



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Response to OSCE Project Coordinator in
Uzbekistan**
Ambassador John MacGregor

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 16, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States welcomes back to the Permanent Council the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan. Ambassador MacGregor, we thank you for your report and its timely submission.

On a personal note, I want to extend my appreciation for the way in which you engaged the PC, whether it be during your joint session earlier this year or your presence today. I find your openness, your candor, and your directness refreshing and commendable. I very much appreciate the way in which you provide fresh and additional information during the council that compliments the information you provided in the report. Thank you very much for that.

The United States welcomes the strengthened relations between Uzbekistan and the Project Coordinator, as well as the increased number of activities underway in Uzbekistan. In our view, the OSCE is well-placed to assist with Uzbekistan's ongoing reform process.

We support the Project Coordinator's work in all three OSCE dimensions and appreciate your support for gender mainstreaming throughout its activities.

The United States is encouraged to see the collaboration between the government of Uzbekistan, ODIHR, and the Venice Commission on the adoption of a new electoral code. We look forward to its implementation in what we hope will be free and fair parliamentary elections in December.

The United States is concerned about arbitrary forced evictions and demolition of homes as part of large-scale urban renewal projects in Uzbekistan. These programs must be undertaken with full respect for human rights and individual property rights, they must provide proper compensation, and they must ensure the protection of Uzbekistan's important cultural heritage in these neighborhoods. Independent media should be free to report on these issues. We took note that the Project Coordinator supports the legal protection of private property, and we hope the office will prioritize this issue.

Ambassador, we also hope the Project Coordinator will strengthen cooperation with NGOs and enhance efforts to build the capacity and independence of civil society organizations in Uzbekistan. The United States encourages you to develop more projects that promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, association, religion or belief, and the right of peaceful assembly. In this regard, we urge you to facilitate ODIHR's review of Uzbekistan's laws on religion, including potential amendments. This can help institutionalize recent policy reforms and ensure all laws and practices are consistent with Uzbekistan's OSCE commitments on freedom of religion or belief.

As you noted, Chairman-in-Office Lajčak will visit Uzbekistan next week. We hope the Chairman-in-Office will discuss how the OSCE can strengthen its work in support of the government's ambitious reform program.

Finally, we welcome the increase in resources for the Project Coordinator in the 2019 OSCE Unified Budget. As we begin discussions of the 2020 Program Outline, we should consider how to allocate a greater share of the OSCE's limited resources to support the government of Uzbekistan in implementing the broad range of reforms underway.

Let me conclude by thanking you, Ambassador MacGregor, and your team for your work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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