



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement in Response to the Annual
Report of the Head of the OSCE Office in
Baku, Ambassador Koray Targay**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 4, 2013

Thank You, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Targay back to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

We applaud the Baku Office's efforts to assist the Government of Azerbaijan in strengthening comprehensive security, including judicial sector reform, reforms to facilitate the conduct of free and fair elections, media freedom, the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights, good governance, and dialogue with civil society. We fully support the Office's activities regarding elections, community policing, and respect for freedoms of expression and assembly. Activities by the Office such as training to increase the professionalism of judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers help to promote the rule of law and strengthen Azerbaijan's judicial system.

Azerbaijan is an important partner for the United States. As we noted when Foreign Minister Mammadyarov appeared at the Permanent Council on May 14, last year our countries marked 20 years of diplomatic relations. During this time, we have developed fruitful and substantial cooperation in a number of fields, notably, security, energy, and commerce. Azerbaijan has achieved major advances in education, increased living standards, and made progress in combating human trafficking and protecting women's rights. Azerbaijan has also made important contributions to the NATO-ISAF mission in Afghanistan, to counter-terrorism cooperation, and to the advancement of our goals of energy security and diversification.

We want Azerbaijan to succeed as a democratic, prosperous, secure, and sovereign country. Regrettably, civil society organizations, political parties, media representatives, and defense lawyers are subject to undue pressure from Azerbaijani authorities. The foundation of any truly democratic state is respect for the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. We call upon the Government of Azerbaijan to implement its OSCE commitments in these areas fully, especially the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression for its entire people, including members of the media and democracy, human rights, and rule of law advocates. My government encourages the Office, as well as the Government of Azerbaijan, to collaborate with civil society in all three OSCE dimensions, and to develop constructive solutions for addressing Azerbaijan's challenges in implementing these mutually agreed upon OSCE commitments. As we have previously noted in the Permanent Council, we remain deeply concerned about the closure of the Free Thought University facility and the plight of detained democracy activists, including those from the youth N!DA movement and the Republican-Alternative movement's co-founder and presidential candidate Ilgar Mammadov.

The United States reiterates its full support for the current mandate and work of the OSCE Office in Baku, and calls on Azerbaijan to continue to ensure a robust field presence that works in all three dimensions and engages with the full spectrum of Azerbaijani society. We note the concerns raised by the Government of Azerbaijan as host to the OSCE Office in Baku, and are ready to engage in constructive dialogue to address these matters.

We take this opportunity to urge the Government of Azerbaijan once again to issue an unrestricted invitation to ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to monitor the presidential election scheduled for October of this year.

In conclusion, we value the work of the Office in Baku under Ambassador Targay's leadership and we thank him and his team for their hard work and dedication.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.