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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Address by Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 11, 2010

The United States welcomes the visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin to the Permanent Council today. Ukraine and the United States have a strategic partnership, and we are pleased to work constructively with you on a broad range of issues.

Mr. Minister, we thank you for your comments and we thank you for your statement of interest in playing a leadership role in this organization. We welcome your government's assessment of the important role the OSCE can play in strengthening regional and global security, as well as its interest in serving as Chairman-in-Office in 2013, a role with great responsibility for the stewardship of the OSCE.

Europe's unresolved conflicts remain a great threat to security among and within States and are a serious and longstanding challenge for the OSCE. In particular, we welcomed your Foreign Minister's support for the efforts to find a Transnistria settlement via the "5+2" process, and call for formal negotiations in that format. We hope that the November 15-16 5+2 talks in Kyiv, which your government has graciously agreed to host, will produce progress on this longstanding conflict. We agree that we should act now to enhance the OSCE's capacity in early warning, conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Relevant proposals put forth during the course of the Corfu Process should be given serious consideration within the context of the upcoming OSCE Summit.

Regarding the human dimension, we are encouraged to hear that Ukraine places great importance on human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law, and democratic institutions. Like Ukraine, we continue to value highly the participation of civil society in our work – this is what sets the OSCE apart from other organizations. We welcome your statement of full confidence in the internationally-recognized expertise of ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in election observation, and your support for their objectivity and autonomy. We would further welcome greater emphasis on all fundamental freedoms, in particular the freedoms of expression, assembly and association.

The U.S. government noted its concern that the Oct. 31 local elections in Ukraine did not meet the standards of openness and fairness that we had observed during the 2010 presidential election; we also noted the acknowledgement by President Yanukovich that the electoral legislation is in need of reform. In this vein, we note his decree to convene a working group of domestic and international experts, including from the United States, ODIHR, and the Council of Europe, with the goal to "present for public consideration by May 2011 the wording of the Electoral Code, which will unify the election laws and will allow holding the elections at all levels in accordance with the highest democratic standards."

Such a reform process should be inclusive, involving all Ukrainian stakeholders. The U.S. is willing to assist such an effort.

Regarding freedom of the media, we welcomed your government's invitation to the Representative on Freedom of the Media to visit Ukraine, and assurances that the Government of Ukraine will uphold media pluralism and OSCE commitments on media freedom, including combating violence against journalists. We urge your Government to continue to be wary of steps that could limit freedom of assembly or potentially limit media freedom.

We welcome the important work undertaken by the Project Coordinator in Ukraine in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine, and we congratulate Ukraine's cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat that has resulted in the successful conclusion of the first stage of a project to remove 16,000 tons of the rocket fuel "mélange." We likewise strongly support the cooperative initiative to eliminate excess stockpiles of conventional "Remnants of War." These efforts demonstrate the enormous benefits that can obtain from close cooperation between OSCE field presences and their host countries.

We welcome your support for revitalizing efforts to move forward on the CFE Treaty and to strengthen the implementation of arms control and CSBM instruments.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to continuing discussion of Ukraine's proposed priorities for the OSCE both bilaterally and multilaterally in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.