



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, H. E. Edward Nalbandian

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 6, 2013

I would like to warmly welcome his Excellency, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, to the Permanent Council.

The United States and Armenia have a strong relationship spanning a broad range of shared interests including preserving peace and regional security, promoting trade and investment and advancing democratization and the rule of law. Armenia has achieved progress in improving its business climate and combating human trafficking. In the area of rule of law, we have worked together on a draft criminal procedure code awaiting Parliament's approval. The United States appreciates Armenia's contributions to our shared mission in Afghanistan and to peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. We wish Armenia every success as it takes on the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

We remain concerned about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. As a co-chair of the Minsk Group, the United States is committed to working with the parties to find a way forward and enable people of the region to live together in peace and dignity. Your continued engagement with the co-chairs and with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, most recently in Krakow on 17 May, is a welcome sign of your commitment to the peace process. We appreciate that during the co-chairs' follow-on visit to the region May 23 and 24 both presidents reiterated their commitment to the peace process and discussed the need for a summit later this year.

Concerning economic reform, private sector investors look for an open business climate with predictable rules; an independent judiciary; and transparent regulations, taxes, and customs. We recognize the progress Armenia has made in a number of these areas. The United States looks forward to continued cooperation with Armenia to improve its business climate further.

During more than twenty years of independence, Armenia has taken some positive steps toward democratic development, such as the general respect of fundamental freedoms in the presidential election campaign. Now is the time to pursue a robust vision of democratic reforms. We urge the Government of Armenia to live up to its commitments to the systematic, fair, and transparent implementation of the rule of law. Strengthening judicial independence would help to promote democratic as well as economic development.

We are pleased to work with Armenia on strengthening its democratic institutions to promote transparency in government and advancing the right of free speech as exercised by the media, and root out corruption. Dialogue with civil society plays an important role in promoting democratic values, stability, and regional security.

We urge the Working Group established in connection with last May's parliamentary elections to work closely with ODIHR on the remaining eight electoral reform recommendations, and to pay special attention to those recommendations related to the voter registration list. We also urge Armenia to fulfill its promises to investigate problems in the presidential election, including those highlighted by the ODIHR final report. In 2010 in Astana, Armenia, the United States, and all other OSCE participating States, reaffirmed that we all are accountable to our citizens and responsible for the full implementation of all our OSCE commitments.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan provides valuable support for Armenia's democratic development, and dialogue between the Government and civil society based on our common commitments. Its work in all three dimensions continues to make substantial and positive contributions to Armenia's democratic reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.