



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Center in Ashgabad, Ambassador Djikic

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 15, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Ambassador Djikic back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report on the OSCE's work in Turkmenistan.

The United States is pleased by the increased level of engagement between the OSCE and the Government of Turkmenistan over this past year. We note that more projects were carried out in 2007 in all three dimensions than in previous years, and that Turkmenistan increased its collaboration with other OSCE bodies and institutions. We encourage the Center and the Government of Turkmenistan to continue building upon these good relations and to expand their collaboration into new programmatic activities.

The United States supports fully the Center's work in all three dimensions. In our view, the Center has done a commendable job raising awareness about OSCE commitments and principles in the country, including working directly with government officials, civil society, and students.

We take particular note of some of the projects and activities that assist Turkmenistan meet its OSCE commitments. The Center's work with the police, border guards, and customs are helping build the capacity of law enforcement bodies and reduce the threat of terrorism. We note that the Government of Turkmenistan has expressed an interest in expanding collaboration on border security and management activities and we look forward to a positive response on two proposed extrabudgetary projects in this area. We also hope that more border-related training and activities are initiated as a result of the OSCE border assessment to be conducted this year.

The Center has made good headway into second dimension activities that promote trade and investment, as well as fight money laundering. We also are encouraged by the Center's work with ODIHR to help train domestic election monitors, and by the activities intended to strengthen human rights, including the provision of expertise and technical support for improving training standards for judges, prosecutors, and lawyers.

As you noted in your report, Mr. Ambassador, Turkmenistan has made notable progress in democratic and economic reforms since President Berdimuhamedov was elected, but there are still many areas in which Turkmenistan could benefit from OSCE assistance. The United States would like to see the Center continue to support the development of civil society and

NGOs, and we urge the Center to help coordinate NGO participation at this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We would further be interested in additional activities to help develop an independent media.

Finally, we would like to welcome Turkmenistan's expressed support for the Ministerial Decision on Engagement with Afghanistan. We are confident that Turkmenistan can help consolidate security in the region by helping to train Afghan officials and tighten its border with Afghanistan.

As always, the United States supports the important role that the OSCE Center in Ashgabat can play in assisting the Government of Turkmenistan fulfill its OSCE commitments and engage in the region. We stand ready to support the Government and the Center in their joint efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.