



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **The Closing Session of the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

Remarks of Jonathan D. Farrar  
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to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, October 5, 2007

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Colleagues:

I am Jonathan Farrar, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. I appreciate this opportunity to join Ambassador Williamson in reaffirming the United States' unwavering commitment to the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the Helsinki Final Act enshrining that Declaration, to OSCE commitments and our support for the OSCE's institutions and field missions working to establish the liberties upon which lasting security is built. As President Bush emphasized in his recent address to the United Nations General Assembly, respect for the inherent rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Over the past two weeks, the United States delegation has shared our views on challenges of implementation confronting the participating States. It has heard and responded to the concerns of others about our own record, and we have welcomed those exchanges. Expressing concern about a fellow participating State's respect for universal and inalienable freedoms is not interference in internal affairs; it is the right – indeed the responsibility -- of every OSCE signatory.

We also have welcomed the exchange of ideas with other governments and non-governmental representatives regarding OSCE's work in the Human Dimension. We continue to support the efforts of the three Personal Representatives to promote tolerance and non-discrimination. We strongly encourage the incoming Chair-in-Office, Finland, to renew each of their terms. We are ready to engage with the Chair-in-Office to make the representatives and their distinct mandates even more effective. We would welcome a Ministerial decision to convene a high-level conference on anti-Semitism, discrimination against Muslims, and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions in 2009, with an experts meeting in 2008, along with the continuance of the implementation review taking place within annual HDIM conferences.

Mr. Chair, at this closing session, I would like to highlight two issues that go to the core of the Human Dimension and of the Helsinki process as a whole. First: The importance

of preserving and strengthening the OSCE as a values-based organization. And second: the imperative of protecting and supporting non-governmental organizations and independent media who play a critical role in advancing human rights and democracy.

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed over thirty years ago, it did not legitimize an unacceptable status quo – though some insisted, and others feared, that it did. Instead, the document paved the way for peaceful, democratic change.

For more than thirty years, the Helsinki process has served as a source of inspiration and hope. As Secretary Rice has said: “preserving the integrity of the Helsinki principles and ensuring that OSCE continues to be an agent of peaceful, democratic transformation should be paramount objectives.”

The Human Dimension of the OSCE is the area where differences between principle and performance are most keenly felt in the daily lives of men and women. It is precisely where the distance between commitment and compliance is greatest that the OSCE and its institutions, especially ODIHR, must continue to concentrate their efforts.

My delegation is open to ideas that strengthen the capacity of OSCE to uphold high standards and rise to new challenges. But we oppose any efforts that diminish OSCE’s credibility as a values-based organization, dilute the commitments of signatory states in the Human Dimension, divert OSCE’s attention from tough Human Dimension issues or undermine OSCE’s effectiveness on the ground.

OSCE has set a pioneering example for other regions of the world and it must remain a path-breaker. Those pressing for peaceful, democratic reform continue to meet with resistance in many countries around the globe, as the disturbing events unfolding in Burma so graphically attest. I came to Warsaw from the UN General Assembly session, where the United States is working with the UN to support the courageous people of Burma as they seek the foundational freedoms enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Colleagues: a time when human rights and democratic principles are under siege is no time for OSCE’s principles, institutions and missions to be undercut.

That brings me to the second issue I wish to highlight – the need to defend the role of NGOs and independent media. It was, after all, the participating States of the OSCE that adopted some of the world’s earliest and most advanced provisions regarding NGOs and press freedom. It is particularly regrettable that today, in some participating States, NGOs and journalists are targeted for harassment – and worse. For example:

Over the last few years, the Government of Uzbekistan has forced over 300 NGOs to close, including most international human rights groups, removing the international community’s ability to monitor Uzbekistan’s compliance with its international commitments.

In April 2006, human rights advocate Mutabar Tojiboyeva was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment on charges human rights groups said were politically motivated. Reportedly, she has been held for periods of time in the prison psychiatric ward and in solitary confinement.

