



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Response to European Union
Special Representative for Central Asia
Ambassador Patricia Flor**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 11, 2013

The United States warmly welcomes the European Union's Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Patricia Flor, and thanks her for her remarks. Ambassador Flor, we especially appreciate your comments on the importance of the OSCE's activities in Central Asia across all three dimensions.

Central Asia is an extraordinarily heterogeneous region, with each of its five countries representing a unique history, experience, and situation. However, taken as a whole, Central Asia is host to numerous common security challenges. Uncertain borders, ethnic rivalries, corruption and economic uncertainty, environmental degradation, water scarcity, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms combine to make security in this region the most challenging of the entire OSCE space. The countries of the region cannot meet these shared challenges to their security on their own. Rather, they require a cooperative, multilateral response. The United States believes that, to provide the needed multilateral support to the countries in Central Asia, the OSCE should shift its focus from the western Balkans, where it rightly concentrated its efforts in response to the security challenges of the 1990s, to Central Asia. This shift should take the form of refocused budgetary and staffing priorities.

In the face of Central Asia's security challenges, the United States has consistently prioritized the region with our extra-budgetary contributions to the OSCE. We have donated millions of dollars in the past several years supporting projects such as the Community Security Initiative, the Border Management Staff College, and the Cross Border Market Resource Centers on the Afghan/Tajik border. The EU's decision to commit to three years of funding for the Community Security Initiative illustrates its participating States' commitment to security in Central Asia. We commend you for this commitment. However, there is much more to be done. We are encouraged by the creation of a high-level security dialogue between the EU and the five countries of Central Asia and hope that this dialogue will lead to further commitment of EU resources to OSCE activities safeguarding security in this vital region of the world.

The European Union's efforts to promote security in Central Asia are also a critical component of any multilateral approach to the region's security difficulties. As you so ably illustrated, Ambassador Flor, the EU and the OSCE work as partners in the region, coordinating their efforts to address issues such as border security and water scarcity. We urge the EU to continue to strengthen this coordination and to ensure that both organizations provide the best possible assistance to the countries of Central Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.