



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement Regarding Effective Date of
NGO Law and the Pending Legislation
in the Russian Federation
for Media to Register as Foreign Agents**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 29, 2012

The United States notes with concern that, effective December 1, all domestic nongovernmental organizations (or NGOs) in the Russian Federation that accept foreign contributions and engage in broadly defined “political activities” must now register as “foreign agents.” As Secretary Clinton emphasized in St. Petersburg this year, we want Russia to fulfill its potential. That means giving the Russian people the chance to develop a vibrant civil society, including organizations that promote free and fair elections for Russians, expose injustices and human rights abuses, and protect Russian workers’ rights.

There is no parallel between this legislation and the United States’ Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). Russia’s legislation has been used to target NGOs involved in democracy activities, even if those NGOs undertake such action regardless of receipt of foreign funding. The United States’ FARA law is not aimed at NGOs, but rather at law firms and public relations agencies hired by a foreign government acting as an agent of a foreign principal.

The United States strongly urges Russian authorities to consider carefully Russia’s international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments on human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law as they begin to implement and enforce this law.

The United States also joins in the concerns within the international community regarding pending legislation in the Duma that would require media receiving 50% of their funding from abroad to label themselves as “foreign agents.”

An independent, pluralistic media sector is critical to a healthy democracy. We urge the Russian Federation not to pass this bill and instead to uphold its commitments to respect the rights of media freedom, including freedom of expression.

Mr. Chairman, when taken together with the new NGO law and the new amendments to the treason law, this latest proposed legislation on the media reflects a deeply disturbing pattern of restrictions on civil society and the media, and an increasingly constricted space for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.