



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

### **Response to the Head of the OSCE Center in Dushanbe**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 29, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Ambassador Pryakhin, welcome back to the Permanent Council and thank you for your comprehensive report on the OSCE's activities in Tajikistan.

The United States is pleased to see an increase in dialogue between the Center and the Government -- including through the second annual task force meeting -- which has increased the transparency of the OSCE's work and the efficiency of the Center. We take note that this has resulted in more streamlined activities that better reflect the needs and priorities of Tajikistan.

In keeping with this positive spirit of cooperation and collaboration, we hope that current discussions between the Government of Tajikistan and the Chairmanship result in a robust mandate that meets Tajikistan's needs in all three dimensions.

The United States supports fully the Center's work to assist the Government in its political, economic, and social development. While the Center's many programs all help contribute to overall security in the country, we would like to highlight a few that are notable for their successes and innovative approaches.

The launch of four transborder trade-promotion centers on Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan has assisted Tajikistan improve trade, transit and communication with its neighbors and is a particularly notable example of the OSCE's contribution to economic capacity building in the region. We would also like to highlight and commend the Center for its Small Arms and Light Weapons program, as well as its Mine Action Program, which have increased the safety and security of Tajikistan's residents.

As you noted in your report, Ambassador Pryakhin, there remain significant needs in Tajikistan where the OSCE could provide additional assistance, including support to improve Tajikistan's economic capacity and to help fight corruption. We are pleased that the Government of Tajikistan is calling for an increased focus in this field and we hope that participating States send staff to fill these new positions.

The OSCE also has a role to play in assisting the Government increase the professionalization of the police forces, improve freedom of expression for members of the media, respect for religious freedom, and support for civil society development, including helping the Government fulfill its OSCE commitments on NGO participation. We were disappointed that

the Government of Tajikistan refused to register the National Democratic Institute this year and recall the decision not to register Freedom House. We are also concerned about efforts to pass a new religion law with problematic provisions, the banning of three minority religious communities, and Government plans to tear down the only Synagogue in Dushanbe to make additional room for the President's palace grounds.

Mr. Chairman, the United States sees Tajikistan as a contributor to regional stability and an important partner in OSCE work with Afghanistan. We are pleased that since Ambassador Pryakhin's last visit to the Permanent Council, Tajikistan and the OSCE have embarked on three extrabudgetary projects intended to tighten Tajikistan's borders. To play the leadership role that many envision for it in regional border and customs management training, it is expected that Tajikistan will demonstrate a greater willingness to serve as a host for joint border management training with Afghan officials.

Thank you again, Ambassador Pryakhin. We look forward to seeing you again soon.