



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Acting President and Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 30, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes the Acting President and Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, to the Permanent Council. We appreciate very much his making this special trip to Vienna at a historically critical time for his country, to address this body. This day also happens to be a very important American holiday, Memorial Day, where we commemorate all those Americans who have died in conflict. We appreciate hearing Acting President Bakiyev's views on the progress that Kyrgyzstan is making toward establishing lasting stability based on democratic rule and respect for human rights.

Mr. President, today's session has been termed a "special session", and indeed it is; for it comes at a very delicate moment in Kyrgyzstan's quest to transition itself into a stable and economically self-supporting democracy governed by its people and supported by the rule of law, which could serve as a model for the entire region.

Over the course of several dramatic days in March of this year, the Kyrgyz people themselves brought an end to a corrupt regime which failed to respond to their basic demands for freedom and economic opportunity. They accomplished this breakthrough with minimal violence, and this is something that the Kyrgyz people should take great pride in.

At that critical moment, President Bakiyev, you along with Felix Kulov, Foreign Minister Otunbayeva, and other prominent leaders, moved decisively to establish a functioning interim government which has legitimacy among the people. In doing so, you brought stability and a sense of security to your people in an otherwise very volatile situation, while at the same time respecting human rights.

Presidential elections in July offer the opportunity, and the challenge, for the Kyrgyz people to further consolidate the gains they have made so far and to lay the groundwork for peaceful democratic development. The very credibility, domestically and internationally, of the new administration will depend on whether these elections are conducted in a free and transparent manner, fully consistent with international standards.

Towards that end, we urge the Government of Kyrgyzstan to fully implement ODIHR's recommendations for ways to improve the process in advance of these elections. For our

part, the United States, has and will continue, to provide substantial election-related assistance through project funding and the secondment of election monitors and advisors.

The United States remains concerned for the well being of Uzbek refugees who have crossed into Kyrgyzstan following the violent events in Andijan. We welcome the assurances of Kyrgyz authorities that these refugees will not be forcibly returned and encourage continued close cooperation with UNHCR to ensure their safety.

Mr. President, we recognize that the path to stability in the wake of sudden political upheaval is one that is fraught with challenges and uncertainty. The OSCE Work Plan, approved by the Government of Kyrgyzstan on May 3, represents this organization's commitment to help the Kyrgyz people secure for themselves a future founded on democracy, on the rule of law, on economic growth, and on respect for human rights.

The United States fully supports the rapid implementation of this plan and has pledged though the OSCE 500,000 U.S. dollars to support priority projects. This support comes in addition to 4.5 million dollars in bilateral funding for election assistance and other immediate needs.

We continue to closely monitor the security situation in Kyrgyzstan and share the assessment of the Kyrgyz government and of others, of the need to strengthen the security environment, particularly in the short term. We support the prompt elaboration of an interim police program that will address this pressing issue in a manner that promotes respect for human rights.

We also share the assessment of Ambassador Müller in Bishkek and of the High Commissioner for National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus, that the well being of ethnic minorities must remain a priority for Kyrgyz authorities. Ensuring that minorities feel fully included in the political and economic activities of the nation is one of the best ways to promote integration and prevent conflict.

In closing, Mr. President, as you, your fellow leaders and the Kyrgyz people undertake this significant transformation into a more democratic society, I can assure you that United States stands squarely alongside its fellow OSCE States to encourage you and provide all possible support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.