



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky, Head of the OSCE Center in Astana

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 29, 2010

Ambassador Keltchewsky, the United States warmly welcomes you back to the Permanent Council and expresses our thanks and support to you and your staff for the excellent report you present today.

In the politico-military dimension, the Center's work on improving transparency, introducing community policing practices and human rights training for police officers is of real and practical value. We were pleased that the Center worked in conjunction with the SPMU to realize these goals; likewise for your cooperation with the Arms Control and Verification Center at the Ministry of Defense.

In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, there are few issues as pressing and with such high stakes as is the survivability of the Aral Sea. The Center's work on promoting integrated water management principles and achieving the efficient management of water resources should continue to be a central theme in the Center's activities in the year ahead. We also see the great value in the work the Center began to combat corruption and to aid the Government of Kazakhstan in implementing the Kazakhstan State Program on Combating Corruption for 2006 – 2010.

Unfortunately, we in the United States know all too well the significance of promoting oil spill preparedness and we commend you for the Center's work with the government to enhance preparedness in the Caspian Sea region.

For the United States the Human Dimension work remains among the most critical aspects of our OSCE field presences. Your report points to some positive engagement in the Human Dimension. We concur that strengthening the capacity of the National Human Rights Commissioner's Office (or the Ombudsman) is a vitally important goal. There have been positive changes to Kazakhstan's legal code in the past year, but more remains to be done. The United States continues to urge Kazakhstan, first and foremost, to comply fully with its commitments made at the Madrid Ministerial in 2007. We urge the Center to continue working with the government to do so. We also appreciate the Center's initiatives regarding prevention of torture, particularly training of police officers and independent monitoring of police detention facilities; we encourage the Government to continue cooperating with these valuable programs.

Your report also mentions that the Center has been following cases involving journalists, but provides few details. Working closely with the Representative on Freedom of the Media to

provide for a free and independent analysis of the cases would be helpful. We note the concerns voiced by the Representative on Freedom of the Media about the impact the new “Leader of the Nation” Law and the “Draft Administrative Code on Access to Information” will have upon free speech in Kazakhstan. These examples are reminders that media freedom must remain a core focus of the Center in Astana for the foreseeable future. Similarly, the flawed trial and continued incarceration of Yevgeniy Zhovtis demonstrates broader concerns over the application of the rule of law in conjunction with OSCE commitments and international standards--such issues deserve the attention of participating States and of the Center in Astana.

Ambassador, your report highlights important achievements in the time since you last came before the Permanent Council. It is notable that the Center’s activities are now reaching even more of the citizens of Kazakhstan than ever before, including in rural areas. The work to combat Trafficking in Persons, and to reduce domestic violence is work that literally changes lives. We agree that the enthusiasm and the commitment that Kazakhstan has brought to their Chairmanship role has translated into a far greater awareness within the country and, indeed, throughout Central Asia for the work of the OSCE and for OSCE values. It means the work that you do makes a difference.

Ambassador Keltchewsky, the United States offers to you and your staff our heartfelt thanks for the work all of do each day throughout Kazakhstan. Be assured of our continuing support.

Thank you Mister Chairman.