



United States Mission to the OSCE

Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting Session 4: Field Presences

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Thank you, Mr. Coordinator.

You and your team deserve to feel a sense of satisfaction. This session is the realization of your vision to bring EEOs to Vienna and share their accomplishments and experiences, and the United States applauds your initiative and hopes to see this become a regular feature of 2nd dimension meetings.

Colleagues, we have just heard a number of very compelling statements from the OSCE's field presences. As evidenced by their depth of knowledge, it is clear that we have a great pool of expertise and talent to draw on as the OSCE seeks to assist participating States to fulfill their commitments. The women and men who directly assist with the implementation of commitments truly are on the frontline, and we should listen carefully, as we have, particularly during this inaugural meeting, as we seek to better understand how we are performing in implementing our commitments and, more importantly, what tools and initiatives are needed to better implement those commitments.

In the time available, it is of course not possible to address all the fantastic work being done across the OSCE region, so we would like to highlight a few exemplars of their high-quality work.

The field operations must of course interpret their mandates in the light of the OSCE's core tasks, so that longer-term projects can be sustained, yet offices also need to maintain agility to respond to emerging problems. Often activities are started based on themes put forward in the Economic and Environmental Forum, but then are left without subsequent support and follow-through. This is just one of the reasons why we continue to track and support the activities of the long-standing field presences and newer institutions like the OSCE Academy in Bishkek and the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe. With specific reference to the economic and environmental dimension, we welcome and support the growing role of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, with its new master's degree program focusing on economics and development. We believe programs like those at the Academy will ultimately facilitate economic activity that can not only improve licit trade within the OSCE space, but crucially also help neighboring Afghanistan to do so.

The deployment of field missions in the Balkans and other conflict areas has been among the OSCE's greatest contributions to security and cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic region in the last two decades, and we support efforts to improve the effectiveness of OSCE's field presence. The organization needs to develop the flexibility to transfer resources and expertise as needed to address problems and emerging crises before they erupt into conflicts. Even as we in the United States and other countries seek to right-size the Balkans missions while

augmenting the resources at other field operations, we will continue to support all the OSCE field presences as they carry out their mandates.

The field presences have focused on real-world problems. Their projects are not usually large in scope, but they do have an outsize human impact. For example, when the Centre in Bishkek set up a program to help labor migrants understand their rights and learn how to avoid becoming the victim of a trafficking scenario, they had maximum impact on a very vulnerable population.

The field missions also help build capacity, and we are particularly supportive of the work that is done to promote good governance. For example, the OSCE office in Baku has helped implement effective outreach programs on combating corruption for both citizens and officials. Azerbaijan's ratings on the World Competitiveness Index have improved, setting the groundwork for real progress in combating corruption. And, the presentation we have just heard on the Guillotine Project in Armenia provides much to consider in thinking of where else this approach could be applied.

The economic and environment officers in the field continue to serve a vital function in assisting participating States to meet their OSCE commitments. Of all the critical work areas our distinguished panelists have just presented, we would like to highlight one issue we all know has the power to overshadow all others in the second dimension. We noted yesterday that good governance is more than just anti-corruption, but without a focus on the pernicious effects of corruption on political and economic systems, all other field work is at risk of being robbed of its value. Graft, bribery, favoritism in public procurement, and other drags on the economy reduce the financial resources and political capital available to governments working with the private sector and civil society to solve problems in energy production and consumption, transportation systems, and environmental protection and restoration. To that end, we strongly support both the Lithuanian Chair's efforts to capitalize on this year's Forum topics of sustainable energy and transport and the incoming Irish Chair's focus on good governance during their Chairmanship year. We look forward to continuing robust discussions on how all participating States can learn from the experiences and best practices from the field.

In closing, the role of the field missions in this area will continue to be important for years to come, and we hope to see even greater involvement and support for initiatives in the field.

Thank you, Mr. Coordinator.