



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Heart of Asia Ministerial Meeting in Almaty

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, May 2, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes the third Heart of Asia Ministerial meeting as part of the Istanbul Process in Almaty on April 26. We thank all the participants, including many OSCE participating States, for the constructive discussion, which aimed to advance the cause of long-term stability, democracy, and prosperity in Afghanistan and throughout South and Central Asia. We would also like to extend a special thanks to the Government of Kazakhstan for its exemplary contributions to the Istanbul Process and for hosting the meeting last Friday.

Eighteen months since the inauguration of the Istanbul Process, we can point to some important milestones in Afghanistan. Afghans are taking the lead for security across their country. They are working to advance a national dialogue on peace and reconciliation and to prepare for next year's important elections. They are moving toward greater economic dynamism and private sector led growth. And today, Afghanistan is participating as a sovereign partner in discussions about the future of its region, and the region is uniting in support of Afghanistan.

The security of Afghanistan is indivisible from sustainable security in the OSCE region. Central Asia in particular has a vital role to play in ensuring a secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan, which directly affects long-term security, stability and prosperity in the region. The OSCE and each of its participating States can, and should, continue to bolster this stability by supporting the security, political, and economic transitions already underway in Afghanistan. We should also support the implementation of the six confidence building measure action plans endorsed in Almaty.

Through programs such as the Border Management Staff College and the Patrolling Programming and Leadership course, the OSCE is assisting Afghanistan to develop the professional law enforcement expertise it needs for a successful democratic security transition. OSCE observation of the 2014 presidential elections will be a major contribution to a successful political transition in Afghanistan. As the Cross Border Market Resource Centers on the Afghan/Tajik border illustrate, the OSCE can also promote regional trade by enhancing the institutional capacity and improving the governance norms that underpin robust international commerce and thereby assist Afghanistan with its economic transition to become a center of regional trade. Through all of these efforts, and through regional

institutions such as the OSCE Academy, this Organization is also strengthening the all-important people-to-people connections that serve as the foundation for regional ties between Afghanistan and its neighbors in Central Asia. All these projects and programs should be continued and, where appropriate, expanded in order to promote security, stability, and prosperity in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and throughout the OSCE region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.