



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

# **Response to UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Türk and IOM Senior Regional Advisor for Europe and Central Asia Manfred Profazi**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 3, 2018

Assistant High Commissioner Türk, the United States warmly welcomes you back to the Permanent Council. We also welcome Senior Regional Advisor Profazi for his first presentation to the Council, and thank you both for your reports.

Mr. Chair, today, more people are displaced by rising violence, conflicts, insecurity, and persecution than at any other time since World War II. UNHCR and IOM are major players on these issues within the UN System and, in the case of the UNHCR, has convention-mandated lead responsibilities. However, the needs are great. The United States agrees there is an important supporting, complementary role for the OSCE. Our collective approach should respect each others' sovereign right to address these issues. Respect for applicable international law obligations, including those related to non-refoulement and human rights, also needs to be central to any approach.

Mr. Chair, first and foremost, participating States must respect their OSCE commitments and end aggression against neighbors within the OSCE region. Russia's aggression in Ukraine, for instance, has affected well over 5 million Ukrainians, approximately 90 percent of whom rely on humanitarian assistance. By some accounts, it has also displaced an estimated 2 million individuals. In Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, hundreds of thousands have been unable to return to their homes due to unresolved conflicts. We should continue using OSCE mechanisms to pursue the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts before tensions lead to further conflict, suffering, and displacement.

Mr. Chair, the United States continues to support many of the recommendations of the 2016 OSCE Informal Working Group on Migration. Specifically, the OSCE should create a central position on migration within its executive structures; improve coordination among executive structures; and empower and build the capacity of the OSCE field offices to help assess and, as appropriate – and in coordination with UNHCR and IOM – help nations to address the mass movement of refugees and migrants.

The OSCE and our field missions contribute to a range of practical initiatives that foster regional cooperation and help participating States humanely manage migration. The United States supports border management initiatives, helps build the capacity of competent national authorities to integrate refugees, cooperates in the fight against transnational crime – including human smuggling and trafficking in persons, promotes labor standards and good

governance to mitigate the illegal flow of migrants, and supports the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable populations of migrants. We regularly engage on these issues jointly with UNHCR, the IOM, and OSCE field missions.

In closing, Mr. Chair, the United States stands ready to engage through the OSCE to identify ways in which we can complement the work of UNHCR and IOM to address refugee and migration challenges facing the OSCE region.

Thank you.