



United States Mission to the OSCE

Working Session IV: Afghanistan

As delivered by Political Officer Daniel Phelps
To the Annual Security Review Conference
Vienna, June 26, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We welcome Ms. Shukria Barakzai and Mr. James Appathurai to this session of the ASRC. Thank you both for your informative and thought-provoking remarks.

At the outset, please allow me to extend the congratulations of United States to the people of Afghanistan on their historic presidential elections. These elections are a significant step forward on Afghanistan's democratic path, and the courage and resolve of the Afghan people to make their voices heard is a testament to the importance of these elections to securing Afghanistan's future. We commend the voters, electoral bodies, and security forces for their commitment to the democratic process. The United States calls on all stakeholders, including the two candidates and their supporters as well as the media and general public, not to prejudge the outcome of the election and to exercise patience as the electoral administration bodies count votes, adjudicate complaints, and certify results in the coming weeks. The United States further calls on all stakeholders to refrain from any acts that could incite violence, civil disorder, or instability and to engage the electoral institutions with patience and respect, channeling electoral complaints through the established institutional mechanisms, in line with Afghanistan's Constitution and electoral laws and regulations. We also appreciate the ODIHR Election Support Team's efforts to assist Afghanistan in managing this election.

Since 2007, the OSCE has supported a number of initiatives focused on border security and transnational threats, including countering terrorism and violent extremism, with Afghanistan and its neighbors. The United States has been a key supporter of the OSCE's work to share its expertise with Afghanistan and the region to build a more stable, prosperous, and democratic environment. As a platform for cooperation and facilitator of cross-border private sector collaboration and joint ventures, the OSCE is well-positioned to advance regional security and stability. The OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Dushanbe already provides specialized training for border security agencies from across Central Asia, the wider OSCE region, and Afghanistan. However, since it is entirely dependent on ad-hoc contributions, the BMSC unfortunately suffers from an uncertain financial future. The OSCE should put the College on firm footing by funding it through the Unified Budget (UB). The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, which offers master's level training for Afghanistan and the region's next generation of leaders, is partially financed from the UB – a resourcing arrangement which should be considered for the BMSC's funding in 2015. The OSCE's programs also facilitate trade between

Afghanistan and Tajikistan by building capacity and developing relationships between Tajik and Afghan businesses, notably by empowering and engaging women entrepreneurs. We applaud the OSCE's multi-faceted approach both to strengthen border security and to increase regional trade and linkages, including the promotion of integrated border management strategies.

We also fully support additional efforts within Central Asia for the benefit of Afghanistan and welcome Secretary General Zannier's vision in seeking out new, value-added region-wide endeavors. In this regard, we urge the speedy development and implementation of activities that meet the needs of our regional partners. Ideas such as establishing a regional center of excellence or an institute for strategic studies to assess opportunities and challenges facing the region deserve our close attention. We also encourage the OSCE to align its efforts on Afghanistan closely with the priorities identified by the region through the "Heart of Asia" process. The OSCE has unique experience and expertise to apply to the action plans of the six confidence-building measure working groups.

We remain committed to the New Silk Road vision as a strategic framework for the United States' ongoing engagement in the region, because we believe that the development of trade and transport corridors connecting Central and South Asia via Afghanistan have the greatest potential to transform regional relationships and promote connectivity. The OSCE remains very much an integral part of building the "software" side of New Silk Road.

The United States is clear-eyed about the challenges that exist in Afghanistan and the wider region. But we also see clearly the progress made, as well as the great potential for advancement through greater regional engagement and cooperation. We remain committed to supporting stability in Afghanistan and to augmenting the regional partnerships that will help make this vision possible.

In closing, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary General noted, possibilities for cooperation with Russia have diminished. This is unfortunate. That cooperation can only resume on the basis of mutual trust. We urge Russia to take the necessary steps – which have already been clearly described in other sessions of this conference – to reestablish that trust.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.