



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, H.E. Elmar Mammadyarov

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

The United States warmly welcomes His Excellency Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, to the OSCE Permanent Council.

Azerbaijan is an important partner for the United States. Last year, our countries marked 20 years of diplomatic relations. During this time, we have developed fruitful and substantial cooperation in a number of fields: security, energy, and commercial matters. Azerbaijan has achieved major advances in education, increased living standards, and made progress in combating human trafficking and protecting women's rights. Azerbaijan has also made important contributions to the NATO-ISAF mission in Afghanistan, to counter-terrorism cooperation, and to advance our goals of energy security and diversification.

We want to see Azerbaijan succeed as a democratic, prosperous, secure, and sovereign country. It is for this reason that my government is troubled by the Azerbaijani government's reaction to protests this year, including the arrest and interrogation of democracy activists, pressure on civil society organizations and political parties, and closure of Free Thought University's facility. Respect for rule of law and all fundamental freedoms: the freedom of expression—including for members of the media—as well as the freedoms of assembly and association, will help Azerbaijan to advance as a prosperous, democratic nation. In 2010 in Astana, both Azerbaijan and the United States, as well as all other OSCE participating States, reaffirmed that we are all accountable to our citizens and responsible for the full implementation of all our OSCE commitments.

The United States also attaches great importance to our cooperation in multilateral organizations such as the OSCE. This Organization is a valuable forum for furthering our relations based on the principle of comprehensive and co-operative security.

The OSCE Office in Baku provides valuable support for Azerbaijan's democratic development and dialogue between the Government and civil society based on these common commitments. Its work has made substantial and positive contributions to Azerbaijan's reform agenda; yet much remains to be done. The United States reiterates its full support for the current mandate and work of the OSCE Office in Baku, and we hope that Azerbaijan will continue to ensure a robust field presence that works in all three dimensions in the country and engages with the full spectrum of Azerbaijani society. While we note the concerns raised by Azerbaijan as host to the OSCE Office, we urge that the government engage in constructive dialogue and address these matters at the appropriate time in the OSCE's calendar of work.

We look forward to Azerbaijan's invitation to the OSCE to deploy a full observation mission, an unrestricted invitation to observe the upcoming presidential election on October 16.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, the United States believes that efforts in support of resolving the protracted conflicts should remain high on the OSCE's agenda. As a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States will continue to work closely with the sides to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement. The status quo is not acceptable. Progress on negotiations is indeed needed.

In conclusion, we value Azerbaijan's participation in the OSCE. The United States hopes that your visit here today will add positive momentum to this partnership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.