

27 April 2006

ENGLISH only



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Release of Turkmen Political Dissident Durdykuliev

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 27, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The United States would like to welcome the release of Turkmen political dissident Gurbandurdy Durdykuliev on April 11, after more than two years' detention in a psychiatric hospital. His arrest and detention occurred in early January 2004, after he requested permission to hold a two-day political demonstration to protest policies of the Government of Turkmenistan. A number of international human rights groups, as well as 54 members of the United States Congress, had expressed concern about Mr. Durdykuliev's case to the Turkmen authorities.

We are still learning the details of his difficult ordeal in the psychiatric hospital. And while his release is a positive step by the Government of Turkmenistan, Mr. Durdykuliev's plight underscores the fact that civil society and social activists continue to face daunting challenges in Turkmenistan. Only when dissidents such as Mr. Durdykuliev can speak out openly without fear of reprisal or confinement can we say that respect for individual rights, including freedom of speech and assembly, is being upheld.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.