosperity, and respect for democratic processes and human rights in the broader Central Asian region.

Finally, I want to focus on the participation of NGOs in OSCE events and field work in the human dimension. It is, we believe, one of the elements that make the OSCE so valuable and our work at the HDIM so fruitful. The work of participating States in other OSCE fora – like the Human Dimension Committee – cannot substitute for engagement with and among NGOs at HDIM. We very much appreciated the opportunity to hear NGO views on the modalities for this meeting during a side event hosted by Ireland last week. The United States welcomes ideas to strengthen that dialogue, but will not agree to any changes that would restrict or weaken our existing framework for public access and participation.

Thank you.