



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, H.E. Thorbjørn Jagland

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Christopher Midura
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 24, 2013

We warmly welcome the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and thank him for his remarks. As you know, Mr. Secretary General, the United States has been a strong supporter of the Council of Europe. The U.S. recently joined as a full member of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, and we look forward to promoting human rights and democratic governance through that important institution.

The United States believes that the OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant, complementary roles to play in strengthening respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and rule of law.

We welcome the concrete cooperation that has occurred between our organizations since you last spoke to the Permanent Council, Mr. Secretary General. During this period, we note that there has been excellent cooperation between our organizations in the fight against terrorism and in countering trafficking in human beings. We support the joint activities and actions undertaken during this period in these areas, as well as the regular coordination and stock-taking between our two organizations.

As our two organizations look at future cooperation in the area of election observation, we raise a note of concern, Mr. Secretary General, about the divergent views of our organizations on the October 9 Presidential elections in Azerbaijan. While ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly found "significant problems throughout all stages of election day processes" and found that the election was "undermined by limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association," we were surprised that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) assessed that a "free, fair and transparent" process prevailed on election day. As the State Department's Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf noted on October 10, the United States agrees with the assessment of OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and shares the concerns raised in their joint preliminary findings.

We commend your recent statement on the need for a constructive approach to the integration of Roma in Europe. Like you, Mr. Secretary General, we have also been alarmed by what you called "discriminatory actions and stigmatizing words being used against the Roma people." We support the efforts of the Council of Europe to end discrimination against the Roma community and create a more inclusive Europe. We hope there will be opportunities for our organizations to use our voices together on this very important issue. We also note the active participation of the Council of Europe in the recent Human Dimension Implementation meeting in Warsaw. We trust that the Council of Europe found great value

in the open dialogue between civil society and participating States that is a hallmark of that important meeting.

In closing, we welcome the existing collaboration between the Council of Europe and the OSCE and value our ongoing discussions to ensure future coordination and cooperation on our shared goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.