



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Program Office in Bishkek and the Director of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek**

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Tracey Newell  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 23, 2024

Ambassador Rogov and Dr. Walker, it's an honor to welcome you to the Permanent Council. The United States is a steadfast supporter of your work to combat human trafficking, and promote the rule of law, economic development, and media freedom.

Russia's war against Ukraine has undermined security across the OSCE region, threatening the safety and prosperity of tens of millions in the region. Russia's actions have also significantly increased risks associated with human trafficking specifically. In this context, we welcome the Kyrgyz Republic's establishment of a National Rapporteur on Migration and Trafficking. The United States encourages the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure adequate resources for victim services and increase the availability of shelters for victims of trafficking. These are areas where the Program Office has expertise and could play a role.

We laud the Program Office's focus on promoting human rights and outreach to civil society. As the OSCE recognized in Astana in 2010, civil society plays an important role in helping ensure respect for democracy and the rule of law. That is why we are deeply concerned about the Kyrgyz Republic's restrictive "Foreign Representatives" law, which runs counter to freedom of association. The law's tighter controls over NGOs receiving foreign funding will hinder civil society's ability to promote and advance democracy, good governance, human rights, and prosperity.

We welcome the Program Office's initiatives to enhance rule of law and criminal law capacity. As referenced in your presentation, Ambassador Rogov, your initiative to deploy Mobile Police Receptions in our view is exactly the right kind of engagement. These initiatives will help the Kyrgyz Republic achieve both its First and Third Dimension commitments.

For our part, the United States is working with the Kyrgyz Republic to accelerate regional cooperation, connectivity, and economic development in Central Asia through the C5+1 diplomatic platform. We are committed to creating a more favorable business environment in the Kyrgyz Republic, and your support for entrepreneurs in the country is an important part of these efforts. Your programs to help build mobile applications, as referenced in your presentation, to register business entities and provide a portal for electronic state services benefit the people and businesses of the Kyrgyz Republic and help reduce opportunities for corruption.

We also welcome your advocacy for media freedom and freedom of expression in the Kyrgyz Republic. The OSCE Central Asia Media Conference held in Bishkek last year highlighted the fundamental link between media freedom and democratic governance. Indeed, as our own Representative on Freedom of the Media has said, freedom of expression is the most effective aspect of democracy. The reverse indeed is also true: government censorship, repressive restrictions on the media, and harassment of journalists indicate an erosion or lack of democratic governance. We urge you to consider to work with the authorities in the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure journalists can operate without undue pressure or harassment.

Dr. Walker, as you begin your leadership at the OSCE Academy, you can play a key role in creating strong and stable leadership in an institution which has been focused on expansion in the last few years. The Academy stands as a beacon of academic excellence and regional cooperation, fostering the development of future leaders and promoting security across Central Asia. We are confident that under your stewardship, the Academy will continue to provide students in the region and beyond with exceptional educational opportunities.

We also extend our gratitude to the Kyrgyz government for its continued support for the Academy as well as the Program Office which significantly benefits the people of the Kyrgyz Republic and the whole region.

Ambassador Rogov and Director Walker, you have our gratitude for your dedication to the goals of the Program Office and for the comprehensive reports you shared today. Thank you for your contributions to enhancing security and prosperity in the Kyrgyz Republic and across the OSCE region.

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