



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to ODIHR Director Strohal

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 28, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Strohal, welcome back to the Permanent Council. The United States thanks you for your comprehensive report. We agree that ODIHR's thematic programs, individual projects, human dimension conferences, and election observation activities are vital in assisting states to improve their implementation of human rights and democratic principles.

We also wholeheartedly agree with your assessment that elections are only one part of the democratic process. Participating States that take advantage of ODIHR's assistance in the areas of legislative and judicial reform, rule of law, and human rights – as well as OSCE assistance on media freedom – are ultimately best situated to hold free, fair and democratic elections in which the public has confidence. Democratization, human rights, and tolerance programs also contribute to domestic stability and international security.

ODIHR's election observation reports are – and should remain – an invaluable source of recommendations in all these areas. The United States encourages all participating States to take note of ODIHR recommendations and to invite ODIHR experts to follow-up visits after final election reports are released. In this regard, the United States looks forward to welcoming the ODIHR and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly elections team for a follow-up visit to our own 2004 General Elections.

We strongly support ODIHR's plans to send an Election Support Team to Afghanistan for parliamentary elections in September. We also believe ODIHR should continue its outreach efforts through the Elections Section to other OSCE Partners and neighbors.

We note that the elections schedule in 2006 will be busier than usual. The ever-growing demands placed by participating States on the small elections Program must be matched by appropriate increases in resources under the 2006 budget.

Moreover, we encourage States to contribute to the Diversification Fund for Election Observation Missions. We also encourage all States that can to second long- and short-term election observers. Participation in ODIHR Election Observation Missions is a great way to become more familiar with the Office's excellent and unbiased methodology, as well as to learn more about OSCE commitments in the field of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Chairman, let me take this opportunity to stress that under the 1992 Prague Document that established it, "ODIHR is *the* [O]SCE institution charged with the tasks... in connection with the Human Dimension" of the OSCE, or CSCE at that time.

As such, ODIHR's credibility rests on the autonomy of its experts from political interference and on its endowment with a budget sufficient to support the tasks that participating States give it.

The United States strongly believes that core activities that have been tasked to ODIHR by Ministerial Council decisions should be funded by the OSCE unified budget. People whose job is to fulfill these core activities should have the job security provided by a position on the post table. That is why we believe that the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Program will require a more substantial budget in 2006 and should not be forced again to rely primarily on extra-budgetary contributions and secondments.

The United States has been very impressed with the excellent work done by the Tolerance Program over the past year, and especially since it received its first budget in May 2005. That is why I am honored to announce that we will make this week an extra-budgetary contribution to the Tolerance Program of over \$130,000.

This contribution will support activities on capacity building projects for tolerance NGOs, and the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. These projects are wonderful examples of the assistance that ODIHR has to offer to all participating States, both east and west of Vienna. They also are examples of projects that should be funded under the unified budget.

The United States will make another contribution of \$250,000 this week to Democratization Section projects on tolerance and respect for the rights of migrant workers and on fair trials. Ambassador Strohal's report noted that the Democratization Section uses primarily experts from countries "East of Vienna" to implement its projects. We appreciate this fact, and believe that precisely this sort of cooperation – between experts with first-hand experience to share – is one of the keys to the Democratization Section's success. We urge other participating States to contribute to this and other Democratization projects.

The United States also commends the work of ODIHR's Human Rights section, especially in the areas of anti-trafficking, freedom of association and assembly, trial monitoring, and human rights training and education. These are all crucial elements contributing to stability and security throughout the OSCE region. We thank the Human Rights Section for organizing a productive Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on human rights and the fight against terrorism two weeks ago.

Finally, regarding ODIHR's report on the deeply disturbing events in Andijon, Ambassador Strohal quite rightly references a key principle of the 1991 Moscow Document: that human rights issues are not the exclusive domain of individual states but are, in fact, the legitimate concern of all participating States. Indeed, we have pledged to hold each other accountable. The essential link between the protection of human rights and our common security remains one of the key pillars of international stability and of this organization.

The United States takes this opportunity to once again thank ODIHR for its prompt preliminary inquiry into this tragedy and urges the Government of Uzbekistan to extend its full cooperation to a full and credible international investigation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you again, Ambassador Strohal, for your report.