



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Government of Kyrgyzstan's Proposed Investigations of NGOs

As delivered by Ambassador Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 16, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States recognizes the Government of Kyrgyzstan's efforts over the past year to uphold its OSCE commitments and to build a modern democracy. However, we are concerned by recent reports the Minister of Justice asked the head of the Registration Department of the Justice Ministry to carry out investigations of all NGOs receiving financial support from abroad, in order to determine which NGOs "pose threats to the national security of Kyrgyzstan." Media reports suggest the Minister recently clarified that only religious NGOs would be investigated in an attempt to fight "religious extremism."

Mr. Chairman, investigating NGOs without basis, whether or not they are religious in nature, is contrary to fundamental democratic values and OSCE commitments, specifically, commitments to uphold the principles of freedom of association and the functioning of non-governmental organizations.

The Copenhagen and Moscow Documents commit participating States to ensure the right to form, join, and participate in NGOs. Paragraph 43 of the 1991 Moscow Document states that participating States will facilitate the ability of NGOs "to conduct their national activities freely on their territories." In addition, paragraph 10.4 of the Copenhagen Document specifically states NGOs have the right to unhindered access to, and communication with, similar bodies outside their countries. This includes the right to solicit and receive voluntary financial contributions from international sources.

The United States acknowledges Kyrgyzstan's efforts since March 2005 to move forward with democratic reforms. We therefore hope and expect that Kyrgyzstan will not implement a proposal reminiscent of Soviet-era tactics that would be consistent with some of the most repressive and authoritarian trends in the region.

Kyrgyzstan has always been a leader in Central Asia in the field of religious tolerance. We look forward to such leadership continuing under the current Administration. The United States also hopes the Government of Kyrgyzstan will stand by its commitment to create an environment in which civil society can operate freely. We call upon the Government of Kyrgyzstan to facilitate, rather than hinder, the vital work of non-governmental organizations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.