



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to ODIHR Director General Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 28, 2010

Ambassador Lenarčič,

We would like to welcome you once again to the Permanent Council and to thank you for your comprehensive report and statement. The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned its place as the key institution in the OSCE's efforts to promote democratic development, including free and fair elections, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, tolerance and non-discrimination, and of course, to assist participating States in meeting their human dimension commitments. Better implementation of these commitments is an imperative for us all, and we welcome your constructive role in this regard.

We likewise wish to thank you for your even more comprehensive report presented at the Warsaw part of the Review Conference about where participating States stand with the implementation of their human dimension commitments. We urge all participating States to carefully review this report, particularly as we move toward the Astana Summit and our reaffirmation of the spirit and commitments of Helsinki.

ODIHR's well-deserved reputation for election monitoring is directly attributable to its well-known, objective criteria and procedures for election observation, which are in adherence to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. We appreciate ODIHR's continuation of this tasking by publishing the Sixth edition of the Election Observation Handbook. We also look forward to continued and closer cooperation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in carrying out future OSCE election observation missions. Both ODIHR and the PA are valuable contributors to the observation and evaluation processes. We encourage all participating States to implement these recommendations fully and in a timely manner.

We support, as evidenced by our co-sponsorship of a food-for-thought paper within the Corfu Process, your call for strengthened elections observation follow-up and agree that election observation can only have a lasting impact if post-election recommendations are not only given serious consideration, but are in fact implemented to the fullest extent possible. We are also open to ideas on how we might better institutionalize the peer review role, perhaps through the PC and the Human Dimension Committee, as follow up to ODIHR's election recommendations. We highly value the peer review function in the human dimension and see it as a key mechanism for improving implementation. We also believe that the role of civil society in promoting human dimension goals is invaluable, and we will continue to stand for full participation by NGOs at Human Dimension events in accordance with OSCE modalities, and for full respect in all participating States for the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly that undergird civil society's important work.

We welcome your initiative to tie the efforts of the Democratization Department into post-election follow-up and agree that election observation recommendations are closely related to the fields of democratic governance, rule of law, legal reform, gender equality and population registration.

While we are disappointed that participating States were unable to come to consensus in holding an OSCE human dimension event on freedom of assembly and association this year, we look forward to the publishing of an online Guidebook on Freedom of Association and welcome the publishing of the second edition of the Handbook on Monitoring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly. We encourage participating States to utilize these resources to ensure that these fundamental freedoms are fully respected in the OSCE area.

We applaud ODIHR's programmatic work in the area of human trafficking, and we urge expanded coordination with the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to ensure that all efforts are complementary and that there are no overlapping or conflicting priorities in this important area.

The United States strongly supports ODIHR's efforts in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We particularly applaud your programs to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions and other forms of intolerance and discrimination. We encourage continued cooperation with the Chairmanship's three Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Special Representative for Gender Issues, as well as the Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief in this regard. We also commend ODIHR's important efforts to deal with hate crimes. While hate crime data for the United States was unfortunately not available in time for the upcoming publication of ODIHR's annual report on hate crimes, detailed information will be available for 2009 on the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division website in November.

In light of heightened levels of hate crimes and other forms of discrimination towards minorities, and the United Nations designation of 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent, at the High Level Tolerance Conference and at the Warsaw Review Conference we called for a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in 2011 on racism and discrimination and an increased focus by the ODIHR Tolerance Unit on this topic. Both would assist in building the capacity of participating States to combat racial and ethnic discrimination and we reiterate this call today.

We appreciate your remarks about the important work being done by ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues. ODIHR's close cooperation with Roma and Sinti representatives, as evidenced by the adoption of the "Roma Warsaw Declaration" on the sidelines of the Warsaw part of the Review Conference, is crucial. His stated priority to assist participating States in combating acts of discrimination and violence against and counter negative stereotypes of Roma and Sinti in the media is greatly appreciated. We especially support continued efforts to promote equal access to early education and quality education for Roma and Sinti children throughout the OSCE and look forward to ODIHR's comparative report on the participation of Roma and Sinti children in early education later this year.

We also appreciate and value the important work ODIHR does on protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism. As we noted at the mid-October workshop on preventing terrorism hosted by the Chairmanship, we noted the vital partnership you have forged with the ATU to ensure a cross-dimensional approach to this priority issue.

In conclusion, the United States retains full confidence in the vital work performed by ODIHR and continues to support unequivocally its current leadership and direction.