



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Czech Deputy Foreign Minister on the Council of Europe

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 1, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Deputy Minister Šrámek, the United States warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council in the Czech Republic’s capacity as Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Czech Republic has developed an impressive program for the Council of Europe based on the principles of protecting human rights, especially for members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; promoting gender equality; strengthening the rule of law; and supporting local and regional democracy. As you and other delegations have noted, these are concerns shared by both the Council of Europe and the OSCE’s participating States, embodying our respective core principles.

Respect for the rule of law, human rights, and democratic institutions is a fundamental pillar of a rules-based international order. When international law obligations are violated and democratic governance is eroded, our security framework begins to crumble. That is why it is important for international organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe to work in concert to defend and promote human rights and democratic values.

Now more than ever, the OSCE and Council of Europe must work together to uphold this rules-based international order. As we see demonstrated through Russia’s unabated aggression in eastern Ukraine and its continued support for so-called “separatists” which it leads, funds, trains, and equips, Russia undermines this order, just as it has through its occupation and purported annexation of Crimea. Future cooperation between the Council of Europe and OSCE on Ukraine-related initiatives, such as the Special Monitoring Mission, is imperative.

The United States has been an observer to the Council of Europe for over 20 years. We are also a full member or observer in the Council’s Venice Commission, the Group of States against Corruption, and the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Money-Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism, as well as a party to the Convention on Cybercrime.

Our two organizations are most effective when they are mutually supportive, particularly in

efforts to measure the health of democracies and the rule of law. The United States appreciates the Council's engagement on legislation reviews with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of the Media. This cooperation provides valuable points of reference for the OSCE field missions, which are often operating in difficult environments, and where democratic institutions are developing.

We should build on the many already well-established areas of cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe on democratic election processes and election legislation, the human rights of members of national minorities, and freedom of expression. We look forward to the Council of Europe cooperating further with the OSCE on countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, and on Internet freedom issues, which are also priorities of the OSCE's Austrian Chairmanship.

Mr. Deputy Minister, in conclusion, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have significant and complementary roles in defending and promoting democracy, human rights, and a rules-based international order, and we thank you for coming to Vienna to reiterate that important message today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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