



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Freedom of Expression in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 9, 2012

The United States wishes to express concern about recent developments in Kazakhstan on freedom of expression.

The United States follows with great interest the implementation of Kazakhstan's new law on television and radio, and regrets that the new law does not incorporate any of the numerous recommendations by the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media. These recommendations would have improved the legislation by bringing it into line with Kazakhstan's OSCE and international media freedom commitments.

Recognizing the Government of Kazakhstan's duty to ensure the safety and security of its people, we urge the Government of Kazakhstan to ensure that all of its citizens have the right to express themselves. In this regard, the United States shares the concern expressed by the Director of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) over actions taken with respect to certain opposition groups and activities in Kazakhstan, including the January 23 arrest of *Vzglyad* newspaper editor Igor Vinyavsky, the raid on *Golos Respubliki* newspaper, searches and closures of unregistered Alga branch offices, the arrest of some Alga party leaders, and the apparent inability of opposition groups to obtain permission for peaceful protests.

The United States urges Kazakhstan to ensure that all investigations are conducted transparently, respecting fundamental rights, and that all persons accused of crimes are afforded their full rights in accordance with Kazakhstan's laws and with OSCE and other relevant international commitments and obligations.

The United States remains committed to working together with the government and people of Kazakhstan to maintain security and stability while promoting freedom of expression and rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.