



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Head of the Center in Bishkek and the Director of the OSCE Academy

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 22, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Sergei Kapinos back to the Permanent Council and extends a special welcome to Dr. Pal Dunay for his first report to the Permanent Council. We thank you both for your reports.

Ambassador Kapinos, your mission is an important part of the OSCE's efforts to promote peace and stability throughout our region. With its close proximity to Afghanistan, its ongoing efforts to consolidate its democracy, and its multi-ethnic society, Kyrgyzstan represents many of the challenges and opportunities the OSCE participating States face in coming years. Basic OSCE values and principles – that a comprehensive approach to security leads to stability and that international transparency and cooperation lead to peace – will be vital elements of Kyrgyzstan's efforts to confront these challenges and take advantage of these opportunities.

We agree with your assessment that police reform is an area where the OSCE has much to offer Kyrgyzstan. A modernized police force will help consolidate democracy in Kyrgyzstan. However, it is important that the Center in Bishkek's efforts are tailored to Kyrgyzstan's needs. We suggest the OSCE perform an evaluation of the Center's Police Reform Program to help identify how it should be structured to support the realities of today's Kyrgyzstan.

The Community Security Initiative remains one of the OSCE's most significant efforts and is a prime illustration of the OSCE's ability to help countries strengthen their security. We encourage you to keep it as a top priority. We are encouraged by recent management changes that have improved morale and effectiveness at CSI.

The United States places great importance on improving practical cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors in Central Asia. We commend you for getting phase two of the Customs Academy project up and running, and we look forward to the positive impact it will have on security in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

Ambassador Kapinos, we support the Center's second dimension work focused on promoting good governance and the rule of law. On anti-money laundering, anti-corruption, local government transparency, and improved public administration, your activities are clearly focused on implementing the 2012 Dublin Declaration on Good Governance. We encourage you to continue this good work.

The United States places the highest importance on encouraging respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. We greatly appreciate the Center's focus on helping Kyrgyzstan to implement its basic OSCE commitments in these areas. We note that last year the Center took into account ODIHR's analysis of the proposed "foreign agents" law that would have severely curtailed the ability of civil society to serve as a positive force in Kyrgyzstan. Last December we praised the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan for rejecting this restrictive legislation, and we view ODIHR's expert analysis as contributing to that decision.

We are disappointed the President of Kyrgyzstan recently signed the "False Accusations Law," making it a crime to falsely accuse someone of committing a crime "in a public statement and/or in the media." This amendment is a setback for freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan, as even a mere threat of a criminal charge carries a chilling effect. We urge you, Ambassador Kapinos, to encourage the government to repeal this anti-democratic legislation and reaffirm its commitment to freedom of speech. Additionally, legislation now under consideration by the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan – based largely on Russia's so-called "LGBT propaganda" law – would represent a serious restriction of the fundamental freedoms of citizens of Kyrgyzstan. We urge the Government of Kyrgyzstan to invite ODIHR to analyze this draft legislation, and we hope that the Parliament will heed ODIHR's recommendations this year as it did last year.

Dr. Dunay, please allow me to make a few comments about the OSCE Academy. We congratulate you on your appointment to lead the Academy, and welcome you to the Permanent Council. The Academy has become a positive example of regional cooperation in Central Asia. Its regional focus and devotion to serious scholarship are central to training Central Asia's future leaders, and its efforts to maintain a robust alumni network promote lasting connections among these future leaders. These connections will be one of the Academy's greatest legacies. We trust that your leadership will guide the Academy to become an even stronger regional educational institution, and we appreciate that you are already, as your presentation today evidenced, taking a strategic view in laying the groundwork for the enhanced long-term impact of the Academy.

Thank you again, Ambassador Kapinos and Dr. Dunay, for your remarks to the Permanent Council today, and for your excellent work in Bishkek.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.