



United States Mission to the OSCE

Any Other Business Closing Reinforced Plenary Session

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Michael Kozak,
Head of Delegation
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, September 30, 2016

The United States has used this agenda item to follow up on the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism. It is up to us, the participating States, to remain actively engaged on the concerns which gave rise to the invocation of the Mechanism until they are resolved.

We welcome **Turkmenistan's** participation in this meeting, and hope that it reflects a desire to improve the country's human rights record. However, more than thirteen years after the Moscow Mechanism was invoked following hundreds of arrests, show trials, and allegations of torture connected to the alleged coup attempt of November 2002, we lack adequate information on many individuals who disappeared into the prison system.

As we heard during this meeting, there are almost 100 well-documented cases of such persons who have disappeared – including former OSCE Ambassador and Foreign Minister Batyr Berdiev and former Foreign Minister Boris Shikmuradov. Many cases involve allegations of torture and abuse. The families of those who have disappeared have no information on the whereabouts or health of their loved ones, or even whether they are dead or alive. There continue to be new cases, including of former RFE/RL correspondent Saparmamed Nepeskuliev, who was arrested last year on dubious drug charges after reportedly being given “medicine” while in detention. There has been no information on his whereabouts or condition, and a former cell-mate has described the harsh conditions in which he was held.

Turkmenistan, as an OSCE participating State, has committed itself to “ensure that all individuals in detention or incarceration will be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.” We call on the Government to provide concrete information on these individuals, as well as access to them.

I will switch gears and briefly update you on promised actions we have taken since the last HDIM. We engaged partners to ensure that the OSCE response to the migrant and refugee challenge is consistent with human dimension commitments. We regularly publicize OSCE employment opportunities to a wide and diverse audience. And we convened expert briefings on constitutional policing, anti-discrimination initiatives, and the debate over capital punishment in the United States.

We have listened carefully to criticisms and recommendations over the past two weeks. As is our custom, we are prepared to take some follow up steps. These include:

-) Building on a side event we hosted with civil society, we will organize a discussion on approaches to protecting the freedom of expression while countering hate speech, online and offline;
-) We will continue to update the Permanent Council and relevant OSCE institutions on constitutional policing and related anti-discrimination measures in the United States;
-) In light of the migrant and refugee crisis, we will provide information on actions we are taking to assist and protect refugees;
-) Some participants still claim that their restrictive NGO laws are similar to ours. To debunk this claim, we will organize an event on our legal framework, and explain how civil society functions freely in our country.