



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center, Ambassador Marcel Peško

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 8, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador Peško, welcome back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your detailed report. In our view, this annual exercise provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the Center's contributions to furthering the OSCE's goal: lasting peace in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian spaces through a comprehensive approach to security.

Ambassador Peško, your report points to a lack of trust among participating States and pressure on our system of multilateral institutions. Our security is indeed being challenged daily by Russia's contempt for the international order. Trust is damaged when one country blatantly violates international law.

We appreciate the CPC's efforts to respond to our shared security challenges. The OSCE's crisis response capacity can address our security concerns when an OSCE participating State ignores its commitments. The CPC's support to the Trilateral Contact Group, the Special Representative on the South Caucasus, the Special Representative on the Transnistrian Conflict, and to the CiO's Personal Representative on the Conflict Dealt With by the Minsk Conference, *inter alia*, remains indispensable to efforts to find peaceful resolutions to the conflicts.

Ambassador, we appreciate your overview of the CPC's work in Ukraine and we agree with your assessment regarding the situation. We would take this opportunity to underscore stark realities. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is caused by Russia's contravention of OSCE principles regarding respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another State. The United States reiterates our call on the Russian Federation to direct the forces that it arms, trains, leads, and fights alongside to end their campaign of obstruction against the SMM. We also expect the Russian Federation to return its contingent to the JCCC and reopen the crossing point at Zolote.

Ambassador, the United States welcomes the CPC's efforts to provide operational support to the SMM in the form of the "Task Force on the Alignment of Operations and Security Issues with Management Processes" and with the regularized channel of communication between Vienna and Kyiv. We urge the CPC to work with the SMM to institutionalize this support in the form of dedicated personnel, given the size and complexity of the SMM and its area of operations.

Mr. Ambassador, regrettably, elsewhere in the region, OSCE field operations are often impeded by their host country from conducting early warning and conflict prevention, despite the Ministerial Council decision reaffirming the OSCE's role in crisis response – which is agreed to by all 57 participating States. Hosting an OSCE field operation should not be seen as a stigma. OSCE field missions can help countries adhere to their OSCE commitments and thereby prevent conflicts and strengthen security.

Field operations also must help host countries strengthen regional cooperation. The missions in Southeast Europe, for example, facilitate cooperation among their hosts to address transnational threats. We encourage field operations in Central Asia to seek ways to promote greater cooperation. This is already being done through the Border Management Staff College and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek; however, there is certainly potential for Central Asian field operations to engage on a broad range of cross-border issues.

The United States supports the OSCE's re-establishing its footprint in the South Caucasus and other locations where countries desire support. The Armenia Cooperation Program is a step in the right direction to respond to Armenia's request for continued engagement with the OSCE. Clearly, the OSCE could contribute to Georgia's peacebuilding efforts more directly if it had a presence in the country.

The CPC's efforts to strengthen the organization's conflict prevention toolbox have yielded results. CPC's mediation support provides a valuable service to the Chair's Special Representatives, negotiators, and mediators. Beyond the OSCE's long-term field missions, this organization needs to be able to put monitors on the ground immediately in crisis situations. The United States proposed a crisis management decision almost a decade ago. We believe it is important to continuously review the organization's toolbox and urge next year's Slovak Chair to find ways to do so.

We note the CPC's proposed merger of the FSC Support Section and the Communications Network programs in 2019 in a new "Political Military Support Service." Additional details on this proposed step are needed to help States evaluate it. Any such potential merger must be focused on increasing efficiency, not on seeking a new mandate that would include incorporating analysis or qualitative Arms Control functions. Regarding the Information Management and Reporting System, we continue to deliberate on the best path ahead. Any product created by such a tool is only as good as the data provided to it, and our focus should be on ensuring that all participating States contribute to the annual data exchanges. We look forward to further information, including an assessment of the anticipated cost, upkeep going forward, and benefits of such an effort. As always, we applaud the CPC's efforts on the Pol-Mil Code of Conduct and gender mainstreaming.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.