



United States Mission to the OSCE

Cooperation with the Business Community for Institutional and Human Capacity Building

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our delegation was very interested to hear the presentations by the keynote speakers, and we are firmly convinced that the private sector can be a powerful force for positive change in countries. International businesses are both integral parts of the communities in which they operate, as well as guests of the community. As members of that community they are looked upon to contribute. As guests, they are expected to give something back.

Firms can and should lead by example, be it – as we've seen in some of the presentations today – by simply being "good neighbors," or by reinvesting part of their profits in the community, by promoting high standards of corporate responsibility, and by promoting diversity in the workplace. One of the easiest ways to break down gender and ethnic barriers is to put people side by side where they can demonstrate that they are linked more by common threads than they are divided by differences.

One phenomenon that helped lead to promoting women in business – and high places in business – in continental Europe, for example, was the spread of American and British financial institutions which had significant numbers of female vice presidents in their ranks. This new "norm" helped erode resistance to female managers and at the same time emboldened more women to enter business and to strive for management positions.

Businesses can also hire locally, offer internships, and facilitate exchanges between foreign subsidiaries and the home office. Nothing teaches corporate culture better than the experience of working inside another firm. Businesses are also well positioned to work with host country governments to remove obstacles to business development and expansion and to create a better overall climate for investment, be it foreign or domestic.

Public-private partnerships are providing increased capacity for technology transfer, accelerating opportunities for countries that are not yet fully up to speed in this area. Technology transfer provides an economic stimulus, which creates alternative approaches for regional security and cooperation. Public-private partnership, including regular, honest discussions about obstacles to doing business can go a long way toward convincing governments to make the kinds of changes necessary to create a climate conducive to economic development and investment.

We believe that the OSCE can play a role in promoting this public-private partnership, and we are eager to hear from others their ideas about what the OSCE could do to increase partnership with the business community with the specific aim of increasing human and institutional capacity. Thank you.