



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Dr. Halil Yigitgüden

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 7, 2016

The United States would like to welcome Dr. Yigitgüden back to the Permanent Council for his report as OSCE Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities. Dr. Yigitgüden, we thank you for your efforts as well as those of your staff. Strengthening security in the OSCE region through enhanced economic connectivity and good governance are important priorities. We are pleased that your office and the German Chairmanship are focusing on these topics.

The United States welcomes the effort to increase economic ties among OSCE participating States, particularly those in the Caucasus and Central Asia. By removing barriers to cross-border cooperation, supporting trade facilitation and customs cooperation, and improving the regional investment climate, the OSCE and its participating States can foster more sustainable growth across the region. Regional efforts designed to improve economic connections in the Caucasus and Central Asia, such as the New Silk Road initiative and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, can be enhanced by OSCE activities in the region. We are encouraged that Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan have formed an informal group at the OSCE to explore how the Organization can further support regional cooperation. Mr. Coordinator, we encourage you to engage with this group and support its efforts in a manner that is inclusive of all participating States.

A good example of how the OSCE contributes to sustainable connectivity is a project managed by the OSCE Center in Bishkek. Designed to develop the technical capacity of Afghan and Kyrgyz customs officers, the project encourages greater economic ties within the region by reducing border congestion while improving border security. To date, 150 Afghan and 850 Kyrgyz customs officers have been trained in identifying and detecting narcotics, conducting risk analysis and managing risk, examining cargo containers and trailers, improving interviewing techniques, compiling statistics, and carrying out audits. Such OSCE initiatives can play an important role in encouraging investment and trade in the region, which are essential components of security.

Mr. Coordinator, we are pleased that the promotion of good governance remains a priority for the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension. Good governance is the foundation of effective government, economic and environmental policies, regulatory frameworks, adherence to the rule of law, and engagement with civil society and the general public. The United States attaches particular importance to, and wholeheartedly supports, the OSCE's work to promote good governance and to prevent, combat, and prosecute corruption. The scourge of corruption affects the security of all OSCE participating States by impeding

democratic progress, respect for human rights, government accountability, social inclusion, and inclusive economic growth.

We share your view, Mr. Coordinator, of the strong need to overcome negative perceptions about migrants and labor migration. The U.S. economy benefits tremendously from the contributions of immigrant workers, whose direct impact on our GDP is estimated to be as high as 15 percent. Migrants are enterprising, ambitious, talented, and entrepreneurial; and have created some of the world's most innovative and valuable companies. The United States is pleased to learn that you will hold an expert meeting on economic migration in May. This is an essential aspect of the OSCE's broader response to the migration and refugee crisis, and we welcome your office's engagement on this issue.

An important element of the OSCE's second dimension work in 2016 will be the Chairmanship's business conference and the Economic and Environmental Forum that will be held jointly in Berlin in May. These events will bring together civil society, academic experts, government officials, and business representatives to discuss the impact of good governance on the investment climate; the fight against corruption, money-laundering, and terrorism financing; the security of supply chains; and labor migration. Such activities help deliver on the promise to involve the private sector and business community more closely in the OSCE's Second Dimension work.

Economic and environmental issues remain critical components of comprehensive security, particularly for a world experiencing economic hardships, social turmoil, climate change, and an historic migration and refugee crisis. Dr. Yigitgüden, we appreciate the progress that has been made in furthering the OSCE's economic and environmental work, and continue to believe that the Second Dimension provides many more opportunities to strengthen security, build confidence, and restore trust.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.