



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to HoM in Tajikistan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 14, 2009

Madam Chairwoman.

Ambassador Pryakhin, welcome back to the Permanent Council and thank you for your comprehensive report on the situation in Tajikistan and the OSCE's activities in the country.

When you were last at the Permanent Council a year ago, the Government of Tajikistan and the OSCE Chairmanship were in the midst of discussions about the future of the OSCE in Tajikistan. We are pleased that these discussions resulted in a robust mandate for the Office--with new staff and expertise--that addresses Tajikistan's needs in all three dimensions. Since the new mandate took effect, we have witnessed an even stronger partnership between the OSCE and Tajikistan. This is a remarkable way to celebrate the fifteenth year of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan.

The United States fully supports the Office's work to assist the Government in its political, economic, and social development. The Office has experienced successes over this past year, including completing Phase II of the Small Arms and Light Weapons and conventional ammunition destruction program, clearing large swaths of land of anti-personnel mines, supporting new information and resource centers to enhance the business, trade, and investment climate, and raising awareness about human rights and trafficking. What we find especially noteworthy about these programs is that you, Ambassador Pryakhin, and your staff have done your utmost to transfer over time the ownership of projects to the host country, so that Tajikistan is left with an enhanced capacity to address its own security concerns.

The United States is pleased that the OSCE Office has responded to calls from the Government of Tajikistan to increase the country's capacity to combat corruption. This is a pervasive problem that requires serious and sustained attention and threatens Tajikistan's relationship with international donors. We welcome the Office's new initiative to add anti-corruption components to all of its work across the three dimensions.

While the OSCE Office has experienced successes, the government has not engaged at a high level on human rights reforms. We note that the OSCE's efforts to help develop the Institution of the Human Rights Ombudsman have been hindered by the Government of Tajikistan's lack of an appointment to fill the Ombudsman position. We urge the government to rectify this situation as soon as possible. We also encourage the government to more vigorously support the OSCE's penitentiary reform program and other similar efforts of the international community, among other things by allowing fuller access to prisons for independent observers.

In the next several months, we believe the OSCE has a larger role to play in assisting the Government to implement the recommendations from the 2005 election and to prepare for the February 2010 election. We hope the addition of an elections officer to the Office will help fulfill this role, and we encourage the Government of Tajikistan to work closely with the OSCE on this matter. We take this opportunity to urge the government to implement the OSCE recommendations from the 2005 election to avoid similar voting irregularities.

Ambassador Pryakhin, as you near the end of your posting, we are thankful for your tremendous work in Tajikistan and appreciate that you are leaving behind a more streamlined, efficient, and effective Office than what you inherited. We are confident that your capable staff will carry on your legacy.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.