



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Rashid Meredov, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 27, 2014

The United States warmly welcomes Foreign Minister Meredov back to the Permanent Council. Mr. Minister, thank you for joining us today for this discussion and for sharing your ideas. Your presence is the latest example of Turkmenistan's increasing engagement with the OSCE.

Turkmenistan's initiative to host a High-Level Conference on Energy Security in Ashgabat is an important undertaking in this vital field – and I should apologize: it occurred during the US Government shutdown and I was sorry that we weren't able to send the delegates that we intended. We look forward to Turkmenistan's continued interest in and leadership on these issues in the OSCE. We see the potential for expanded OSCE work on energy security, including the promotion of good governance, transparency, and anti-corruption principles, which are integral components of this important issue.

We also welcome Turkmenistan's recent approval of an OSCE project to train border guards from both Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Border security is an area where the OSCE has significant expertise. This effort to improve the effectiveness of the officials who guard Turkmenistan and Afghanistan's common border can help enhance security in the region and spur trade between the two countries, bringing economic benefits to the communities on both sides of the border. Efforts like this help Afghanistan and its people address the challenges of political, security, and economic transition by strengthening ties with their neighbors and with the OSCE.

Mr. Minister, we hope that this year Turkmenistan's engagement in the OSCE will extend to the Human Dimension as well, and we encourage Turkmenistan to participate in the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. It is my understanding that the Government of Turkmenistan objects to some of the civil society activists who attend this meeting, but I would note that the HDIM is an important forum for participating States—the United States included—to hear and to respond to critics and to discuss implementation of OSCE commitments. One of the ways we build trust is by engaging seriously and in good faith on concerns about gaps between commitment and action in any dimension. In your absence, the only voice we hear from Turkmenistan is that offered by civil society. Please come to Warsaw this September and add your voice to our discussions.

Finally, Mr. Minister, we encourage the Government of Turkmenistan to consider how it can more effectively and fully implement its OSCE human dimension commitments, particularly those related to prisoners. One way to do this, in addition to engaging in the fora and mechanisms associated with this body, would be to consider supporting relevant

recommendations from last year's Universal Periodic Review of Turkmenistan at the UN Human Rights Council.

Minister Meredov, I once again thank you for speaking with us today, and I look forward to our continued cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.