



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Statement on the Closure of Human Rights Watch Office in Uzbekistan

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 23, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On March 24, the United States expressed our concern in the Permanent Council about the possibility of the Human Rights Watch Office being closed in Uzbekistan. We very much regret the Supreme Court has now ordered Human Rights Watch to close its office in Tashkent.

International NGOs such as Human Rights Watch have an important function to play around the world, and their work is wholly consistent with the concept articulated by President Karimov for “further deepening democratic reforms and creation of a civil society” in Uzbekistan. We see the closure of Human Rights Watch in Uzbekistan as a significant step backwards from Uzbekistan’s international and OSCE commitments to further develop civil society and transparency in the country.

As we pointed out in March, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton affirmed the central role human rights play in the U.S.-Uzbek relationship when she urged President Karimov on December 2nd last year “to demonstrate his commitment to insure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are truly protected in” Uzbekistan. We repeat that call today and urge the Government to take steps to bring this matter before the court for reconsideration. We also call on the Government to take positive steps to open space for civil society, and particularly for international NGOs, in a manner consistent with OSCE principles.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.