



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 5, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Markus Müller to the Permanent Council. Thank you, Ambassador Müller, for your informative report.

As illustrated by clashes earlier this year along its border with Kyrgyzstan as well as violence just last month in the Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous region, Tajikistan is on the front lines of many of the most pressing challenges – and opportunities – facing the OSCE in the coming years and decades. Its ill-defined borders with some of its neighbors and its long border with Afghanistan drive many of these challenges, as do internal concerns, such as reform of the security sector, environmental issues, opaque governance, ethnic tensions, and a poor record of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The OSCE Office in Tajikistan (OiT) plays an important role in assisting Tajikistan to address all these challenges by implementing its comprehensive OSCE commitments. And the government of Tajikistan should be proud of the way it demonstrates its interest in practical implementation through good faith engagement with OiT, not to mention its active, constructive, and capable delegation here in Vienna.

Perhaps the most visible component of the OSCE's work in Tajikistan is the Border Management Staff College. The BMSC is a first-rate OSCE institution that, per last year's independent assessment, does superb work and advances core OSCE principles. It provides much needed technical training to assist participating States and Partners for Cooperation – above all Tajikistan and Afghanistan – to modernize and strengthen the management of their borders. And it gives this training in an international context, providing program participants with important connections to their peers from around the OSCE region. The United States strongly supports the BMSC, and we support fully funding the BMSC through the Unified Budget. The BMSC carries out OSCE priorities. Any participating State that opposes inclusion of the BMSC into the Unified Budget should state clearly and specifically what their concerns are. The current funding model prevents the BMSC from making the sort of medium- to long-term plans that any educational institution needs to maximize its potential. We stand ready to work with all participating States to find a mutually acceptable solution to address the future of funding the BMSC.

The OSCE Office in Tajikistan provides a model of how an OSCE field presence can work productively and cooperatively with its host country and civil society. For example, the OiT's Human Dimension Department works closely with the government and with key civil society groups to identify specific policy areas where work needs to be done. The OiT's role

then becomes one of facilitator – not just in providing material and technical support, but also in coordinating activities, developing public messaging, and performing needed advocacy with all relevant stakeholders. This approach, through which the representatives from the OSCE Office, government officials, and civil society actors are all equal partners working together to achieve a common goal, amplifies the value the OSCE provides and develops local capacity.

Ambassador Müller, the United States also continues to support much of the traditional programmatic activity your Office undertakes. We are very interested in the upcoming second phase of the Police Reform Program, and hope it is able to make a meaningful contribution toward reforms in the security sector. The Patrolling, Programming, and Leadership border security training program is providing border guards on the Tajik/Afghan border with practical, hands-on skills to address their greatest challenges. The ongoing success of the Women’s Resource Centers, which serve as community hubs for everything from promoting government transparency and sharing voting information to training women and serving as crisis centers, provides another model for other OSCE field missions to consider emulating. Your support of Aarhus Centers across the country helps build local-level capacity to address pressing environmental concerns. Across all your programmatic activity, we encourage you to continue to find innovative ways to assist Tajikistan to implement the 2012 Dublin Declaration on Good Governance.

Your office, Mr. Ambassador, has done all this great work in the face of significant staffing shortages, particularly the long-term vacancy at the head of the Politico-Military Department. We are also concerned that these shortages, soon to be compounded by other senior staff members completing their tours at your Office, will begin to undermine OiT’s ability to effectively carry out the Office’s mandate. We urge you to fill positions as promptly as possible when they become vacant, and the United States stands ready to assist you in this regard in whatever manner we can.

Thank you again, Ambassador Müller, for your presentation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.