United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Incidents and Legislation in Romania

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 19, 2013

Nearly a quarter century ago, Romania moved quickly toward becoming a modern democracy and integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community. Romania has made remarkable progress, which makes the introduction of problematic new legislation more troubling.

The United States is concerned by the Romanian parliament's recent approval of draft amendments to the country's penal code that would exempt elected officials from anti-corruption and conflict of interest investigations. We note that these amendments were passed without public consultation or debate, and no opportunity for judicial authorities or civil society to respond. If ratified, these amendments would reduce transparency as well as weaken the rule of law by hampering corruption investigations led by the Directorate General for Anticorruption and other authorities. We call upon the Romanian parliament and other branches of government to reconsider this move and ensure Romanian legislation adheres to the country's OSCE commitments on the rule of law and good governance.

We also note that on December 5, Romanian public television channel TVR broadcast an anti-Semitic song, which called for the burning of Jews, presented as a traditional Romanian Christmas carol. We commend Romania's Foreign Minister for condemning the song and we acknowledge the steps taken by Romanian officials to repudiate such acts of bigotry and their perpetrators and to help ensure they never happen again. In Romania and elsewhere in the OSCE, one of the most important steps to take in countering intolerance is for public officials to immediately and forcefully speak out against it, not only in international fora but to domestic audiences. The protection of minorities and combatting anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and all forms of intolerance are essential OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.