



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Head of the OSCE Center in Ashgabat

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Ivo Petrov to the Permanent Council. Thank you, Ambassador Petrov, for your informative report.

We commend you and your team for obtaining agreement to implement the long-awaited project to train border guards from both Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Border security is an area where the OSCE has significant expertise. This effort to improve the effectiveness of officials who guard Turkmenistan and Afghanistan's common border can help enhance security in the region and spur trade between the two countries, bringing economic benefits to the communities on both sides of the border. Endeavors like this help Afghanistan and its people address the challenges of political, security, and economic transition by strengthening ties with their neighbors and with the OSCE.

As Turkmenistan continues to consider constructing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and a new rail connection between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, we urge the OSCE Center to develop programs to strengthen the "software" – the norms, rules, and regulations – needed to promote commerce along the "hardware" of these planned trade routes. The 2012 Ministerial Council Declaration on Good Governance should help guide these efforts. We are also happy to see the Center's successful support of the Aarhus Center in Turkmenistan. We hope that further support of this important effort will serve to encourage the development of civil society in Turkmenistan.

We greatly support the Center's ongoing work to improve the treatment of prisoners in Turkmenistan's penitentiary system. We also commend you for your projects designed to raise awareness about domestic violence and women's rights. Your support of the domestic violence hotline is a major contribution to Turkmenistan and we urge you to continue your good work in this area.

The Center has done constructive work in the third dimension, but as we have made clear publically and privately, including on the occasion of the visit of the foreign minister, the United States remains deeply concerned about the poor implementation of OSCE commitments related to fundamental freedoms and human rights in Turkmenistan. Human rights defenders and civil society are particularly vulnerable, and we continue to urge the government of Turkmenistan to uphold its OSCE commitments and international legal obligations in this respect. We also join calls inviting Turkmenistan to participate in this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. We encourage you,

Ambassador Petrov, to continue to find ways to help Turkmenistan to strengthen its implementation of these commitments in the Center's work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.