

## **U.S. Delegation to the Open Skies Consultative Commission**

31 January 2012

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you as Chair of the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC) this session and to wish you success in this important role. Last year the OSCC faced a series of challenges and I want to renew our pledge to provide you and our fellow delegations our full support in finding a long-term solution to the procedural dilemma before us.

At the beginning of each new year, many of us take time to reflect on our future goals and objectives. I believe the OSCC also finds itself in that position. As we begin the work of 2012 and look to the future, I would like to offer some reflections from my government on our collective successes and what we are looking forward to this year.

First, on January 1, 2012 we recognized the **Treaty's 10-year anniversary** since entry-into-force that occurred on January 1, 2002. We have accomplished much during this decade – let me mention just a few of our successes:

- certification of 10 types of aircraft and multiple sensors;
- OSCC adoption of 157 Decisions; approval of 20 Chairman's Statements; and 40 notification formats;
- conduct of over 836 observation flights and numerous training missions;
- accession of eight new State Parties; and
- conduct of two Review Conferences.

These activities took place in an atmosphere of collaboration and innovation that increased confidence among all States Parties. During the past ten years we have collectively established an impressive track record. On behalf of our delegation, we would like to commend all the personnel involved in making the first decade of Open Skies implementation a resounding success.

Mr. Chairperson,

While noting the cooperative accomplishments since the Treaty's entry-into-force, it is important to recognize that the next major milestone on the horizon is the **20-year anniversary of the Treaty's signature on March 24**. We are considering a number of activities to commemorate this occasion, and would like to work with our colleagues in the OSCC to focus world attention on the positive security benefits the Treaty has provided since its signature at the Helsinki CSCE Summit in 1992. We should reflect upon and celebrate both decades of success.

The Treaty on Open Skies is a unique regime, born at the end of the Cold

War, but continually adapting to take into account changes in the Euro-Atlantic security context. It has exceeded all expectations, and demonstrated the flexibility granted by the authors of the Treaty to address common needs. This is an uncommon trait for a legal Treaty – to be able to address issues that arise during implementation by using the Treaty’s famous “unless otherwise agreed” language. We should not let this important milestone pass without heralding our joint successes. Again, a few examples:

- allowing joint certification of multiple aircraft, rather than individual national events;
- leasing Parties’ aircraft to others on a regular basis;
- observation flights are routinely shared by 2 or 3 States, rather than on a single nation basis;
- sharing observation flights between NATO Allies and Russia;
- using Open Skies assets for natural disaster monitoring.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to recall that at the Second Review Conference, Assistant Secretary Gottemoeller called for increased collaboration by all States on the future sharing of assets. As we all know, our economies are still struggling and continued funding for Open Skies remains in question in some capitals. As a result of these economic realities, we would like to refocus **OSCC attention on the topic of sharing assets**. We remain concerned that we are not addressing serious, long-term budgetary and other strategic planning issues that are necessary for the long-term health of the Treaty. In order to do so, we recommend the OSCC organize a special one-day meeting early this year on future assets and strategic planning.

Under the Danish Chairmanship in 2010, we held an initial brainstorming session on strategic planning in November. Then, early last year, the Spanish Chair led additional discussions on aircraft options. In addition, the German delegation suggested creating an Informal Working Group on the topic. The draft Decision to establish the working group is pending adoption by the OSCC. A recent example of such efforts is reflected in a notification from Hungary, indicating its readiness to provide film processing in its laboratory for any State Party. We see our proposal for a special meeting as another forward-looking contribution in the realm of sharing assets.

Mr. Chairperson,

Regarding other OSCC activity, there is important work underway in the Informal Working Group on Sensors (IWGS), especially on those **draft decisions necessary for the certification of digital sensors**. The IWGS will meet again the week of 27 February and the Chairman has issued a draft agenda for review. In particular, we are hopeful the group can finish its work on the draft Decision for

Open Skies Digital Data Exchange Format (OSDDEF). Also, I would like to recall that there is one draft Decision agreed by the IWGS on Infrared Technology that is pending adoption by the OSCC.

In the Informal Working Group on Rules and Procedures in cooperation with our Czech and Canadian colleagues, we have recently issued a revision to the draft Decision on **Minimum Airfield Standards**. This draft reflects input received during the last meetings in October. Implementing such standards remains a priority for ensuring more effective observation missions. We also support discussion of the Norwegian food for thought paper that seeks a common interpretation of the Treaty's provisions regarding "**circling**" for mission planning purposes. We look forward to further discussion of these key implementation issues in the near future.

I would like to recall that during the fall session, the OSCC was able to adopt three of the five pending Decisions on revisions to several **notification formats**. There are two draft Decisions still pending adoption by the OSCC. The Informal Working Group on Notifications and Formats will resume review of Formats 12 and 14 this year, as well. Otherwise, we are not aware of any new proposals pending review by the working group.

I hope this intervention points to several substantive issues that the OSCC should be addressing as part of the normal Commission process. We are all aware of the differences of opinion that arose last year that prevented us from dealing with these important issues. As we have stated previously, we support **accession** to the Treaty by any OSCE participating State. The pending application of Cyprus for accession to the Treaty remains valid, and under review by the OSCC until we reach consensus to either approve or reject it. Since consensus is unlikely under current circumstances, we need to find a way to acknowledge this situation in such a way that the Commission may continue its important work and get back to business. We believe there are many viable options available to the OSCC parties and finding a solution is only a matter of political will. We offer our full support for such consultations in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to close by noting that outside the Hofburg, we have another busy year of observation flights before us, and I would like to extend our best wishes to all the observation teams for another safe and successful flying season. We will be publishing the list of total flights conducted since Treaty entry-into-force shortly for future reference.

Thank you for your attention. This statement will be provided in writing to all delegations.