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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of Center in Bishkek, Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere

As Prepared for Delivery by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 25, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Tesoriere, welcome to the Permanent Council and thank you for your comprehensive report on the situation in Kyrgyzstan and the work of the Center. In our view, you have inherited a Center that has, over the past ten years, been a strong example for the OSCE for its excellent programmatic activities and strong and candid working relationship with the host country.

The United States fully supports the work of the Center and the comprehensive, cross-dimensional strategic plan that you crafted and outlined for us today. We are pleased that the Center's work takes place not only in Bishkek and in Osh, but also in the far reaches of Kyrgyzstan; the use of local provincial coordinators ensures that even remote villages can benefit from the OSCE's presence. This is an innovative approach that could serve as a "best practice" in field mission work.

Ambassador Tesoriere, it would be difficult in the short time allotted here to detail all of the exemplary work of the Center. We therefore would like to highlight a few programs we believe are especially commendable and are making a significant and lasting impact. The Policing Program by all accounts has helped start the process of reform to bring the police service's performance in line with Kyrgyzstan's international commitments and could be used as a model in the region. The Community Policing Program and Public Prevention Centers have laid the groundwork for a much-needed link between local communities and the police, and we believe this program should be expanded in the coming year.

We would also like to underscore the important work undertaken by the Center in good governance and anti-corruption. The Center has provided critical assistance to the government in strengthening transparency and in reducing corruption and money laundering. We also note the excellent work undertaken by the Center's human dimension department, which is currently supporting voter education and the training of electoral officials for the upcoming local election. The judicial support programs, including training for prosecutors and judges, have set the stage for the development of a more professional, independent judiciary. Finally, we note that the OSCE Academy continues to serve as an excellent example of regional cooperation and has produced an impressive cadre of graduates.

None of these programs would have been successful this year without the strong support of the Government of Kyrgyzstan and its commitment to be a responsible stakeholder in OSCE programs. We urge the OSCE Center and the Government of Kyrgyzstan to continue this close cooperation in solidifying the gains made by Kyrgyzstan in building a democracy,

improving respect for human rights, developing a civil society, and in addressing some continuing challenges.

Most pressing is the need for the OSCE to continue to work with the Government to resolve discrepancies between national legislation and international commitments. We note with concern that elements of the recently adopted laws on public assembly and the media, as well as draft legislation concerning religious freedom and political parties, appear to undermine Kyrgyzstan's international commitments. We encourage the Center to work with national authorities in Kyrgyzstan to adjust implementation guidelines to ensure that government implementation is in line with OSCE commitments, and to work with the legislature to seek further adjustments in the future in line with shared commitments and objectives. We also encourage the Government to work with the OSCE Center to implement ODIHR's recommendations concerning election legislation and reform.

The United States thanks you again, Ambassador Tesoriere, and your very capable staff for the important work you are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.