

10 June 2011

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the General Amnesty in Armenia

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 10, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States shares the sentiments expressed by the EU and by the Lithuanian Chairman-in-Office on May 27 in welcoming the general amnesty in Armenia. In this context, the United States also welcomes the release of those detained in connection with the events of March 1, 2008 - cases over which we and others including the EU have long expressed concern.

The amnesty represents the latest positive step taken by Armenian authorities to address the lingering tensions from the March 2008 events. It comes after the recent resumption of authorized opposition rallies in Freedom Square and President Sargsian's call for a more meticulous investigation into the 2008 events.

The United States hopes that these positive steps will contribute to a constructive, transparent, and inclusive discourse among the authorities, all members of the opposition, and the full breadth of Armenian civil society. We further hope that such positive steps will continue in the run-up to the May 2012 parliamentary and February 2013 presidential elections, and that both these elections will be conducted in a free and fair manner that reflects the will of the people. It is also important that an independent and pluralistic media climate is established in the run-up to these polls, so that Armenia's citizens can make informed, independent choices about their leadership.

The United States believes that the rule of law and democratic institutions are fundamentally important to Armenia's political and economic development as well as its internal stability and security. We continue to call on the Armenian authorities to strengthen due process, ensure freedom of assembly and expression, and support an open, vibrant, and prosperous society. We remain committed to supporting the Government of Armenia and Armenian civil society to this end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.