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## The Abiding US Regional Engagement through the OSCE

The wave of pro-democracy protests in the Arab world reminds us inevitably of the last time dictatorships across an entire region suddenly shook and collapsed under the pressure of the people's desire for freedom. In 1989, Europe changed suddenly and immeasurably. Because of those events, and because of the wise policies in the years that followed, Europe, and the United States' relationship with Europe, has changed vastly in the past twenty years. In those days, the major preoccupation in the transatlantic relationship was the defence of Europe against the Soviet threat. Today, Europe is more democratic, largely unified, and is America's most important global partner. The US and Europe work together on an extraordinarily wide range of issues, although there is a common thread that runs through all our engagement with Europe: US-European co-operation remains essential to achieving our strategic objectives.

Our engagement with Europe begins with the idea that the United States faces a daunting international agenda and that our ability to deal with it is immeasurably increased by working with strong allies and partners. The OSCE's multidimensional approach to security is directly relevant to the transnational issues we face as we work together to build a democratic, prosperous, and secure transatlantic community. For this reason, the OSCE is one of the top three key European institutions with which the United States engages, alongside the EU and NATO. While NATO and EU enlargement have perhaps enjoyed more prominence in recent years, the OSCE nonetheless remains an essential venue for dialogue, co-operation and democracy promotion precisely with those countries that are not yet – or do not intend to become – members of these two other organizations. It serves as a testament to the United States' enduring commitment to the security of Europe and Eurasia.

The Helsinki Final Act states that promoting democracy and respect for human rights is fundamental to achieving sustainable security in Europe and Eurasia. It links security *among* states to respect for human rights *within* states. The OSCE's core values are among the reasons why this organization has a central role to play in President Barack Obama's and Secretary Hillary Clinton's foreign policy strategy.

The Helsinki Final Act brought to the forefront of international dialogue the revolutionary idea that true security demands democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for individuals within states. Since 1975, this concept of comprehensive security has been a rallying cry for generations of reformers who have claimed their rights and left their mark on our history. And

in this globalized, interconnected world, comprehensive security also means that insecurity anywhere in the OSCE region is a challenge for all of us.

The OSCE is a critical guarantor of the Helsinki legacy, and it has a laudable body of work behind it supporting the rights, freedom, and peace enjoyed by so many. Over the years, it has itself also made significant contributions to furthering security in Europe. Indeed, the remarkable success of the Organization during the past 35 years is proof of what the participating States can achieve when we implement in good faith our commitments, which are based on shared values and objectives. Improvements in the lives of our citizens in the OSCE area are the result of years of hard work, conviction, and persistence.

Nevertheless, not only can more be done to strengthen European security – it must be done. We must do more to prevent the outbreak of conflict in Europe, such as occurred in 2008 in Georgia. We must do more to ensure an effective arms control system, and address twenty-first century threats to our security, such as terrorism, organized crime, and trafficking in drugs and human beings. We must do more to ensure sustainable economic growth and protect the environment. And, above all, we must protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms that are the foundation of liberty, justice, and peace. The fact that we have yet not achieved all that we had hoped is not a reason to lose faith in the OSCE. Building the democratic institutions necessary to provide security and long-term stability is a process. Such a process takes time, which does not lessen its importance or the necessity for sustained US engagement.

Under Secretary Clinton, we are devoting attention and resources to deepening relationships with our closest allies, who share common values and interests and seek to solve collective challenges with us. We are also assisting countries to build their own capacities, to address their own problems, and to move their people out of poverty and toward sustainable progress. This also means encouraging greater regional engagement and responsibility to address common problems and devise constructive regional roles. The US will continue to be an active transatlantic leader, strengthening regional institutions such as the OSCE, and deepening co-operation.

These institutions must be modernized where necessary, and we must ensure they have the tools at hand to fulfil the tasks with which we have entrusted them. It is also imperative that we uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and defend the universal values that are enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. The US intends to lead by example, engaging directly with civil society in the countries with which we work. Public opinion and public passions matter even in authoritarian states. Technology has empowered people to speak up and demand a say in their own futures. So in every country with which we work, we will engage their publics, not only to make space for their contributions, but to send a message to their leaders about the accountability of states to their citizens.

