



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Response to Head of the OSCE Center in
Ashgabat, Ambassador Ivo Petrov**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 26, 2016

The United States welcomes Ambassador Petrov back to the Permanent Council. Ambassador, we thank you for your report and for your service, especially since today marks your final statement in this chamber.

The United States appreciates the work of the OSCE Center in Ashgabat across all three dimensions. We welcome the Center's projects on border security and management, including the emphasis this year on building border patrol capacities. We support the Center's activities on counter-terrorism, cyber and ICT security, building counter-narcotics capacity, and strengthening good governance.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law are crucial to building strong and stable democracies. The United States supports the Center's work to provide training on human rights law and its application in criminal proceedings before competent, independent and impartial courts and tribunals. We also support the Center's efforts to improve conditions in prisons and places of detention and enhance awareness of and respect among staff for international human rights and professional standards related to detention and treatment of prisoners. We urge Turkmen authorities to work with the OSCE to improve prison conditions and provide information on and access to all prisoners. It is vital that families have information on the whereabouts and well-being of their relatives. We are particularly concerned about those in prison who have not been able to communicate with their families or the outside world for many years, and call upon the government to fulfill its international obligations.

The United States takes note of the adoption of a National Action Plan on Human Rights, and urges the government of Turkmenistan to take full advantage of OSCE assistance in its concrete implementation. While action plans and international instruments are important frameworks, they must be followed up by action to put them into practice. We welcome the Center's activities to promote respect for freedom of religion or belief, including the study trip to the United States. We encourage further efforts by the Center to support the development of civil society in Turkmenistan, including through increased participation in OSCE events. This work remains important, as the United States continues to have deep concerns about the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkmenistan.

We also welcome the adoption of a National Action Plan on combating trafficking in human beings and the actions the government is taking to implement it, such as revising legislation, raising awareness, and conducting training programs, including for law enforcement. The United States supports continued work to address domestic violence and promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

We welcome the participation by representatives of Turkmenistan in the 2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, as well as increased involvement of Turkmen parliamentarians in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and we look forward to continuing this trend.

Ambassador Petrov, once again, let me offer sincere thanks to you and your team at the OSCE Center in Ashgabat and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.