



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# **Anniversary of the Astana Declaration and Our Commitment that Human Rights are Not Exclusively Internal Affairs**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 17, 2015

During the recent Ministerial Council in Belgrade, some delegations suggested that the OSCE pays too much attention to the human dimension, purportedly out of proportion to the attention it pays to the other dimensions included in the Organization's comprehensive concept of security. Suggestions were also made that the human dimension is used in a politicized and selective manner to criticize certain participating States. Furthermore, during a recent Permanent Council meeting, we heard the assertion that expressions of concern by some participating States about human rights in other participating States amount to interference in the internal affairs of those States. I would like to remind colleagues of our commitments made in Moscow in 1991, and of their reaffirmation just five years ago in Astana, where we all confirmed "that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security." We further confirmed that "human rights and fundamental freedoms are inalienable, and that their protection and promotion is our first responsibility."

Mr. Chair, colleagues, we were unanimous in Moscow and in Astana that the extent to which any one of us is, or is not, implementing our common commitments affects the well-being and security of our own citizens and those of other countries in the OSCE region. As President Obama said earlier this year at the UN General Assembly, "internal repression and foreign aggression are both symptoms of the failure" to provide a strong foundation for the strength of nations, based on "individual rights and good governance and personal security." The United States and other countries raise specific concerns and cases regarding human rights in individual participating States because it is only when concrete concerns are raised, that concrete solutions can be found. That is why we reiterate our concern to the Russian Federation, for example, about a spate of restrictive laws and practices that impede the exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in Russia, including the laws on Foreign Agents and Undesirable Foreign Organizations.

The United States fully recognizes the importance of the commitments made in Moscow and Astana. This is why our delegation proactively brings to the attention of this Council human rights issues in the United States, and why we take seriously and respond to concerns raised regarding issues in the United States. The U.S. commitment to the principles endorsed at Moscow and Astana explains why we raise in the Permanent Council – including today – the issue of policing and racial discrimination in the United States, why we explained the steps the U.S. government took following the tragic events in Ferguson, Missouri, Baltimore,

Maryland, and New York City, and brought to the OSCE a representative of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice to discuss this topic in depth. The United States has also engaged with the OSCE regarding the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, which the U.S. remains committed to closing. On December 10, we marked UN Human Rights Day here in this Council by reaffirming the importance of ensuring the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, and of rejecting discrimination and intolerance in all their ugly forms, including when they occur in the United States

In closing, we want to stress that OSCE participating States reaffirmed in Moscow 1991 that “categorically and irrevocably ... the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.”

Thank you, Mr. Chair.