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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Statement by the Kazakhstani Chairmanship Regarding Follow-Up to the Astana Summit

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 16, 2010

This has indeed been a significant year for our organization. Our heads of state or government recognized in Astana the enduring importance of the OSCE to our common security, reaffirming its comprehensive security concept and agreed principles and commitments and seeking to carry the ambitious vision of Helsinki and Paris into the 21st century. They also reaffirmed the primary importance of fully implementing our commitments in all three dimensions.

The Astana Commemorative Declaration was a notable achievement, particularly in its unambiguous reaffirmation of OSCE commitments in the areas of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. The declaration also recognized the important role played by civil society. In the latter regard, we applaud the robust civil society engagement in the run-up to and during the summit and recognize Kazakhstan's efforts in fulfillment of its responsibilities as Chair to afford NGOs access to and participation in the proceedings, in keeping with OSCE modalities, commitments, and precedents.

The Astana Commemorative Declaration is notable for another reason – it provides a way ahead, tasking us to move forward on a number of fronts to create a serious, full-scale plan of action.

We urge our partners and the incoming Lithuanian Chairmanship to focus on concrete actions we can take in 2011 to counter the newest challenges facing our nations – trans-national threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, drugs, and human beings. These threats, which in many cases are inter-related, originate both within and outside the OSCE region. We have broad consensus on the need to strengthen our common efforts to address these challenges and to bolster our interaction with our Partners for Cooperation, including Afghanistan, and we should act decisively to translate this consensus into planned, concrete actions.

We have broad consensus, too, to update the Vienna Document 1999, to improve the OSCE's ability to act effectively across the entire conflict cycle, and to address economic and environmental challenges. And we have renewed our commitment to strengthen respect for democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. We should act decisively and concretely in these areas and ensure that these values find full expression in a 21st century context.

Critical to the OSCE's effectiveness as a security organization is a clear demonstration that the participating States have the political will to ensure that the OSCE has a continued role to play in preventing and resolving conflicts in our area. As Secretary Clinton said in Astana, we must let the OSCE do its job. The OSCE must make a positive contribution on the ground if it is to remain relevant. Our aim now should be to identify ways to use this organization to promote dialogue and trust, especially where dialogue is almost nonexistent. We must use our existing toolkit – our long experience in identifying and implementing confidence- and security-building measures, our history of supporting economic cooperation, our tradition of encouraging people-to-people contact, and our expertise in promoting democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law – to bolster dialogue, foster creative thinking, and move toward the peaceful resolution of outstanding conflicts.

We look forward to working closely with the Lithuanian Chairmanship to build on the consultations held this year to identify concrete steps for a common path forward. We should look closely at our commitments, identify those areas in which implementation is weakest, and take action to address shortcomings. We must make every effort to strengthen our common security community, not only to meet today's challenges, but also to prepare ourselves to address the challenges of the future. Only then will we be able to make the ambitious vision of Helsinki and Paris a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.