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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut on the Gender Action Plan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 16, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins other delegations in expressing our appreciation for this very comprehensive report. We thank the Secretary General and all those in the OSCE structures who contributed to it.

We strongly supports efforts to strengthen work on gender issues in all three OSCE dimensions, including in the politico-military and the economic and environmental dimensions, where women are still significantly under-represented. We attach great importance to the discussions of gender and security in the FSC and the Security Committee this year and would like to see them continue.

The United States commends the Secretariat's development of tools and methodologies to help participating States implement their commitments on gender equality. A number of field operations are focusing on integrating a gender perspective into OSCE policies, programs, and activities. The appointment of gender focal points in field operations is a noteworthy example of progress in mainstreaming gender issues. We also must underscore the importance of respecting fundamental freedoms and strengthening democratic processes to undergird our efforts in the area of gender equality and reduce the vulnerability that women and their fellow citizens face when their rights are not secure.

While we are promoting gender equality in all 56 participating States, we should continue to do the same here at "home" – in the OSCE Secretariat and institutions as well as in the field operations. We are pleased to see a more positive trend within the Secretariat in response to gender-related concerns such as discrimination and harassment, including a proposed survey to ask Secretariat staff about their personal experiences. We commend the steady increase in the recruitment of women to higher management positions in the OSCE, which reached a historic high of 30 per cent in May of this year, and hope to see improvement also in the representation of women in OSCE field operations and institutions. The United States has been a strong advocate and actor in pursuing this goal. According to the report, more than half of all OSCE staff seconded by the United States are female. We continue to seek out highly qualified women, including in the security and law enforcement sector, and were pleased that one of our female nominees was selected for the Police Advisory Group in Kyrgyzstan.

Nevertheless, we believe more can be done. The severe under-representation of women among heads and deputy heads of mission remains a matter of grave concern to us. The

OSCE is far behind the United Nations in this category. We urge participating States to nominate more qualified female candidates to these and other critical positions in top management.

While we appreciate the increasing number of gender-inclusive projects and programs conducted by OSCE field operations in all three dimensions, we believe that additional attention could be paid to initiatives that boost the participation of women in conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. As we mark the 10th Anniversary of UN Resolution 1325, the U.S. delegation will co-sponsor a side event at the Review Conference in Warsaw on October 6 to discuss successful strategies for involving women in security, conflict resolution, and peace building.

We strongly encourage continued efforts to implement all gender-related OSCE commitments as part of broader efforts to improve implementation across the board. We hope to support such efforts by contributing a significant amount of extra-budgetary funding to projects to foster women's participation in political parties, enhance women's economic empowerment, and combat violence against women. We also look forward to close cooperation with Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on Gender Issues, Wendy Patten. She has indicated her determination to work closely with participating States, encouraging them to give the highest possible political priority to fulfilling OSCE gender-related commitments.

In conclusion, I'll quote my boss, Secretary Clinton, on the occasion of International Women's Day in March of this year: "...the United States is making women a cornerstone of foreign policy because we think it's the right thing to do, but we also believe it's the smart thing to do as well. Investing in the potential of the world's women and girls is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for women — and men — the world over."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.