



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 26, 2017

Minister Kasoulides, the United States warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council in your capacity as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and we’re pleased that students from Long Island University could be here to hear your presentation this morning. Cyprus has outlined an ambitious program based on the principles of democracy and human rights shared by both the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Security through a rules-based international order founded on the protection of human rights and inclusive, democratic societies can best be achieved when international organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe work in concert to protect and promote our common values.

More than ever before, the OSCE and Council of Europe must advance this rules-based international order among states. As we see in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, which continues unabated, Russia also undermines this order through its occupation and purported annexation of Crimea. Cooperation between Council of Europe and OSCE activities, such as the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, is imperative.

The priorities Cyprus has set forth for its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers – strengthening democratic security in Europe with a specific focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms for all individuals without discrimination, democratic citizenship, and the rule of law – embody many of the COE’s and OSCE’s core principles. In particular, Cyprus’ work to highlight and promote the human rights of LGBT persons, and persons with disabilities, is crucial for building truly inclusive, democratic societies. We look forward to the Council of Europe cooperating further with the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners to address violent extremism leading to terrorism, which is a priority of the Cypriot Chairmanship.

We should build on many already well-established areas of cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe on democratic election processes and election legislation, the rights of members of national minorities, and freedom of expression. Since 1995, the United States has been an observer to the Council of Europe and is a full member or observer in the Council’s Venice Commission, the Group of States against Corruption, the Convention on Cybercrime, and the Committee of Experts against money-laundering and terrorist financing.

Our two organizations are most effective when we are mutually supportive, particularly in efforts to measure the health of democracies and the rule of law. The United States values the Council's engagement on legislation reviews with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. This cooperation provides a framework for the findings of OSCE field missions, which are often operating in difficult environments, where democratic institutions are developing.

Mr. Minister, in conclusion, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant and complementary roles in defending and promoting democracy, human rights, and a rules-based international order, and we thank you for coming to Vienna to reiterate that important message today.

Thank you.