



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

### **Response to the Head of the OSCE Center in Ashgabat**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 30, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States extends a warm welcome to the Permanent Council to Ambassador Ivo Petrov in his capacity as Head of Mission at the OSCE Center in Ashgabat.

Mr. Ambassador, we thank you and the Center's exceptionally dedicated staff for your comprehensive report highlighting developments that have taken place in Turkmenistan over the past year as well as some of the continuing challenges. The work the Center has undertaken to advance security across all three dimensions has been of vital importance to the people of Turkmenistan.

In the First Dimension, we applaud the Center's efforts to support Turkmenistan's decision to connect to the OSCE Communication Network. This is an important step illustrating Turkmenistan's commitment to the OSCE. We also thank the Center for its continued support for implementing effective capacity building measures for secure storage, handling, disposal, and destruction of excess stockpiles of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and conventional ammunition (SCA). Likewise, we welcome the Center's border and maritime security programs, particularly in hosting the round table discussion with officers from the OSCE participating States on the Caspian Sea. We look forward to the implementation of the planned border security training program designed to strengthen surveillance and detection capacities of Turkmen border guards.

In the Second Dimension, we welcome Turkmenistan's continued efforts to develop regional trade infrastructure. Turkmenistan's efforts in developing both the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project and a new railroad connection between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan illustrate its leading role in promoting improved trade routes between Central and South Asia. We urge the Center to consider implementing programs to develop the "software" – the norms, rules, and regulations – needed to promote commerce along the "hardware" of these planned trade routes. The 2012 Ministerial Council Declaration on Good Governance should guide these efforts. We are also happy to see the Center's successful support of the Aarhus Center in Turkmenistan. We expect that further support of this important effort will serve to strengthen the development of civil society in Turkmenistan.

We look forward to the proposed High-Level International Conference on "Energy Security and Sustainability – the OSCE Perspective," scheduled to take place in October in Ashgabat. This conference will give us all a chance to examine more closely the impact of energy and its production, transportation, and use, on security in the OSCE area.

As we have made clear in previous years, my government sees work in the Third Dimension as among the most important work the OSCE does in Turkmenistan. We are therefore especially pleased that Ashgabat hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference last July. Similarly, we thank the Center for its recommendations to the Parliament to develop mechanisms to further media freedom in Turkmenistan, and we urge the Center to continue looking for opportunities to advocate this issue, in coordination with the Representative on Freedom of the Media. We encourage the Center to continue engaging the Government of Turkmenistan on other human rights issues including fundamental freedoms of religion, association, assembly and movement, including easing registration restrictions for nongovernmental organizations, expanding due process legislation and improving implementation of current laws.

Your report highlights the Center's good use of overseas study trips across all the dimensions as a way to share best practices with Turkmen officials. We applaud this practice, and urge the Government of Turkmenistan to work with the Center to find appropriate ways for participants in these study trips to brief staff at the Center on their experiences after the conclusion of the trip. Noting the utility and importance of study exchanges for all members of society, the U.S. Government encourages the Government of Turkmenistan to allow robust exchanges for civilians as well as government officials.

Finally, Ambassador Petrov, on behalf of the United States Government, I wish to express our thanks for your service in Ashgabat.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.