United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

As delivered by Chargè d'Affaires Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 21, 2013

The United States also wishes to note that today is the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Nearly 50 years ago, a booming voice for justice rang out across our National Mall in Washington, D.C., reverberating across the United States and sending ripples throughout the world. Speaking to a gathering of tens of thousands, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, challenging America to take up the worthy task of perfecting our Union and ending racial discrimination. Issuing his proclamation regarding Dr. Martin Luther King Day, President Obama stated: "A half-century later, the march of progress has brought us closer than ever to achieving Dr. King's dream, but our work is not yet done.… Too many Americans are denied the full equality and opportunity guaranteed by our founding documents." Madam Chair, the work of the participating States against racial discrimination remains incomplete. This includes my own country.

We remain concerned about racism and racially motivated violence throughout the OSCE space, which can take the form of race-based murder and other violent attacks, sports-related racial epithets, and government policies on housing, just to name a few manifestations of racism. All of us must strive ceaselessly to ensure the human rights of persons belonging to racial minorities and other marginalized and vulnerable populations, and to prevent and address intolerance and discrimination against these populations. We therefore commend the work of ODIHR for its efforts to address racism in the region, and we call upon all participating States to reflect on this day, to implement existing commitments, and continue to bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

Thank you, Madam Chair.