



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Internet Law in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 16, 2009

The United States would like to join the EU in expressing our deep regret that Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev signed into law on July 11th legislation on the Internet that we view as restrictive.

In our view, numerous provisions in the law are inconsistent with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments on freedom of media and speech. The new law would weaken freedom of expression on the Internet by equating blogs and chats with traditional media and reclassifying all Internet fora as "media outlets." It would also apparently significantly expand the legal grounds on which the government could shut down and block websites. The legislation marks a step backwards in the development of Kazakhstan's governance of the media.

The United States has raised concerns about the Internet law several times in the Permanent Council, as has the Representative on Freedom of the Media. The legislation has received this amount of attention because it is so critically important for an incoming OSCE Chairmanship to respect and endorse OSCE commitments, including on freedom of speech. We ask that the Kazakhstani Mission relay these concerns to authorities in Astana. We appeal to the government to implement this legislation in a manner consistent with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments to freedom of speech and the media.