



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Address by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation H.E. Aleksey Y. Meshkov

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 14, 2013

Deputy Foreign Minister Meshkov. Your presence here today demonstrates both the value that the Russian Federation places on the OSCE and the important role Russia continues to play in the organization, and we thank you for your presentation here today.

The United States values our cooperative and constructive relationship with Russia and we welcome Russia's presidency of the G-20. We share common goals, including the creation of conditions to achieve long-term prosperity for all our people. While the United States and Russia do not agree on all issues, our relationship accommodates frank discussion of disagreements in a spirit of mutual respect.

We appreciate your insights from the Presidency of the G-20, and your presentation of Russia's priorities in that forum. We listened with interest to your further iteration of Russia's priorities in the OSCE. Mister Deputy Minister, you began by emphasizing the importance of existing political commitments, noting Russia's commitment to fulfill them, and its expectation that other participating States will do the same. The United States fully agrees with you on this issue. Each time the U.S. reflects on the organization today, and looks ahead to the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, we are more convinced of the centrality of the existing political commitments, which were built on the sound foundation of the Helsinki principles. The present and the future of this organization rest firmly in the implementation of these commitments.

As the U.S. looks at other issues central to the Helsinki+40 process and the future of the OSCE, however, our views differ from yours in some important aspects. Notably, we do not share Russia's view that the development of a charter for the OSCE is central to the future of the organization. We remind all colleagues here that as far back as 1993, we agreed at the Rome Ministerial that participating States will, subject to their constitutional, legislative, and related requirements, confer legal capacity on OSCE structures in accordance with the provisions adopted by the Ministers. This requirement endures today.

Instead of looking backward to revisit issues addressed decades ago, the United States remains convinced that our collective energies in the Helsinki+40 process are better focused on fully implementing existing commitments, and to identifying new applications of these commitments for the 21st Century, taking into account new technologies, growing interdependence, and cross-border threats and challenges.

We agree with your assessment, Mister Deputy Minister, of the confluence of important topics being discussed by the G-20 and the work of the OSCE in the Second Dimension. Certainly the Chair's theme of energy and environment this year provides an excellent opportunity for collaboration on the two issues, in particular in the areas of sustainable energy development. We welcome the priority placed by the Russian G-20 Presidency on fighting corruption, particularly in light of the adoption this past year of the Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering, and the Financing of Terrorism. We agree that cooperation and coordination among G-20 members and OSCE participating States in efforts to fight corruption are vital to facilitating economic growth. Robust implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) by participating States would go a long way toward the establishment of good governance and transparency that we all seek for our citizens. In light of the focus on Afghanistan in this week's Security Days, we also wish to emphasize the important role that the OSCE's Second Dimension work can play in addressing the challenges and opportunities brought on by the the completion of full security transition in Afghanistan at the end of 2014.

In the Human Dimension, the U.S. is firm in its support for the principle enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, and reaffirmed in Astana, that security among states depends on respect for human rights within states. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that we are implementing the commitments we have made -- and nowhere is that more important than in the Human Dimension. We believe that fundamental freedoms are immutable and cannot be redefined under the rubric of so-called traditional values. The United States shares your concerns, Mister Deputy Minister, regarding the importance of promoting tolerance and combating discrimination against members of minority groups -- whether those persons be Roma/Sinti, LGBT, or members of religious minorities, the human rights of all should be respected. We hope that the Russian Federation will join our call for greater civil society participation in all Human Dimension activities.

We note the importance of ensuring that Human Dimension commitments are applicable in the 21st Century. The United States takes strong issue with the Russian Federation's suggestion that the internet and other new communications technologies are somehow exempt from OSCE commitments in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to freedom of expression and free assembly. We call on all participating States to implement their OSCE commitments to human rights and fundamental freedoms fully, online as well as offline. The Russian Federation, and the other few participating States blocking consensus on the Declaration on Fundamental Freedoms in the Digital Age, could move us closer to the goal of full implementation by joining with the 51 participating States that support this reaffirmation of our OSCE commitments to protect fundamental freedoms in the 21st Century. We also fully support the statement of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic, that her mandate encompasses monitoring threats to the exercise of free expression online and through new technologies. We will resist any effort to restrict or renegotiate this mandate, as we have resisted other efforts to diminish existing human dimension commitments.

In the military-security dimension, we agree with you that conflicts must be a priority. The OSCE should not shy away from advancing thoughtful, fresh efforts to resolve the protracted conflicts. The fundamental goals of the Helsinki Final Act -- refraining from the threat or use of force, sovereign equality, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes -- must be upheld and advanced by this process. The lack of peaceful resolutions to the conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and

Nagorno-Karabakh affects every aspect of this organization's work. The Helsinki+40 effort should have as its goal the achievement of tangible results in every area, including steps to address these protracted conflicts, to ensure an effective OSCE response to situations of crisis or tension, and to facilitate the presence of the OSCE when requested by a participating State.

We also agree that an effective, modern conventional arms control regime is important to a secure Europe. In this regard, we must also continue our efforts to update the Vienna Document, so that its provisions are relevant to today's smaller military establishments. The Helsinki+40 process should provide an environment that supports the process of updating the Vienna Document. We want to build an OSCE community where transparency and trust, in all dimensions, are the norm. We support the Ukrainian Chair's effort to have a broad dialogue on this subject, which is taking place in the Forum for Security Cooperation's Security Dialogue.

We are convinced that the Security Dimension, like other areas we have already discussed, is one that will also benefit from a thoughtful look forward, to ensure that commitments are meeting the challenges of the present and the future. In that light, we supported the adoption last year of decisions consolidating and strengthening the OSCE's work on terrorism, narcotics, and police reform. We note, Mister Deputy Minister, that you mentioned progress on confidence building measures in the area of cyber-security. These CBMs are within our reach, would produce real benefits, and would demonstrate that the OSCE is fully capable of meeting the challenges of today and of the future. We welcome progress under the Ukrainian chairmanship toward updating the 1994 Principles on Non-Proliferation. We have had productive dialogue with our Russian colleagues, as well as many other interested parties and look forward to our continued cooperation in this area.

Deputy Foreign Minister Meshkov, we again welcome you to the OSCE and look forward to your continued involvement in our work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.