



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Szabó, OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan

As delivered by Ambassador Dan Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 15, 2014

The United States welcomes to the Permanent Council the Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, Ambassador Gyorgy Szabó. Ambassador, we thank you for your presentation and ongoing efforts to support Uzbekistan in fully implementing its OSCE commitments, and we appreciate your stated goal of maintaining balance among the three dimensions.

In the First Dimension, we applaud Uzbekistan's decision to join the International Civil Aviation Organization Public Key Directory, a global validation system for e-passports, and we recognize that this decision was in large measure thanks to you and your staff's efforts to promote travel document security. We also commend you for hosting the first ever OSCE regional seminar on travel document security in Central Asia. Travel document security is an important tool in combating many of the most pressing transnational threats in the OSCE region, including violent extremism, trafficking in human beings, and illicit trafficking in narcotics, weapons, and other dangerous materials. Your efforts to promote police reform by training instructors from the Police Academy also have the potential for far-reaching impact. We encourage you to ensure that your police training incorporates relevant aspects of all three OSCE dimensions, including human rights awareness and anti-corruption activities. In this regard we commend your efforts to instruct officials at the Ministry of Interior on international human rights and anti-corruption standards.

It is apparent from your report, Mr. Ambassador, that your Second Dimension activities continue to be guided by the principles and norms reaffirmed in the 2012 Ministerial Council Declaration on Good Governance. In particular, we commend your efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Financial Investigation Unit to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, as well as your work supporting Uzbekistan as it seeks to meet its obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We also support your broader second dimension activities, particularly the project to support women entrepreneurs.

As you know, Mr. Ambassador, the Third Dimension is an inseparable part of the work of the OSCE -- comprehensive security across the OSCE space cannot be achieved solely through activities in the first two dimensions. We therefore urge you to ensure that your Third Dimension activities are as robust and productive as those in the First and Second Dimensions. We welcome your efforts to strengthen government offices charged with promoting respect for human rights. We believe, however, that there is room to do more, particularly with regard to strengthening the capacity and independence of civil society organizations. And we, as others, encourage you to develop projects that promote human

rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and religion.

Mr. Ambassador, I would also like to recognize your efforts to support the cross-dimensional priority of combatting trafficking in human beings. Your workshops promoting local-level coordination among the police, health and social service providers, women's committees, local neighborhood associations, and NGOs will greatly strengthen local, grass-roots efforts to combat modern slavery. And your efforts to educate businesses on their social responsibility to address the root causes of human trafficking promise to make a real difference.

Finally, we also appreciate your positive relationship with the Government of Uzbekistan. We welcome the news that the adjustment to the new project agreement cycle – an important fruit of that positive relationship – was largely successful. We lament that opposition by very few participating States has prevented us from adopting a 2014 budget. Once that budget is adopted, we look forward to the speedy selection and hiring of the two additional local staff that were approved last year. We would be interested to hear how you plan to utilize those two new positions – I know you addressed this in your presentation – to enhance your project activity.

The United States encourages the Government of Uzbekistan to leverage its constructive relationship with the Project Coordinator to find ways to work together with the OSCE to address some of the more pressing bilateral concerns Uzbekistan has with its neighbors, particularly in the realm of borders and water resource management.

The United States applauds the work of the Project Office in Uzbekistan across all three dimensions and looks forward to hearing reports of additional success in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.