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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to the Chairmanship's Special Representative for Gender Issues**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 4, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Ms. Patten to the Permanent Council today. Thank you for outlining your ambitious plan and your priorities in the promotion of gender issues in the OSCE area. We believe that your appointment and the work you started at the Review Conference in Warsaw will lend new impetus to our common efforts toward progress in the six main areas outlined in the Gender Action Plan.

The United States is firmly committed to women's empowerment and the promotion of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. Secretary Clinton has made women's issues a cornerstone of our foreign policy. We believe that women's ability to fully and equally exercise their rights is essential to global economic prosperity, political stability, and more peaceful, secure, and democratic societies.

Within the OSCE area, we note that some progress has been achieved towards implementation of gender-related commitments, but believe more can be done, especially in the areas of protecting women against violence, involving women in conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction, and empowering women economically. Hence, we welcome these priority areas.

Gender-based violence is regrettably still widespread in many participating States. Ending it requires political will and everyone's participation to strengthen legal protection and to support those who assist victims by providing social and legal services, as well as psychological assistance. Refugees are particularly prone to suffering from gender-based violence. No ethnic or socio-economic group is immune to this scourge. The establishment of a shelter for women victims of violence with support from the OSCE Office in Tajikistan is an example of successful field work that deserves our continued support.

Women's participation is essential to overcoming transnational threats and to managing challenges arising from war, tyranny, trafficking, poverty, and disease. We believe more attention must be paid to encouraging women's participation in the security sector and peace building efforts. Let me cite what Secretary Clinton, together with Norwegian Foreign Minister Støre, said last week to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: "Whether they are combatants or survivors, peace-builders or bystanders, women must play a role in the transition from war to peaceful development."

The OSCE is in a unique position to address gender issues across the three dimensions. Ms. Ms. Patten, we urge you to work closely with the field missions, ODIHR, and the

Secretariat's Gender Section to build on their work and experience. We believe your broad experience and expertise will not only enrich our common efforts but provide us with a new momentum to take a leap forward in achieving equality of opportunity for women and men in the OSCE area. I remember how emphatically my good colleague the Russian Ambassador called for you to address the Permanent Council to hear your views, and we're very pleased that you've given such a clear description of how you plan to carry out your work. You should count on our full support in your efforts to encourage stronger political will among OSCE participating States to develop national action plans and fully implement OSCE commitments on gender.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.