



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, Ambassador Pierre von Arx, and the Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Dr. Alexander Wolters

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 7, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States welcomes Ambassador von Arx and Dr. Alexander Wolters to the Permanent Council today. I wish to express my appreciation for your remarks, the timely submission of your written report, and your informal briefing to delegations yesterday.

The United States supports the work of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek in all three dimensions. We are pleased the Office has continued to work across Kyrgyzstan, including in the south, despite the closure of the field office in Osh.

We support the Office's activities aimed at strengthening inter-ethnic relations, promoting good governance and anti-corruption, combating transnational threats, and promoting human rights, rule of law, and gender equality.

Ambassador, the United States welcomes your Office's focus on assisting efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, as well as your support for combating terrorist financing and money laundering. We value the Office's work on law enforcement reform, including the use of the Mobile Police Reception units, as well as its efforts on penitentiary reform and combating trafficking in persons.

The Office's work on strengthening the judicial system and trial monitoring, including capacity building for civil society to monitor trials, is also important, as are its activities to support freedom of religion or belief and media freedom. The United States welcomes the positive steps taken recently by the Kyrgyz authorities to withdraw a draft law on defamation and to drop the defamation case against former media outlet Zanoza and two of its journalists.

Mr. Chair, we are concerned about bride kidnapping cases. Although the practice is illegal, the law is not always enforced. The United States congratulates the Kyrgyz authorities on holding accountable those responsible for the death of 20-year-old Burulai Turdaaly Kyzy, who had managed to fight back against her abductor and have him brought to a police station, only to be stabbed to death after being left alone with him in a room there.

The United States appreciates the Office's activities aimed at strengthening Kyrgyzstan's electoral system, following up on recommendations made after the presidential elections last November. We support the Office's work on parliamentary capacity building, and look forward to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Fall Session in Bishkek in October.

Turning to the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, we also welcome its director, Dr. Alexander Wolters. The Academy is a key element of the Office's work. Educating the next generation of leaders is one of the most important things that we can do to enable our countries to have secure and successful futures. Dr. Wolters, we appreciate your work to professionalize and raise the profile of the academy. My delegation was pleased to participate in the Academy's Alumni Meeting here in Vienna earlier this week – the first one held outside of Central Asia – and meet with former students. By all accounts, you're doing an excellent job and you can continue to count on the support of the United States Government.

Dr. Wolters, we join several other delegations here today in expressing our concern that the Academy continues to face financial challenges. As my EU and other colleagues have already noted, the academy essentially relies on XB funding, and the lack of funding within the UB threatens its long term stability. It's my current understanding that there have been no new pledges this far for 2019, and this is regrettable. Several delegations here today and in the past have acknowledged the important work carried out by the Academy. As a donor, the United States encourages other OSCE participating States to support this important educational institution. In our view, including more of the Academy's funding in the Unified Budget would help put it on a more sustainable footing.

Once again, I would like to thank Ambassador von Arx and Dr. Wolters for their work and the work of their teams.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.