In Tajikistan, we have yet to see how the new Law on Public Associations, passed by the parliament in May, will be implemented. We call on the Government of Tajikistan to implement the new Law on Public Associations in a fair and transparent manner that does not hinder, but rather facilitates, the development of civil society.

In Turkmenistan, we note President Berdimuhamedov's promises to register NGOs and to review human rights-associated prisoner cases brought to his government's attention, as well as its release in August of eleven prisoners of conscience, including former Chief Mufti Nasrullah Ibn Ibadullah. In this regard, we marked in September the one-year anniversary of journalist Ogulsapar Myradova's death in custody. We urge the Government to investigate and reveal the circumstances surrounding her death as well as to release her still imprisoned colleagues, Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadzhiyev.

We were disappointed by the Kyrgyz authorities' raid this past April on the Media Support Center Foundation press established by Freedom House, but we note the Prime Minister's subsequent actions to restore operations within 24 hours, apologize for the incident, and speak out in support of a free press. We call upon the Kyrgyz Government to demonstrate its continued support for media independence by following through with plans to transform its National Television Station into a public station with strong, independent management.

We welcome the Government of Kazakhstan's stated commitment to implement democratic reforms. We look now to Kazakhstan to turn word into action by undertaking a series of needed democratic reforms, not least the adoption and implementation of OSCE-compliant laws governing independent media and elections.

In Azerbaijan over the past year, seven journalists have been unjustly imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

In Belarus, authorities have stepped up intimidation of the opposition. Opposition politician Andrey Klimov was sentenced at a closed trial this July to two years' imprisonment for publishing material on the Internet criticizing Aleksandr Lukashenka. Also in July, authorities arrested and detained for up to 15 days peaceful protesters against the politically motivated trials of members of the Young Front, a pro-democracy youth group.

In recent months, under Russia's NGO law, the Federal Registration Service branch in St. Petersburg targeted for auditing and investigation several prominent NGOs that deal with human rights and democracy issues or other controversial public policy issues such as immigration and the environment, and that receive foreign funding. The decline of media

freedom in Russia continues with the closure in July of the Moscow-based Educational Media Foundation. In addition, we are concerned that recent amendments to the law on extremism create the potential for abuse and further restriction of free speech.

Despite the climate of intimidation under which NGOs from some participating States live and work, I am encouraged to note that a number of NGO representatives from the countries in question have participated in this meeting. I regret to note that certain delegations walked out last week in response to the presence of an NGO focused on peaceful human rights activities in the North Caucasus. The Chairman-in-Office tried to equate this walk-out with that of the U.S. Delegation during the recent Vienna conference on Victims of Terrorism. However, there is a significant distinction between the Russian and U.S. walk-outs. In our case, we were reacting to the exclusion of an NGO, which contravened longstanding OSCE procedures governing NGO access and participation.

Mr. Chair, for NGOs and the independent media, the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are oxygen. Without these fundamental freedoms, civil society is deprived of its life's breath. When governments prevent or impede the effective exercise of these freedoms they call into question their commitment to democracy itself. We call upon the Belarus authorities not to impede the peaceful opposition march, called the "European March", planned for October 14.

The ability of citizens to peacefully and freely exercise their fundamental rights of expression, association and assembly is an essential ingredient to the holding of elections that meet high OSCE standards. We urge Russia and all other OSCE states with upcoming elections to invite OSCE observers.

For our part, the United States will continue to welcome OSCE observers to our elections. I cannot predict the outcome of the upcoming Presidential election in my country, but you can be certain of this: when our new leader takes office in January 2009, the United States will remain strongly committed to advancing the cause of freedom and the Human Dimension of the Helsinki Final Act.

Mr. Chair and Distinguished Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to address this body. On behalf of the U.S. Delegation, I also wish to thank the Government of Poland and the ODIHR for being such gracious hosts.