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United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to Russia and to the OSCE Secretary General on the Update on OSCE Cooperation with Regional and International Organizations

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Secretary General, for your update this morning.

Understanding the request of our distinguished Russian colleague, I would point out two things. One, that although our distinguished Russian colleague said that not knowing about the topic of today's presentation would limit the Russian Federation from replying, our distinguished Russian colleague then followed on with some very interesting comments about how this topic might be explored, which I think are useful. That leads to a second point, which is that sometimes we do better as representatives when we are surprised, because the genuine dialogue that flows from having a spontaneous discussion is qualitatively different from the more stilted and "pre-cleared" words that we often are asked to offer by our capitals.

So while I welcome prior notice if there is a specific topic that the Secretary General wants to raise and wants considered capital-level views on, I also think that the Secretary General -- and, indeed, the Chairmanship -- should feel empowered to raise at any time an issue that he thinks should be on our agenda. And we should all feel like we have the right to say, "We can't respond to that right now, and we'll come back to it at a later date," as we do with each other. So I think we should be flexible going forward.

To also contribute to the conversation that the Secretary General has put in front of us today, I think it makes a lot of sense for us to think -- there's both a practical and a political aspect to what you've discussed -- and whether the cooperation is with IATA or something else -- I think it makes a lot of sense to share best practices, both to glean them from others and also to share with ASEAN and others what we're doing, and to leverage the resources and expertise of other international organizations, regional bodies, etc.

I think in terms of the more political relationship, it probably makes sense to think about not rules, but some kind of internal checks that you or the Chairmanship might make in thinking through whether a political affiliation makes sense with another organization. Questions like:

Are all of the other organizations' member states also [OSCE] participating States? (As it is, for example, with the Council of Europe.) Or, are a large number of participating States also a member of that other organization? (As is the case, obviously, with the UN, also the EU -- not to call the EU an organization!-- etc.)

And third, and I think maybe most importantly: Are the founding and guiding principles, and operative principles of that organization, maybe not identical to, but consistent with our own? Because I think it's important that we protect the OSCE brand, which is associated with a comprehensive concept of security and a cooperative approach to that.

So I would just offer those spontaneous reactions to your presentation and, again, thank the Secretary General for his words today.