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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 1, 2010

We welcome Ambassador Kapinos back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his comprehensive report. We remain appreciative of the work the Office is doing to assist the Government of Armenia in implementing community policing throughout the country and in bringing its election-related legislation and administration in line with international standards.

We recognize your decision to focus your attention on some particular areas where the OSCE has a clear mandate and a capacity to help government authorities fulfill OSCE commitments. We believe the most important areas are police assistance, good governance and anti-corruption, reform of the judiciary, and the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the media and of assembly.

We support the Office's continued focus on election reform, in particular assisting Armenian authorities to implement the recommendations contained in OSCE election observation mission reports. The electoral complaints process needs particular attention, as does the overall implementation of election-related legislation necessary for a transparent, level playing field.

We take note of the Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan adopted by the Government of Armenia. Serious reform efforts will take considerable resources, cultural change, and political will, and we encourage the Office to continue its strong support to the government in this area.

We commend the Office's Environment and Security and CASE initiatives, which support public participation in decision-making and strengthen civil society. We believe that such projects will enable the population to better exercise their rights and will strengthen good governance throughout Armenia.

We believe that the Office should intensify its active support of pluralism of the media, in particular broadcast media, in cooperation with the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media. We welcomed the legal review by the RFOM's office and its recommendations on how to modify the initial draft legislation and note that a number of concerns and recommendations remain unanswered. We will continue to work with the Government of Armenia toward improving the media law and encourage the Office to do so as well.

Despite some improvements to legislation on freedom of assembly, implementation there is still slow. We would therefore continue to support OSCE assistance in this area.

We also support the Office's efforts to strengthen the government's judicial reform programs, in particular by assisting in the implementation of recommendations of the ODIHR trial monitoring report.

The United States strongly values its relationship with Armenia and stands ready to work with the Office and the government and people of Armenia to assist the country in advancing its democratic development with a view towards becoming a more stable, prosperous country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman