



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Response to the Chairpersons of the
Security Committee, the Economic and
Environmental Committee, and the Human
Dimension Committee**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 11, 2016

The United States joins other delegations in expressing its appreciation to each of the distinguished Chairs for their work. We are also grateful for all those who participate constructively in the three committees, which have done so much to advance the work of this Organization and help participating States fulfill their OSCE commitments.

Ambassador Istrate, thank you for your principled and capable leadership. You renewed your term as chair of the Security Committee at a time when horrific terrorist attacks in the OSCE region and beyond demonstrated the need to redouble our efforts to counter this threat. In recent years, we resolved to counter terrorism by addressing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, foreign terrorist fighters, and kidnapping for ransom. The success of these efforts requires the continued implementation and reinforcement of our commitments, including to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms at the same time we address the threat of terrorism. We welcome your leadership in bringing a practical approach to implementation, including through voluntary reporting and engagement of field missions. We welcome further discussions on countering the financing of terrorism and enhancing travel document security by including OSCE institutions and field missions, our partners, and other international organizations. Only together can we tackle a threat that erodes our collective security.

Ambassador Istrate, the Security Committee is an effective part of our comprehensive approach to address transnational threats. We support your plans to discuss the security implications of migration, security sector governance and reform, community policing, and aspects of border security. We appreciate your support for the implementation of the OSCE's first set of cyber-security confidence building measures, and for efforts to reach consensus on a second set of cooperative measures. We hope that our meeting tomorrow on the second set of cyber CBMs will bear the positive results of good-faith negotiation and engagement by all participating States.

Turning to the Second Dimension, the United States welcomes Ambassador Papadakis' reappointment as Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee. Ambassador Papadakis, we continue to actively support you and your committee's efforts. First and foremost, we believe there is an immediate need for a coordinated response from the OSCE to the migration and refugee crisis. With over one million migrants and refugees having entered Europe, and with several million Syrian refugees and migrants of other nationalities in Turkey

and the Middle East, the crisis is directly affecting many OSCE participating States and partners. The complex nature of the crisis requires creative thinking on how best to mobilize people and resources – within and across OSCE executive structures, field missions, and participating States, and in coordination with the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR and other UN agencies, the International Red Cross, and other organizations. We need to address the impact of the large numbers of migrants arriving in Europe, by cooperating on human rights-based responses to migration challenges, including by prioritizing respect for the human rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and developing the capacity of governments to integrate new arrivals and counter anti-migrant sentiment, xenophobia, and hate crimes.

Ambassador Papadakis, the United States welcomes your committee's other priorities, including environmental governance; improving the investment climate by fighting corruption, money-laundering, and the financing of terrorism; labor migration; and transport and trade facilitation. In each of these areas, it is vital that we remain focused on good governance, respect for human rights, anti-corruption, and the rule of law. Finally, we appreciate your efforts to involve more closely the private sector in the OSCE's work, notably at the Business Connectivity Conference in Berlin in May. We look forward to working with you to achieve tangible progress in each of these areas.

While we are sad to see Ambassador Kvile conclude his terrific chairmanship, we are glad to welcome Ambassador Pehrman, and the United States thanks you and Finland for the energy, creative ideas, and resources that you bring to the Human Dimension Committee. As we discussed in the first Permanent Council meeting this year, it is imperative that we hold each other to account as participating States. We should clearly identify backsliding and failures to uphold OSCE commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Human Dimension Committee provides a vital forum to do just that – to discuss the implementation of our shared commitments and to hear from OSCE representatives and institutions, as well as civil society representatives and other experts. The United States commends Finland for its ambitious work plan, which focuses on tolerance and non-discrimination, freedom of expression and independence of the media, prevention of torture, and elections. The United States reiterates its commitment to participate in voluntary reporting this year, and encourages others to do so as well. Voluntary reporting is a useful, practical tool for understanding States' successes and challenges in implementing their Human Dimension commitments.

Ambassador Pehrman, the United States would like to thank Finland for its leadership in advancing the human rights of persons with disabilities. OSCE commitments on persons with disabilities date back to the 1991 Moscow meeting, and since that time ODIHR has done important work to ensure the equal participation of persons with disabilities in the elections process, and in the areas of tolerance and non-discrimination, such as the collection of hate crimes data. Noting the visit to Vienna this week of the U.S. Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, Ms. Judith Heumann, we emphasize the need for deepening and broadening the OSCE's engagement on disability issues, which are relevant to the OSCE's work in all three OSCE dimensions. Our commitments to promote the participation of persons with disabilities should be reflected in the OSCE's operational practices – whether in hiring personnel or by drawing on disability expertise to carry out the mandates of OSCE institutions and field missions. Participating States should consider establishing disabilities focal points within their governments, if they have not already done so. Participating States and the Chairmanship should also consider how to coordinate activities related to disability issues among OSCE institutions and field missions, and help to raise the profile of this important

issue within all participating States. With that goal in mind, we should consider establishing a disabilities representative within the OSCE. In this regard, we look forward to working with you Ambassador Pehrman, and with our partners who expressed an interest in advancing this issue, including a number of EU members, Ukraine, Russia and others, and with civil society representatives in the disability community, in the weeks and months ahead.

In conclusion, let me say that the leadership of Ambassadors Istrate, Papadakis, and Pehrman provides an excellent example of how we can work together to uphold and advance our shared OSCE commitments. The United States is grateful to each of you for your efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.