



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Three Committee Chairs

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 15, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chair, we, too, hope that all of the distinguished Chairs enjoy their work, and are grateful to them for their reports today. Thanks to the chairs of the three committees, who have done so much to advance the work of this Organization, and to help participating States fulfill their OSCE commitments.

I would first like to address Ambassador Istrate, who has made the Security Committee an effective part of our comprehensive approach to addressing emerging transnational threats.

The Security Committee's robust agenda has allowed delegations to discuss pertinent issues such as countering violent extremism and the financing of terrorism, border management, community policing, and gender issues. We appreciate Ambassador Istrate's initiative to include OSCE institutions, field missions, and other international organizations in these discussions.

Ambassador Istrate, you have effectively led the implementation of the 2014 Ministerial Council declarations on countering the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon and kidnapping for ransom by encouraging national reporting on implementation efforts. As we consider new commitments in these areas, we must continue to implement and reinforce those undertaken previously.

Many colleagues talk often about the "relevance" of our work. Relevance is a by-product of taking action on issues that matter. Ambassador Istrate's focus on implementation of our recent relevant commitments is laudable.

We appreciate your efforts, Ambassador Istrate, in calling for the continued implementation of the OSCE's first set of confidence-building measures, and for progress on a second set. We find ourselves at a moment of opportunity on cyber issues, and hope the Informal Working Group meeting that will be held tomorrow will make strides in advancing practical, cooperative activities that address common challenges in this field.

Turning to the Second Dimension, we welcome Ambassador Papadakis' report on the activities of the Economic and Environmental Committee, and express our appreciation for his work to promote security, stability, prosperity, and cooperation across the OSCE region. As Ambassador Papadakis emphasized, economic and environmental issues remain critical components of comprehensive security, particularly for a world experiencing economic hardships and social turmoil. The Second Dimension offers important opportunities within the OSCE for addressing a wide variety of key issues, from good governance and anti-corruption efforts to water governance.

An area of particular importance in the Second Dimension is the OSCE's work against corruption. The scourge of corruption has a negative impact on democratic progress, respect for human rights, governmental accountability, political and social inclusion, law enforcement, border security, and economic growth – all of which affect security. Corruption undermines public trust in government institutions and enables illicit actors such as drug cartels, terrorists, and poachers. The costs of corruption are immeasurable, resulting in gross misallocation of resources, economic decay, and slower growth. We wholeheartedly support work in the Second Dimension to help participating States prevent, combat, and prosecute corruption. We welcome next week's Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting in Vienna, which will take stock of participating States' fulfilment of commitments related to corruption.

Finally, let me say to Ambassador Kvile that the United States thanks you for your wise, principled, and enthusiastic leadership of the Human Dimension Committee. You have challenged and stimulated participating States by holding engaging discussions with top-level speakers on diverse topics, including freedom of expression, national minorities, gender, freedom of religion or belief, freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, the death penalty, and torture, to name just a few. These discussions have been enhanced by the participation of representatives of OSCE institutions and field missions, and particularly by civil society.

The United States is pleased to echo your comment on the importance of voluntary reporting, which is an exceptionally useful means for understanding the successes and challenges participating States face in implementing their Human Dimension commitments.

Ambassador Kvile, the United States appreciates your focus on the need to uphold OSCE commitments at a time when we see considerable backsliding by certain participating States, especially when it comes to commitments regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms. You are spot on to highlight the opportunity to enhance our toolbox of mechanisms to monitor and encourage implementation of commitments.

We also appreciate your focus on OSCE institutions. As you have rightly pointed out during some of our recent debates in the Permanent Council, OSCE institutions offer constructive criticism of and recommendations to all OSCE participating States, as each and every one of us can improve our implementation of OSCE commitments.

Taken collectively, the leadership of Ambassadors Istrate, Papadakis, and Kvile provides us excellent examples of how we can work together to uphold and advance our shared OSCE commitments across all three dimensions. The United States is grateful to you for your efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.