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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Three Personal Representatives of the CIO on Tolerance

As delivered by Political Counselor Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 20, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins other delegations in welcoming the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman in Office to the Permanent Council today and in thanking them for their reports. The recent Human Dimension Implementation meeting, at which you outlined issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination, highlighted the importance of your work. The fact remains that we have a long way to go towards ending anti-Semitism and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions.

We appreciate the efforts of the Chairman in Office to ensure greater program consistency and conformity, along with a more balanced level of effort in the work of the Three Personal Representatives. We urge the Personal Representatives to continue to use their political influence to respond to hate incidents and to encourage States to enact hate-crime legislation and to prosecute offenders. We also encourage better coordination of the work of the Personal Representatives as they raise awareness of tolerance-related issues at the political level. It is understood that it is the responsibility of the Personal Representatives to focus on the implementation of OSCE commitments in the four priority areas where we have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, discrimination against Christians and members of other religions, and racism and xenophobia.

We look forward to a commitment by the OSCE to hold a Tolerance conference in 2009, like those held in 2005 in Cordoba and in 2007 in Bucharest.

Ambassador Orhun, Professor Weisskirchen, and Ms. Crickley, the United States places great importance on combating intolerance and hate crimes. We appreciate your efforts in this regard and wish you success in your activities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.