



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Response to the Commissioner on Human Rights for the Council of Europe**

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 20, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Mijatović, the United States warmly welcomes you back to the OSCE Permanent Council, this time in your new capacity. Your distinguished service as Representative on Freedom of the Media left a lasting legacy of principled leadership in the OSCE, and we now applaud your contributions to defending and promoting our common values at the Council of Europe.

Your work for human rights, drawing international attention to the plight of human rights defenders targeted for repression, strengthening the rule of law and democratic principles of government, and documenting the shrinking space for civil society reminds us that lasting security and prosperity among states depends on respect for human rights within states.

This comprehensive concept of security is at the core of our organization. It remains critical for the OSCE and the Council of Europe to collaborate in advancing our shared goals.

We join the EU in welcoming your focus on Ukraine. The United States shares your concern regarding impunity for abuses committed by Russian occupation authorities in Crimea and Russian proxies in areas of eastern Ukraine not under government control. We are concerned to hear that Russia and the forces it leads have prevented you from accessing these areas, hindering your ability to fulfill your mission. We welcome your ideas on ways to enhance cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe to address the dire human rights situation resulting from Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine.

The frequent exchange of information and the working relationship forged between the OSCE and its three independent institutions and the Council of Europe help ensure that our activities are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

We also commend your approach to fulfilling your mandate through extensive outreach via country visits, themed awareness-raising events, and media engagement.

We applaud your work to advance women's rights and your focus on combatting violence against women and your recent Convention on this compelling concern. The OSCE, too, is tackling this scourge. We are pleased that participating States were able to reach consensus in Milan on a Ministerial Decision on combatting violence against women. Such parallel

action by the Council of Europe and the OSCE underscores the importance and topicality of the threat that women in our region still face.

Finally, the United States continues to share your concern over the rise of intolerance and discrimination in the OSCE area. There is no place for anti-Semitism, for anti-Muslim and anti-Christian discrimination, or for anti-Roma and other racist sentiment in our societies. LGBTI individuals, migrants, persons with disabilities — all remain vulnerable to human rights violations and abuses. There can be no room for hate crimes against anyone, anywhere, for any reason. Coordinated efforts by the OSCE and the Council of Europe to counter intolerance are critical to safeguarding comprehensive security throughout the OSCE region.

Commissioner Mijatović, we thank you for your service and collaborative approach. We wish you every success in your noble mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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