

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1888/21
16 December 2021

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 16, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you as well for your warm hospitality in Stockholm. And if I may, dear colleagues, it's a real honor to be here and I look forward to getting to know each and every one of you and working together.

Director Mecacci, dear Matteo, thank you for your comprehensive report and congratulations on the milestone of the 400th election observation mission. That's a very impressive accomplishment. ODIHR's ability to continue election observation missions, even during the pandemic, is commendable and shows the importance that ODIHR and participating States attach to your work. Free and fair elections are essential for functioning democracies, and the impartial, highly professional approach ODIHR takes towards its election observation missions is internationally recognized and provides the standard for others to aspire to meet.

In your report you highlighted ODIHR's work on peaceful assemblies. It is unfortunate that some participating States have used the pandemic as an excuse to unduly restrict fundamental freedoms, including the right to peaceful assembly. As a result, this work has taken on renewed importance.

I am happy to see that gender equality remains high on your agenda. This remains a top priority for my government, and the White House recently released the first-ever, whole-of-government Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, focused on advancing the rights and empowerment of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons at home and abroad.

The United States strongly supports OSCE work to combat trafficking in human beings and the human rights perspective that ODIHR brings to it. We welcome the establishment of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council earlier this year. Including the perspectives and experience of survivors in our policymaking makes our efforts more effective.

Finally, and very troublingly, it is deeply unfortunate that this year the OSCE did not convene the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting due to Russia's objection. It is essential the HDIM – a core OSCE function mandated at the highest level -- take place next year with robust civil society participation and I am pleased that you stand ready to support the incoming Chair, Poland, in organizing this event.

The United States will continue to support and defend ODIHR's independence, mandate, and budget. We view ODIHR's ability to independently observe elections as the cornerstone of your mandate and will continue support a budget that allows you to fulfill it. We thank you and your staff for your work under such difficult circumstances, and look forward to partnering with you, the incoming Polish Chair, and other concerned participating States to strengthen ODIHR, which bolsters the well-being and security of this region. Respect for human rights and democratic principles of government *within* states is essential for lasting prosperity and peace *among* states.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

###