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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of OSCE in Ukraine, Lubomir Kopaj

As delivered by Political Counselor Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 20, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is, indeed, a pleasure to welcome Ambassador Kopaj back to the Permanent Council, and to thank him for his very comprehensive report. The United States strongly supports the important work of the Office of the Project Coordinator, which is occurring in an increasingly challenging socio-political environment.

The PCU's broad range of projects appropriately covers all three dimensions, and their objectives focus on a number of challenges that confront Ukraine today. We commend the excellent work being done by the PCU under the democracy, governance, and rule of law initiatives, and here we emphasize the efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of governmental institutions, aid in electoral reform, and anti-corruption activities. These priorities should enjoy the support of the Ukrainian Government and broader civil society. We hope that the PCU's assistance to the Parliament in developing a new election code will help put in place the necessary legal framework for conducting elections.

Efforts to combat increasing incidents of xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in Ukraine continue to be of concern and remain a high priority for the United States. We therefore encourage the PCU to identify opportunities to work with the HCNM to mitigate the potential for conflict among ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Crimea. We encourage the PCU's active engagement with the HCNM, relevant authorities, and civil society to promote tolerance among affected groups.

The PCU is actively engaged in a number of projects that, in the face of the current economic crisis confronting Ukraine, present timely opportunities for furthering economic development, promoting employment, and improving security and environmental management. We commend the collaborative approach employed in the implementation of these initiatives with civilian authorities, the private sector, and local communities.

We would also like to commend your continued overall efforts to improve accountability and fiscal management of the PCU's projects, and urge you to continue to make this a priority.

The United States remains committed to working with the Ukrainian Government and the OSCE's Project Coordinator to assist Ukraine development as an economically stable and democratic country.

Ambassador Kopaj, we wish you all the best for your work in the coming year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.