



United States Mission to the OSCE

Launch of the Guidelines on Freedom of Association

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 5, 2015

The United States joins others in welcoming the launch today in Geneva of the joint ODIHR/Venice Commission guidelines on the Freedom of Association. We look forward to studying the guidelines and seeing how it can be used to help advance protection of freedom of association.

We will use the guidelines to advance our shared international legal obligations and OSCE commitments to protect and promote the fundamental freedom of association, at a time when it is under threat in many parts of the OSCE space. Freedom of association -- both online and off -- is fundamental to democracy and to the exercise of other fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and religion or belief. Unfortunately, some participating States impose undue restrictions on the exercise of the freedom of association and create a hostile environment for freedom of association including by restricting access to foreign funding or labeling NGOs that receive such funds as "foreign agents."

We thank the EU for tabling a draft Ministerial Council Decision on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Association in the OSCE Area prior to the Basel Ministerial. We, together with the majority of participating States around this table, were pleased to support that draft decision, and we look forward to seeing broader consensus develop in the OSCE for the protection and promotion of these fundamental freedoms. We look forward to discussing these issues further at the SHDM in April on the Freedom of Assembly and Association.

Thank you, Mr. Chair