



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Report of Three Committee Chairs

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 31, 013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We too welcome the three committee chairs, and thank them for taking on – and in Ambassador Ildem’s case, for taking on again – these important responsibilities. We thank the committee chairs for outlining their plans for the year and recommit to the work ahead in each of these committees, recognizing that the OSCE’s multi-dimensional approach is at the heart of the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security. We must build our common security on the basis of OSCE principles and strive for a region in which the use of force is never necessary, human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected, and economic and environmental cooperation is the norm.

I take this opportunity to reiterate for the committee chairs, for the Chairmanship, and for my colleagues some of the United States’ priorities for this year.

In the Security Committee, we want to strengthen the collective commitment of participating States to cooperate in combating transnational threats that pose risks to all of us, large and small States alike. We commend Ambassador Ildem’s strong leadership in bringing forward comprehensive and practical decisions on terrorism, narcotics, and police reform on behalf of the Irish Chairmanship. The adoption of decisions last year consolidating and strengthening the OSCE’s work in these areas clearly demonstrates a shared sense of the common threat and the need for the OSCE to provide a forum for discussion and a platform to engage in joint action on these issues. We should continue the progress based on the TNT Ministerial decision and develop concrete counterterrorism and TNT initiatives this year, including capacity-building efforts. On cyber security, I appreciate the trust and confidence the Ukrainian Chairmanship has shown in reappointing me as Chair of the Informal Working Group. I look forward to working with the Ukrainian Chairmanship, and Ambassador Ildem and his committee, on this critical issue. I will soon be informing participating States of our plans for meetings of the Informal Working Group to begin in February.

We also endorse the Chairmanship's commitment to gender equality and reiterate our support for ongoing efforts to leverage UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, and to address gender-based violence across the region. We welcome the positive momentum developed in these areas last year and welcome opportunities to build further on such efforts with the Partners for Cooperation.

Finally, the United States welcomes the focus on Afghanistan. Since 2007, the OSCE has supported a number of initiatives focused on border security and transnational threats with regard to Afghanistan and its neighbors in light of the transition to full security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Forces to Afghan National Security Forces by the end of 2014. These OSCE projects have focused on increasing technical capacities and people-to-people linkages between neighboring Central Asian States. The OSCE has much to offer Central Asian participating States, across the entire spectrum of OSCE activities. We urge the speedy development and implementation of activities that build capacity and help meet the needs of our partners in this region.

We congratulate Ambassador Algayerova on her new position as Chairwoman of the Economic and Environmental Committee. We look forward to constructive work on the themes Ambassador Algayerova has proposed. In particular we appreciate the continued emphasis on good governance and combating corruption. We believe that the Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering, and the Financing of Terrorism adopted last month in Dublin can serve as an important guiding document for the OSCE's Second Dimension work this year and beyond. Discussions on good governance and transparency can and should be a part of all Second Dimension work, regardless of the specific topic.

Similarly, the suggestion to increase public participation in discussions of economic and environmental activities is a welcome one. Involving the public in the OSCE's work, through the inclusion of civil society groups in events like the Economic and Environmental Forum sessions throughout the year, is something the United States has been encouraging for some time, and we will work with the Committee Chair and participating States to make this a reality.

A discussion on transport and security, in light also of the Chairmanship's recommendation to discuss trade and transport corridors this year, gives the OSCE a chance to address the opportunities and challenges that will arise in relation to the drawdown of ISAF forces in Afghanistan, and aid efforts by many members of the international community, including the United States, to integrate Afghanistan into the Central Asian economic and transport network.

In the Third Dimension, we look forward to working closely with Ambassador Zugic. We wholeheartedly support the principle enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, and reaffirmed in Astana, that security among states depends on respect for human rights within states. Our Human Dimension priorities are well known. These priorities – which focus on the protection of human rights and human rights defenders – include opposing anti-Semitism and all forms of ethnic or religious hatred, promoting respect for the exercise of fundamental freedoms online and offline, as well as tolerance, non-discrimination, and the observance of the rule of law for LGBT individuals and members of religious, ethnic, national minorities, or other vulnerable groups, including Roma and Sinti. We encourage strengthening the involvement of civil society in these efforts and in the work of the OSCE more broadly. We urge continued strong support for our Human Dimension institutions, and keeping our Human Dimension events focused on fundamental freedoms and core human rights issues.

It is in the Third Dimension that we see the most troubling evidence of backsliding and the failure of participating States to uphold the commitments they have made, as well as the greatest challenges to progress — both in reinforcing existing commitments and in breaking new ground. The path ahead for Ambassador Zugic is not an easy one, but he has our strong support, especially in his efforts to avoid a repetition of the last two Ministerial Council Meetings. We must all remember the integral place of the Human Dimension in the OSCE's vision of comprehensive security, and redouble our efforts to get good decisions in Kiev.

Again, we extend our sincere thanks and our best wishes to all three committee chairs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.