



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Migration Filippo Lombardi, and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 23, 2017

The United States warmly welcomes Mr. Lombardi to the Permanent Council, and wishes to express its appreciation for his remarks. We would also like to thank the Secretary General for updating us on the various migration-related activities being conducted by OSCE executive structures.

Mr. Chair, global migration represents one of the top political, economic, and security challenges – and opportunities – of our day. As Mr. Lombardi noted, it is our common challenge, our common commitment, our shared responsibility – there is a number of phrases that we collectively can use to describe this. But we share your view that it is our collective responsibility and commitment, and shared responsibility, to address this important challenge appropriately within the OSCE context. We would also like to thank the constructive work that has been done by the OSCE executive structures in this important area, as well.

At the same time, the United States wishes to underscore that participating States have the sovereign right to enforce their immigration laws, protect their borders, and return migrants who are not entitled to protection, consistent with their international obligations. As we saw in our discussions leading up to the 2016 Hamburg Ministerial Council, and again during the October Mediterranean Conference in Palermo, the complexities of an interdimensional issue like migration are not easily resolved. The United States firmly believes the OSCE is well-placed to make important contributions, but we need stronger action and more effective coordination.

As a regional security organization, I agree with the statement made by my esteemed Swiss colleague: the OSCE is in a unique position to complement existing forms of cooperation, to promote safe, regular, and orderly migration, and to enhance protection practices. Rather than assigning blame, I would respectfully recommend that we focus our collective efforts, and our shared responsibility, to ensure that the OSCE plays an effective role in complementing the work done by other international organizations in this area. As some of my colleagues have already mentioned, the OSCE has convening power to bring countries affected by migration together, identify opportunities for more effective cooperation, and facilitate information-sharing to assist law enforcement.

Mr. Secretary General, as you described, OSCE executive structures and field missions do have important roles to play and have remained active, including in helping participating States enhance border management capabilities, facilitate regular migration, and support both

communities and people on the move. During the more than two years since the migration and refugee crisis began, OSCE executive bodies and field missions have been working diligently to respond in a coordinated way.

As OSCE participating States, we have all made important commitments on the human rights of migrants and refugees. The United States welcomed the broad support in July 2016 for the recommendations of the Informal Working Group on Migration, chaired by our Swiss colleague. Delegations agreed that the OSCE should help participating States protect the human rights of migrants and refugees; address intolerance, discrimination, and xenophobia; reduce toxic, anti-immigrant sentiment; successfully integrate migrants and refugees; and combat criminal elements, particularly trafficking and smuggling networks. The United States was pleased that this wide-ranging support resulted in consensus on a Decision at the Hamburg Ministerial on the OSCE's Role in the Governance of Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees.

The United States supports the recommendations proposed by the OSCE's Informal Working Group on Migration. First, we believe the appointment of a Special Representative on Migration would enable more effective coordination of the OSCE's activities internally, and with other international organizations. Both the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Organization for Migration, support this and other recommendations. And the Secretary General in 2016 tasked the External Cooperation Section with overseeing migration activities. But this was considered an interim first step toward a more robust presence in the Secretariat, which we support.

Looking forward, we welcome Italy's intent to bring greater attention to migration issues across the entire OSCE region. As we saw in Palermo, there are a range of views among participating States on the critical issue of migration. But one thing is clear, and one thing we all did agree on, is that all participating States are keenly interested in taking up this critical issue. And we recognize the integral role between migration and security. In that spirit, we encourage the Organization to renew its efforts to address migration and give the OSCE the tools it needs to respond effectively.

In closing, thank you again, Mr. Lombardi and Secretary General Greminger, for keeping the attention of both the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and our Organization focused on migration.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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