



## Increasing OSCE Activities in Central Asia

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the OSCE Permanent Council. As most of you know, I am on my way back from a trip through [Uzbekistan](#), [Kazakhstan](#), and [Kyrgyzstan](#), as well as Seoul, Korea where I attended the [Community of Democracies](#) meeting.

As the United States believes that the [OSCE](#) can play an important role in assisting Central Asian states with their transition process, I would like to tell you a bit about my trip in the region, as well as share some ideas the U.S. has on increasing OSCE activities in Central Asia. We believe we need to take a long-term approach in OSCE programs. We understand that transition takes time; this does not mean, however, that we should refrain from pointing out human rights violations, as we would with any other OSCE State, or asking for progress.

The U.S. goal in Central Asia has been to fully engage the countries of the region on important human rights and democracy issues and to make sure the message is heard that the U.S. Government holds firm in its commitment to promoting [democracy and human rights](#). To help fulfill this goal I have made three trips to the region this year, more than to any other region in the world. These trips have been challenging, in some cases they have been fruitful. In Uzbekistan, on this occasion as in the past, I was able to meet with human rights activists, independent journalists and law students in addition to the Foreign Minister and other officials. I was pleased to see that the lifting of formal censorship has emboldened journalists to report more critically on government policies; we only hope they will increasingly feel the freedom to speak out and provide all of the information needed for citizens to make informed choices.

Human rights abuses continue in Uzbekistan, but it is also my hope that the newly registered human rights group will be able to exercise their right to monitor government actions and to hold their government accountable when atrocities occur, such as the recent [deaths](#) by torture in Jasyk prison. In this regard, I was extremely honored to be able to participate in the OSCE-organized "Roundtable on Legislative and Practical Measures Relating to the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Committee Against Torture." My government fully supports the effort of the OSCE Center in Tashkent to hold further meetings and workshops in order to develop and discuss an action plan, outlining concrete follow-up measures for the appropriate state institutions.

In Kyrgyzstan, I met with the President and Foreign Minister and with members of the democratic opposition, civil society and the independent media. In my meetings with all of these groups, all pointed to the fact that after some months of continuing civic unrest, the government has begun to reach out and take steps to reduce citizen grievances, including the formation of a [Constitutional Council](#) which includes some members of the opposition. The Council has now made its recommendations on constitutional and government reform, and we hope that it will produce genuine reform that is reflective of the will of all the people and that is implemented in a timely fashion.

It is also my hope that ODIHR [OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] will be able to provide a rapid assessment of the soon-to-be announced constitutional amendments in order to determine whether they meet international standards. I urge ODIHR to undertake such an analysis so that Kyrgyz citizens will have the benefit of OSCE experience on constitutional and legislative reforms, so that they can make an informed judgment when they go to the polls in December.

For the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, I hope that it will be able to participate in the Media Support Center, which is using American government funding to establish an independent printing press. Providing independent media with the means to publish newspapers without facing the structural constraints of a monopolistic state-run printing house is an important step towards guaranteeing the freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan and guaranteeing a whole new industry for Kyrgyzstan.

We remain deeply [concerned](#) about developments in Kazakhstan. Opposition leaders Zakiyanov and Abyzov remain jailed on long prison terms which resulted from what appears to have been politically motivated prosecutions. I was able to meet with the wife of Zakiyanov, and she remains very concerned about the health of her husband; we hope Kazakh authorities will ensure that he continues to receive proper medical care.

I was heartened to meet with members of the opposition party Ak Zhol and learn that they have gathered the required number of signatures to register; I have been concerned that the newly enacted political party legislation will severely limit the ability of smaller opposition parties allowed to survive. I also met with members of Democratic Choice, which began the year with promising hopes, but now faces a difficult struggle to complete its agenda of political reform.

Most disturbing in regard to Kazakhstan remains the situation of the independent media, which has been the victim of a consistent and persistent pattern of intimidation, which was made very clear to me in a roundtable on press freedom. In particular, the recent arrest of independent journalist Sergei Duvanov raises serious doubts about the independence of the judicial system. As you may know, Mr. Duvanov was severely beaten shortly before he was to attend the [OSCE Human Dimension Meeting](#) in Warsaw in September, and he has now been charged with rape just days before he was scheduled to travel to the United States. We hope that Mr. Duvanov will be able to receive a fair and transparent trial. We urge the OSCE Center in Almaty to continue its important work in monitoring the situation of the media and the democratic opposition, including the trial of Duvanov. We call upon the Government of Kazakhstan to enable the OSCE to review draft electoral and media legislation in order to ensure that it complies with OSCE commitments.

As to additional OSCE activity, we should look at increasing resources for the OSCE Centers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. We hope this can be done in this year's budget process. Without sufficient resources and personnel, we cannot be successful.

The United States believes the OSCE should look at doing programs in the following areas:

Police and border service training, including as a way to combat terrorism, organized crime, and trafficking while improving respect for human rights. In this respect, we welcome the proposal of the OSCE Police Advisor to open a model police station in Kyrgyzstan. We hope that this program will be expanded, both within Kyrgyzstan and throughout the region. We also take note of the Tajik proposal for a Border Service Training Institute and hope that other States will also come forward with concrete proposals. It is up to the governments in the region to tell us where they believe the OSCE can be of greatest assistance.

We believe another crucial area for the OSCE is Judicial Reform and Training. Effective independent judicial systems are critical for democracy, respect for human rights as well as economic development. Good governance, combating corruption and transparency are also important issues where the OSCE could focus on programs such as legislative assistance, training of government officials, judges, police, and customs officers.

Finally, we would welcome increased economic and environmental programs in addition to the human dimension.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Permanent Council, my government understands that the countries of Central Asia are still struggling for stability in a region where there is little historical tradition of freedom or awareness of human rights. Where we see these struggles yielding success, we acknowledge the results and encourage their expansion; where we see patterns of failure or languishing commitment to meet these obligations, we seek interventions. But we also understand that many countries are capable of doing more and we seek out opportunities to assist them to build the foundations essential to a democratic society. And in doing so, we continue to recognize the OSCE as an increasingly dynamic partner in our efforts. Thank you.

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