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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Ambassador Markus Mueller, Head of the OSCE Center in Tajikistan**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 19, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Markus Mueller to the Permanent Council. Mr. Ambassador, we thank you for your report and for the outstanding work you and your staff are doing in Tajikistan.

The Office in Tajikistan (OiT) ably fulfills its mandate to promote comprehensive security and to encourage Tajikistan to fully implement its OSCE commitments. The United States takes this opportunity to make clear that we fully support the Mission's current mandate. OiT's various projects and programs are, in many instances, models for all of the OSCE's field missions and illustrate the positive impact field operations can have on the security of all participating States. Tajikistan should be proud to host such an effective office.

The Women's Resource Centers are a prime example of the sort of local-level capacity building that the OSCE is uniquely positioned to promote. Indeed, in many ways these centers are poorly named. It is true that through assistance, training, and information dissemination on gender equality issues, these centers empower women and girls to fully exercise their rights as citizens of Tajikistan. They do more than that, however. The centers also strengthen cooperation between civil society and government actors and structures at a local level. In this sense, they are actually Community Resource Centers that serve the interests of all citizens of Tajikistan – men and women alike. Another OiT activity that deserves special praise is the office's support for Tajikistan's first shelters for victims of domestic violence. First in Khujand and later in Soghd, OiT has supported efforts to protect the security of some of society's most vulnerable members.

Your office's efforts to promote economic development in the Rasht Valley by supporting dialogue between entrepreneurs and local authorities have been instrumental in promoting stability in this still volatile part of the country. OiT's assistance with drafting the National Environmental Code and with implementing the Aarhus Convention are two examples of your efforts to reduce the threat that environmental stresses will spark conflict. Also, we commend OiT's capacity building and training efforts to promote good governance and fight corruption. We urge you and your excellent staff to pay particular attention to this area and find creative ways to assist the government of Tajikistan to implement the 2012 Ministerial Declaration on Good Governance. We also encourage you to continue your ongoing work assisting Tajikistan to implement its WTO trade agreements.

Mr. Ambassador, we applaud OiT's involvement of local communities and incorporation of human rights standards in its police reform activities. These components are integral to your critical efforts to help Tajikistan's law enforcement agencies effectively address the serious challenges they routinely face.

Of course, in addition to its invaluable work supporting security in Tajikistan, OiT hosts many of the OSCE's most significant activities supporting Afghanistan's efforts to successfully navigate its ongoing security, economic, and political transitions. The Patrolling, Programming, and Leadership project and the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) provide essential support to the Afghan Border Police – a vital component of a successful security transition. The Cross-border Market Resource Centers do important work in bolstering the norms and institutions necessary to strengthen Afghanistan's commercial ties with its neighbors in Central Asia. Commercial integration is critical to Afghanistan's long-term economic development and stability. As we approach 2014, we trust OiT will continue to provide its critical support to OSCE's activities supporting Afghanistan.

We recently heard the report of the independent evaluation of the BMSC, which emphasized its effectiveness. We thank OiT for hosting this important and effective project. However, the report also highlighted, as you have today, a concern that the United States has long shared – as an extra-budgetary project the BMSC lacks the long-term fiscal sustainability necessary for it to develop long-term plans. In light of this evaluation, we again call for the BMSC to be fully funded by the Unified Budget in 2014. This will require an increase in OiT's budget, but the increase is justified so that the BMSC is placed on a sound financial foundation.

OiT is well-served by its many able and creative local staff. Ambassador Mueller, we encourage you to redouble your efforts to cultivate these talented individuals. Mr. Ambassador, please allow me to once again thank you and your outstanding staff for the superlative work that you are doing to promote comprehensive security in Tajikistan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.