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United States Mission to the OSCE



Response to the Presentations by the Chairpersons of the Security Committee; the Economic and Environmental Committee; and the Human Dimension Committee

As delivered by by Charge d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna, February 9, 2023

The United States welcomes the distinguished First-, Second-, and Third-Dimension Committee Chairs to the Permanent Council. Thank you, Ambassadors Stoian, Raunig, and Callan, for advancing the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and for your willingness to lead these committees through the critical year before us.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine and intransigent approach to this Organization have made addressing the challenges of comprehensive European security all the more urgent. Russia will not succeed in its war against Ukraine, its desire to destroy the rules-based international order, or its efforts to impede the crucial, mandated work of the OSCE. Nor will Russia succeed in disrupting the priorities of the Chair-in-Office or the important work of each of your committees. You have the strong support and confidence of the United States in implementing your robust agendas.

Ambassador Stoian, your presence as chair of the Security Committee confirms it will continue to be effective in addressing transnational threats while maintaining full adherence to OSCE values, principles, and commitments. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; including upholding freedom of expression both online and offline; peaceful assembly and association; and freedom of religion or belief; is central to achieving lasting success of the OSCE's security efforts.

A phased and flexible approach to an uncertain year is the right decision for the Security Committee, as it must remain adaptive and responsive to the on-the-ground security realities brought about by Russia's unjustified war against Ukraine and the war's consequences for the greater OSCE region. Border security and management, the protection of critical infrastructure, and Russia's efforts to destabilize other countries through its disinformation campaigns and other attempts to exploit and exacerbate ethnic tensions and sow societal division all remain areas of concern. In occupied, conflict-affected, and post-conflict areas, the special challenges to policing activities caused by designated transnational criminal organizations – to include Russia's Wagner Group – grow in importance every day.

Thank you Ambassador Raunig for providing clear and consistent leadership for the Economic and Environmental Committee since 2020 – and for agreeing to continue to serve as Chair in

these challenging times. The adaptability you showed in adjusting the Committee's work in response to the pandemic and then also to Russia's aggression against Ukraine demonstrates how the OSCE can help participating States address the most immediate security threats of our time, while advancing its ongoing work and foundational values. I particularly commend the work done by your Committee to shed greater light upon the economic and environmental devastation caused by Russia's brutal war against Ukraine. I urge you to continue your close cooperation with the CiO to raise our awareness and to hold Russia accountable for the ever-widening consequences, both immediate and long-term, of the Kremlin's war of conquest. We look forward to working together on these issues, as well as preparing for and mitigating the security implications of climate change when the next High-Level Conference on Climate Change is held.

Ambassador Callan, thank you for chairing the Human Dimension Committee at a time when we face unparalleled challenges to human rights and fundamental freedoms. We strongly support your robust plans for the Human Dimension of security. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a pre-requisite for lasting security. Russia's war of aggression continues to wreak death and destruction on the people of Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Kremlin intensifies its internal crackdown on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, attempting to extinguish civil society and independent journalism within Russia.

Beyond calling out and condemning the outrages inflicted by Russia on its own people and its neighbors, and the continuing abuses committed by Russia's enabler, the repressive Lukashenka regime, we will join you and other principled Human Dimension Committee members in defending the dignity and human rights of all throughout the OSCE region. We will join you in shining a light on the injustice against those imprisoned in this region for politically motivated reasons, including for dissent and for exercising freedom of religion or belief. We will support your efforts to eradicate torture, which persists in some participating States. We also will join you in your work to bolster the resilience of democratic institutions and processes, strengthen the rule of law, and empower civil society and independent media as bulwarks against distrust, division, and instability. You can count on the full support of my delegation during Human Dimension Committee meetings, and indeed at human dimension events throughout the year, including this week's Antisemitism Conference in Skopje as well as the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting which we hope will convene later this year.

As you tackle these challenges, we encourage each of you to promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation and empowerment of women in all their diversity. We also hope you will continue to provide opportunities for us to directly hear from first-hand witnesses to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as well as from the OSCE's field operations and from civil society in Ukraine and, indeed, across the region.

Chairs, this will be a difficult year for our work, and you will surely face challenges that can impede your progress. Know that the effort and thought you and your teams have devoted to developing robust, timely, and actionable plans is both appreciated and essential, especially now. You have our full support.

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