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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the EC for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, H.E. Benita Ferrero-Waldner

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank You, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, we are honored to welcome you once again to the Permanent Council. The United States considers the European Union to be a critical partner in our engagement around the world, and we highly prize our cooperation with the Commission around the globe. There is no closer partnership in the world than that between the U.S. and Europe: we share a community of values, interests, and responsibilities.

Commission tools such as PHARE, Tacis, Stabilization and Association Agreements, Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, and the European Neighborhood Policy are changing the face of the European continent. The Commission has much to be proud of in its role as an agent of peaceful and prosperous transformation of the OSCE region in the post-Cold War era, and we congratulate you for that.

In the coming months and years, we have many opportunities to make further progress together. A key challenge will be completing the process of stability and reconciliation in the Balkans, and ushering all the countries of that region on a Euro-Atlantic path.

Kosovo will be a major challenge in this regard in the coming months, as we seek to provide the people of Kosovo the clarity about their future that they deserve. We look forward to working with all interested parties to ensure that key functions performed by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo will continue.

The important role our Organization has played in building capacity, protecting the rights of Kosovo's minority populations, and supporting the sorts of decentralized municipal functions envisioned in the Ahtisaari Plan have made an impact. We would like to see the OSCE continue this role, although we understand that the OSCE may be forced for political reasons to shut its doors on the people of Kosovo. We are certain that the United States, the Commission, and the EU Member States, both collectively and individually, are prepared to ensure that vital monitoring functions currently carried out by the OSCE for the people of Kosovo are sustained nonetheless.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, we also welcome the European Commission's continued engagement in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe through its Neighborhood Policy, which is

providing assistance and advice to help those countries further develop politically and economically. Such outreach helps lead to a more stable and peaceful Europe.

The donor community can also play a significant role in helping to resolve the protracted conflicts through programs such as the EU's Border Assistance effort along the Ukraine/Moldovan border, or in economic assistance in South Ossetia aimed at building confidence and mutually-enforcing interests between the parties to the conflict. In that vein, we again reiterate our strong support to the Chairman-in-Office for making the protracted conflicts one of his main priorities this year, and hope the Commission will join the OSCE in that effort.

We also look forward to working with Member States of the European Union, the Commission and all interested participating States and Partners of the OSCE in developing concrete ideas to promote regional security in Central Asia and Afghanistan. As we know all too well, problems such as terrorism and illicit drug trafficking are not isolated in any one region but can spread quickly and present a clear threat thousands of miles away.

We now have an opportunity to address this head on. The EU's Border Management Program for Central Asia is playing an important role in the region, and we look forward to close cooperation as the OSCE also considers expanding its next steps in the region.

We again underscore the importance of bolstering all aspects of the human dimension. There is a challenge before us and we cannot back down. We must stand strong, united, and speak out for these principles.

In closing, Madam Commissioner, the United States greatly appreciates its close collaboration with the Commission representatives in the OSCE. We share common values and political traditions, leading to similar approaches to many key issues. We have welcomed the EU's efforts to use its common foreign and security policy process to speak with a single voice within this organization.

At the same time, we would urge you to bear in mind that an overly rigid approach to maintaining a common policy can sometimes limit the EU's effectiveness within the OSCE. One weak and feeble voice is not always better than a chorus of many, singing in harmony -- if not necessarily in unison. Similarly, efforts to fly the EU flag too high in the field can risk effective coordination with other actors such as the OSCE. As a true friend of the European Union and European integration, the United States is eager to see the Commission play the most effective role possible, so we would encourage you to look for mechanisms that put a premium on flexibility and cooperation.

Once again, thank you for your presence here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.