



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 3, 2014

We welcome UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay to the Permanent Council. It is great to have you here and to see our regional security organization actively engaged with the United Nations in the Human Dimension. We believe we can expand our cooperation in the other Dimensions as well.

We thank you for your courageous engagement and tireless pursuit of truth. It is clear that in many parts of the world, including some OSCE participating States, pursuit of the truth can be a profoundly dangerous activity. Freedom of expression and the related freedoms of assembly, association and religion, online and offline, are continuously under assault in certain participating States. We recognize your efforts to champion the rights of disadvantaged groups around the globe and to speak for all those who have no voice.

High Commissioner Pillay, the United States has heard you describe to the UN Human Rights Council the injustice and individual human suffering that continues in far too many places in the world. You have been a committed advocate for human rights, and a leader on many issues, pressing for justice and accountability as well as in seeking to end all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Champions of a free society, including human rights defenders and journalists, will always have the support of the United States.

We are therefore delighted that your office and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to deepen cooperation across the OSCE region. We remain hopeful that consensus policies supported by states at the United Nations – for example, on human rights defenders or protecting human rights online and offline – can be adopted by consensus here at the OSCE. These principled and commonsense efforts already have the support of an overwhelming number of participating States.

Throughout your tenure as High Commission for Human Rights, you have raised awareness of those human rights situations that need to be addressed urgently. Your approach has been to review all states with the same critical eye, without fear or favor.

In Ukraine, for example, we support the continued work of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission. We heard from Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, a few weeks ago about the “alarming deterioration” in the human rights situation in eastern Ukraine, as well as serious problems in Russian-occupied Crimea. Sadly, life for the residents of Crimea and eastern Ukraine has only worsened because of Russia’s blatant disregard for international law and its OSCE commitments. We call on Russia to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and to end its occupation of Ukraine’s

Crimean peninsula. We also condemn the serious abuses described the UN Rights Monitoring Report, the ODIHR/HCNM Human Rights Assessment Mission Report, and the Special Monitoring Mission reports. And we strongly support respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of everyone in Ukraine, including those living in Crimea.

Before closing, if I may, I'd like to offer a personal expression of gratitude and good wishes. In the years since I first met you on what I believe was the first-ever panel on the human rights of LGBT people at the Palais de Nations – certainly the first one where a High Commissioner participated – I have often admired your courage and clarity in speaking out to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms, and especially in calling for accountability for violators. You have done all of us, as citizens of the world, a service. Thank you for your tireless efforts and every good wish for the next chapter in what has been a life dedicated to justice. And may that next chapter offer a bit more time for rest and relaxation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.