



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Increasing Intimidation of Civil Society in Hungary**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 18, 2014

Three months ago, on June 19, the United States addressed the Permanent Council regarding an apparent campaign of intimidation directed toward civil society and independent media in Hungary. I regret that I must speak to the Council again on this topic.

As we said in June, just one day after the April 6 elections, the Hungarian government accused organizations that conduct legitimate work in human rights, transparency, and gender equality of serving “foreign interests.” Shortly afterwards, the Prime Minister’s Office alleged that NGOs that monitor and evaluate grant proposals for the EEA-Norway NGO fund were tied to an opposition party. On September 8, Hungary’s National Bureau of Investigation initiated a series of police raids on two NGOs responsible for the EEA-Norway NGO grant program in Hungary. With no prior warning, and in a show of intimidation, over 30 officers entered the NGOs’ facilities and seized the organizations’ documents and computers.

These police raids appear to be aimed at suppressing critical voices and restricting the space for civil society to operate freely. The United States again reminds Hungary of its OSCE commitments to human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law.

Mr. Chair, we raise these issues to express our concern about actions that appear inconsistent with OSCE principles, and also to encourage dialogue. We intend to continue to encourage the government of Hungary to observe its commitments and allow NGOs to operate without further harassment, interference, or intimidation. The United States believes that such respect for its commitments will help Hungary to become a more prosperous, robust and inclusive democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.