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United States Mission to the OSCE



**Response to HoC Astana,
Ambassador Keltchewsky**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 13, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Keltchewsky, welcome to the Permanent Council. Thank you for the hard work you have put into your first months as the Head of Center and your very comprehensive report today.

The United States fully supports the Center and its work across all three dimensions. We are particularly impressed by efforts of the Center to promote confidence and security building measures and police development in the first dimension, to combat corruption and money laundering in the second dimension, and to assist the Government in crafting legislative reforms to increase protection of and respect for fundamental freedoms in the third dimension. We consider these priorities parallel ones that can be pursued at the same time along their respective tracks.

Kazakhstan's cooperation with the Center and its field office in Almaty has been productive for the OSCE's activities. We recognize the value of this close working relationship. The OSCE's cooperation with civil society also is a key component. We note the Center's role in facilitating one of the largest NGO delegations to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw of any participating State.

The United States agrees with your assessment, Mr. Ambassador, that the Center should expand its work further into Kazakhstan's many regions. To this end, we fully support a potential pilot project on community policing and activities to help train local administrations. This should include helping to implement new legislation for reforming local governance.

Your office's work should contribute to Kazakhstan's efforts to implement the commitments and values for which this organization stands, and also raise awareness of OSCE activities and commitments with the general public. The upcoming Chairmanship will provide a chance for Kazakhstan to show great leadership in these areas domestically and abroad.

The United States looks forward to Kazakhstan's implementation of the commitments it made at the Madrid Ministerial. While fulfillment of the commitments is the Government's responsibility, in our view the Center should continue to play a supportive role in this regard by providing assistance from experts and facilitating civil society input.

We also want to express our strong support for the continued assistance provided by ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and other OSCE bodies in crafting the best possible pieces of legislation to enhance and not limit religious freedom and media freedom, to liberalize registration requirements for political parties, and to reform the electoral law per ODIHR's recommendations. We hope that these reforms are completed in a timely and transparent fashion.

We hope Kazakhstan will take into careful consideration the advice provided by the ODHIR Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief concerning the draft amendments to the religion law and ask that Astana allow ODIHR to make the report public.

Thank you again for joining us today, Ambassador Keltchewsky. The United States is happy to support you and your excellent team in Kazakhstan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.