



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Statement in Response to Presentation of OSCE Eminent
Persons' Report**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 30, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by complimenting our speakers this morning. I thought that there was such an extraordinary complementarity between the Panel's report and the introductory comments that were made by each of you. They were excellent; they set an excellent tone. I think and I hope that we will carry forward in working with this report in that same spirit.

It is a great pleasure for the United States to welcome back the former Chairman-in-Office, the Norwegian Ambassador to Washington, Knut Vollebaek. We also very much welcome the presence of the other members of the Panel, Minister Žužul, Ambassador Shustov, as well as Ambassador Höynck.

I also want to give a special acknowledgement to someone who couldn't be here with us today - Ambassador Richard Williamson - for his dedicated work, the intelligence that he brought to bear, and the broad knowledge and background of the issues that confront us that he brought to the work of the Eminent Persons.

We thank Ambassador Vollebaek for his presentation to us today for the work of the Panel, which he chaired and want extend to him, and through him to all members of the Panel, our gratitude for producing both an impressive and very well-thought out list of recommendations.

From the time last autumn when the idea of establishing a Panel was proposed, the United States strongly supported the concept. We were pleased to be able to nominate Ambassador Williamson to be a member of the Panel. We believe that his long experience, as I've said, brought an important contribution to this endeavor under Ambassador Vollebaek's leadership, in order to give all of us the kind of fresh look at the OSCE that we had expected.

Let me also, on behalf of the United States, offer our most heartfelt condolences to the Russian Federation on the death of Ambassador Afanasyevskiy. We greatly respected and admired his commitment to the Organization. His memory will live on through the steps that we take to ensure that the OSCE remains alive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the participating States.

I should note here that his commitment went to his final days, as he conveyed his last comments on this report.

Mr. Chairman – the Panel's report will fuel discussions and high-level consultations for months, perhaps years, to come. Therefore, we will not here today offer any detailed

assessment of its conclusions and recommendations at this point. Instead, let me outline some general impressions.

In relation to the Panel's mandate to provide strategic vision for the OSCE, we very much value the reaffirmation of support for the major areas of OSCE's work through all three dimensions of OSCE, including promoting democratic transformation, respect for human rights, free and fair elections, a free media, and tolerance of diversity. We are also pleased with the report's solid endorsement to work that is being done – and yet waiting to be done, indeed needing to be done – by OSCE field operations.

We very welcome the report's call for all OSCE participating States – all of such States - to take all measures necessary in order to abide by OSCE's basic norms, values and commitments.

As Ambassador Höynck so well said, if that isn't done, everything else will be empty.

We especially note the emphasis in the report on work in all three dimensions, and the call for a focus on such areas of work as promoting good governance and anti-corruption.

We also agree with the report's call for the OSCE to share its expertise in the political-military dimension with others facing similar threats, particularly at the sub-regional level.

The report also contains a considerable number of recommendations on restructuring the OSCE.

The United States remains open to considering changes to the structure of the Organization, and we will seriously review the proposals made by the Panel. We wholeheartedly support measures that will facilitate coordination among the many parts of the Organization and make coherent the links between, and the responsibilities of, the institutions, the field operations and the Secretariat.

In keeping with our long-standing approach, we will be cautious about supporting any changes that radically tilt the balance of power within the Organization or which determine the ability of participating States to provide extra-budgetary funding to projects, or which threaten the flexibility of the Organization and its ability to quickly respond to crisis or emergencies, which are among the Organization's greatest strengths – we will not see those diminished.

We will also consider carefully how proposals might effect OSCE and ODIHR's abilities to carry out their fundamental functions of promoting respect for human rights, including minority rights and religious and racial diversity, democratic transformation, including through free and fair elections.

In closing Mr. Chairman, we wish again to thank Ambassador Vollebaek, his staff, the Members of the Panel and all who contributed to the production of this report. The United States will be an energetic participant in the discussions on the report, and we look forward to making the most of its the forward-leaning and forward-looking recommendations.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.