



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Presentations by the Chairs of the Three Committees

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Before commenting on our work in the Three Dimensions, I'd like to start by expressing the gratitude of my government for the role the Albanian Chair has played this year. Ambassador Hasani, your Mission's heroic leadership ensured that the OSCE, including its field missions and institutions, functioned effectively in the face of the extraordinary challenge of the pandemic. None of us envisioned the coronavirus disrupting our agenda for the year as dramatically as it did, but in your stewardship of this Organization, you confronted this exceptional challenge and rose to it. In addition to the pandemic, you confronted new and ongoing conflicts and crises in our region, posing challenges across all three dimensions.

The United States appreciates your principled commitment to keep the Russia-fomented and -fueled conflict in Ukraine at the top of our agenda, to support efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to end the violence and work toward a lasting settlement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, to continue pushing for progress toward resolving the conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and to address the fraudulent election and brutal crackdown in Belarus. These issues will remain top priorities for all of us in the year ahead.

The fact that you devoted a large portion of your energy also to the work of *Economic and Environmental Committee* over a period of months, despite your other pressing responsibilities, is a testament to your commitment to upholding the comprehensive security of the participating States. The United States shares your commitment to ensuring the OSCE is addressing the key challenges we face today in all three dimensions.

The United States welcomes the distinguished Committee Chairs from the First, Second, and Third OSCE Dimensions to the Permanent Council. Thank you, Ambassadors Bush, Raunig, and Šrámek, for your leadership and for promoting a collaborative approach among the committees and across dimensions.

Ambassador Bush, the United States thanks you for your report on *the Security Committee* today. Your leadership has encouraged the United States and other participating States to collaborate on key goals for strengthening the collective security of the OSCE region.

The work of the *Security Committee*, and the OSCE's efforts to counter terrorism, enhance border security, improve policing, strengthen cybersecurity, and combat transnational organized crime, is of vital importance to all participating States. The attack here in Vienna on November 2 serves as a stark reminder that terrorism remains a real threat to the security of all OSCE participating States and the region as a whole. During the UK Chairmanship, Ambassador Bush, you challenged participating States to think broadly and innovatively about how we can prevent and counter violent extremism, while maintaining full adherence to obligations under international law to respect human

rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. Participating States worked hard to advance a counter-terrorism text at this year's Ministerial Council, and although we did not get there this year, we hope to continue to build consensus on the ways this organization can strengthen our response to terrorism.

The United Kingdom's effective stewardship did not limit itself to facilitating innovative themes at the Security Committee. From your February 2020 letter on your goals for the year, Ambassador Bush, you emphasized your interest in dynamic exchanges at the Security Committee, with fewer formulaic statements and more engagements with guest speakers. This approach turned out to be very well-suited to the unprecedented and turbulent year we've all been through. Participating States were asking new questions about law enforcement's response to pandemic-related criminal enterprises or cybersecurity vulnerabilities in our healthcare systems, and thoughtful, experienced speakers were well prepared to address these topics. These insights provided an excellent foundation for the productive Ministerial Council meeting, where we adopted a *Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime*, the first such MC text in the Security Committee since 2016. We look forward to working with you next year in building upon this declaration.

In the Second Dimension we express thanks to all who spearheaded the Committee's work during a tumultuous year, including of course Ambassador Raunig, who provided firm stewardship of the Committee during its most consequential and intensive period of activity immediately preceding the Ministerial Council, and achieved notable success.

The United States welcomes the Ministerial Council decision on "preventing and combating corruption through digitalization and increased transparency." This decision commits participating States to take tangible actions to address corruption as a threat to security in the OSCE area. It also underscores what is possible when the political will is there. But there is much more work to do to address the growing challenge of corruption, which can feed off the disruptions of the pandemic and other crises, and which must be a focus in 2021.

My government was deeply disappointed that after hard negotiations we were unable to achieve a consensus decision on the environment and sustainable use of natural resources. This draft decision did not set out to solve all environmental challenges, but it was an unambiguously good and useful step toward ending trafficking in natural resources.

Despite unity among 56 participating States, one country was unwilling to join consensus, and the OSCE missed an opportunity to take concrete action. My government will push for a strong decision on this issue in 2021; we hope others will join us. While the OSCE is not a scientific organization and should not duplicate the work of others, we are 57 major, influential governments who together can make meaningful contributions on environmental challenges and set an important example. As we continue these discussions in the year ahead, and as all our countries work to rebuild from the massive economic disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the United States is committed to redoubling our efforts in the Second Dimension.

Before speaking to the substance of work carried out in the Third Dimension this year, I would like to offer my and my delegation's condolences to Ambassador Sramek and all of the Czech team, for the recent tragic death of their colleague Ondrej Soukup. He was an important part of the Human Dimension family, and he will be missed.

In the Third Dimension, we faced some of our biggest challenges in 2020, including due to the pandemic. Ambassador Šrámek, I would like to thank you for your excellent leadership of the Human Dimension Committee. As Deputy Secretary Biegun observed in his Ministerial intervention: “in the human dimension, we have witnessed tremendous resourcefulness from civil society actors finding ways to overcome obstacles and make their voices heard. Yet, some governments are using COVID-19 as a cover for cracking down on civil society and independent media, further restricting public access to information and undermining the rule of law.” As we look ahead to 2021, the impact of the pandemic on civil society institutions remains a huge concern. How do we rebuild a rich environment of free media, active social and political institutions, and engaged NGOs after the economic ravages of the past year that have undermined the ability of all these to survive? We must keep these questions in focus as we search for ways ahead in 2021.

We were disappointed that due to the coronavirus restrictions the *Human Dimension Implementation Meeting* was not held. This meeting is critically important for the OSCE and our shared principles and commitments in the Third Dimension, and the United States is absolutely determined to ensure the 2021 HDIM takes place, with robust participation from both participating States and civil society representatives.

Ambassador Šrámek, under your leadership, the *Human Dimension Committee* addressed the need to respect international law and uphold our OSCE commitments even, and especially, in the midst of a global pandemic.

We were pleased to see the decision on eradicating torture achieve consensus at the Tirana Ministerial after many years of discussions, and thank you and your deputy Kamila Xenie Vetiskova for your tireless efforts including late in the evening and weekends to guide the Committee to consensus on this very important text. We must face the sobering fact that torture continues to be practiced by some participating States. Now, it is for all participating States to put the Ministerial text to work to prevent and end this abhorrent practice.

Chairs, you and your teams have the thanks of the United States for your leadership this year, which truly embodied the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security. Your efforts throughout the year truly embody the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security, and we are grateful for your leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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