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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Reports by the OSCE Special Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Youth and Security

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 21, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

At a time where Austria is winding down its Chairmanship and we are beginning to look to the future, it is fitting that we are highlighting the role of youth and the excellent work that you three have done during the year, because you are the future of our organization. So thank you very much for being here. One of you said five minutes is not a whole lot of time to sum up your accomplishments – you did it really well and, as somebody who regularly abuses the five minutes allotted to me, I commend you for your ability to stay brief.

Your collective work is inspiring, it should be commended, and it constitutes an important element towards addressing today's challenges. Our ministers at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade in 2015 acknowledged these points when they underscored the role young people can play to support participating States in implementing OSCE commitments in all three dimensions.

The OSCE has undertaken important work to help tap into young people's potential. In the Western Balkans and in the South Caucasus, for example, the OSCE organized summer school projects to bring together young people across borders and other dividing lines. Such programs help youth understand that lasting peace is based not merely on the absence of violent conflict but on mutual understanding and respect.

The OSCE has also helped empower youth to challenge the spread of violent extremism and radicalization. Under the OSCE's #UnitedCVE campaign, participating young people illustrated how youth across the region can reduce the social isolation and intolerance that terrorists exploit in furthering their hate-filled narratives. As Special Representative Neumann noted in his report this year on countering violent extremism: Youth are not the problem, but can be part of the solution. Youth who are active in the development of concrete and useful interventions can play an important role in preventing their generational peers from choosing paths leading toward violent extremism. We also encourage the OSCE's executive structures, within available resources, to continue to promote and support these and other practical and useful initiatives, and we would encourage such activity in the future.

Under your leadership, the OSCE has strengthened its partnership with youth through regional workshops in Vienna, Tunis, Chisinau, Sarajevo, and Almaty – work that fed directly into the work of this year’s Ministerial, and the three of you should be proud of those efforts. Ultimately, however, it is not enough just to have young people present; we have to recognize what their voices are calling for, namely for fair societies, for equal opportunity, for government free of corruption. Progress in pursuit of these goals, and engaging youth in our efforts to meet them, create a brighter future for our young people and make all of us safer and more secure.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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