

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 15, 2010

The United States is pleased to welcome Chairman-in-Office and Foreign Minister Saudabayev back to the Permanent Council. We appreciate your comments today on plans for Astana and what the Summit will represent to the future of our organization.

There should be no doubt either here in this room or at the Summit in Astana that Europe and Eurasia are crucial for American security and global stability. We often partner with our European friends to address challenges elsewhere in the world, but there is still much work left to do in Europe and Eurasia.

This is a particularly busy season for us with the NATO and NATO-Russia Council summits and U.S.–EU summit, and, of course, the Astana Summit. Through these meetings, we demonstrate our shared comprehensive approach to deal with the full spectrum of security, democracy, human rights, rule of law, and economic challenges the transatlantic community faces. Together, they represent an opportunity to press forward in cooperation on all of these issue areas to exploit synergies between the institutions.

The OSCE has been an integral and irreplaceable part of the European security architecture since 1975. Forged in the Cold War, the OSCE has become, in its aftermath, a global forum to prevent and resolve conflict, promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and enhance good governance and transparency. This will be underlined at the Astana Summit, where we will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the signature of the Helsinki Final Act and reaffirm unequivocally the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and all OSCE commitments and principles, as well as our responsibility to implement them fully and in good faith.

We view this Summit as an opportunity to revitalize the OSCE in all three dimensions and reinforce the development of the OSCE as a democratic and cooperative security community. It is an opportunity that should not be squandered. We are well aware that there is precious little time left to negotiate meaningful agreements. But with the requisite political will, dedication and the leadership of the Kazakhstani Chairmanship, we believe it is possible to present our leaders with a forward-looking document worthy of their support.

Here in Vienna, we are working hard to fashion a robust reaffirmation of our shared commitments and principles, and an Action Plan to demonstrate a renewed commitment to a democratic and secure OSCE region and reconfirm the role of the OSCE and its comprehensive concept of security across all three dimensions.

It has been our firm and continuing view that the action plan is a place where our leaders can task us to accomplish goals that will help the OSCE space become a truly indivisible and comprehensive security community. We need a concrete plan to accomplish this and we need to address the difficult issues of our time.

Transparency in all three dimensions has been a key goal which we have advocated. In the First Dimension, the U.S. supports key, substantive updates to the Vienna Document to show the world we are serious about materially increasing military transparency in Europe.

Similarly, we have been advocating serious crisis response capabilities and we invite more engagement by all to arrive at acceptable language we can use to launch real improvements in our conflict prevention and crisis response capabilities.

The protracted conflicts are a sensitive but critical test of fundamental OSCE principles. The OSCE should renew its focus on practical steps that can contribute to the resolution of the protracted conflicts.

And finally, let me turn our attention to another critical issue facing the organization. Afghanistan is the major conflict of our time, and will be for some time to come. The OSCE, simply put, cannot stay on the sidelines. Rather, appropriately targeted activities for and with Afghanistan – and with the cooperation of our Central Asian partners – can support Afghanistan’s stability and security as well as bolster legitimate economic activity in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

As you all know, the United States has long stood for the value of civil society’s participation in OSCE events. We look forward to an environment in Astana that is conducive to civil society activity, and interaction with participating States, in accordance with OSCE modalities and commitments. We particularly welcome your support for a Civil Society Forum on November 26 and your assurances that the independent Parallel OSCE Civil Society Conference in Astana on November 28-29 can take place unimpeded as planned.

Mr. Chairman, the Astana Summit, in our view, is a start, not an end. It is imperative that we use the opportunity presented by the Summit to set a solid foundation for the OSCE’s future work by providing not only a reaffirmation that our commitment to OSCE principles is firm, but a framework to guide our work going forward. We are now a little more than two weeks out from the Summit. I want to be clear. It is not enough to speak of “enhancing our activities,” or “strengthening the potential of our organization.” It is past time to speak merely of “enhancing” or “potential.”

You mention the need to identify specific goals – we have done so, as have a number of other participating States. I believe that we have, in fact, broad agreement among the clear majority of partners. It is time to take a stand on specific goals. Foreign Minister Saudabayev, we welcome your leadership in this effort, and you can count on our resolute support in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.