There are a number of principles that guide the United States as we consider the future of European security and our role in shaping, strengthening, and sustaining it. They include:

*First, a steadfast dedication to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.* The United States will remain vigilant in our efforts to oppose any attempt to undermine the right of all countries to pursue their own foreign policies, choose their own allies, and provide for their own defence.

*Second, a recognition that security in Europe must be indivisible.* The security of all states is intertwined. We must work together to enhance one another's security, in part by engaging with one another on new ideas and approaches. At the December 2010 Astana Summit, we reaffirmed the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and set out guidelines for the OSCE in the coming years to bring us closer to fulfilment of the vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

*Third, a commitment to practising transparency in our dealings with Europe.* To keep Europe safe, we must keep the channels of communication open by being forthright about our policies and approaches. The United States supports a more open exchange of military data, including visits to appropriate military sites. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) also needs and is getting our attention – our goal should be a modern security framework that strengthens the principles of territorial integrity, non-first use of force, transparency, and the right of host countries to approve the stationing of troops in their territories.

*And finally, a recognition that true security entails not only peaceful relations among states, but opportunities and rights for the individuals who live within them.* Governments must promote and defend the human rights of their citizens so that all can live in dignity, free from fear of violence or oppression. The United States and Europe are acting together within the OSCE to expand opportunities, advance democracy, and protect human dignity. The United States seeks to partner with and strengthen institutions to broaden respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to end the scourge of human trafficking, and to reach out to marginalized groups.

It is on the basis of these principles that we are pursuing enhancements to European security. These principles will continue to guide our judgements on how and where to address security challenges. Overall, our goal is to use OSCE institutions and consultations to ensure the OSCE region leads the world in the implementation of best practices and multilateral co-operation in advancing democracy and countering twenty-first century threats.

Now, the work of the OSCE includes much unfinished business, on which it will need a concerted political effort by the US and Europe to achieve any kind of movement forward. There are unresolved conflicts in the regions of Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh and in Georgia. While progress is often elusive in resolving these outstanding conflicts, the OSCE has continued to make a significant contribution to the progress that has been

realized. In the short term, we will work with the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre to develop a programme of confidence-building measures to promote transparency and trust and diminish the potential for a renewal of violence. In the longer term, we will work closely with our allies to develop a common strategy on Georgia that supports Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Through dialogue in the 5+2 and Minsk Group negotiating formats, we will seek to advance diplomatic solutions to the conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh, engaging OSCE field operations and institutions in identifying and implementing confidence-building measures and developing new approaches to the long-term resolution of these conflicts.

The events of August 2008 in Georgia served as a particularly sharp reminder that we cannot take security in Europe for granted or become complacent. Regrettably, the closure of the OSCE Mission to Georgia in 2009 seriously limited what contribution our Organization could make to address the root causes of mistrust and suspicion that fuelled the conflict. We must let this Organization do its job and restore a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia.

And for that reason, among others, it is essential to strengthen the OSCE capabilities to address crises and conflicts, and to support reconstruction and reconciliation efforts following conflict. There is no other regional organization as well positioned to do so. All participating States agree that one of the biggest challenges in this area is to initiate an appropriate, timely OSCE response to developing crises. The Organization must be empowered to respond more effectively to crises within the OSCE itself. It is encouraging that our partners also recognize the need to improve on our existing capacity. We are committed to working with them to find a framework that will allow for timely, impartial OSCE reporting during emergencies like the one we have seen in Georgia.

The general framework for security in Europe is under considerable pressure. Russia's decision to suspend the implementation of its obligations under the CFE Treaty has undermined the most successful multilateral conventional arms agreement in the world. With the appointment of a Special Envoy for CFE, the United States has again assumed leadership, redefining the discussion on conventional arms to incorporate the continued vitality and relevance of the existing CFE Treaty and the other elements of the OSCE politico-military *acquis*. Using the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the three conventional arms control arrangements associated with the OSCE – the Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, the CFE Treaty, and the Open Skies Treaty – we will work together with our partners to prevent a gradual re-militarization of the Euro-Atlantic region.

We can also contribute to stability across the OSCE region by expanding and updating the military-to-military confidence- and security-building

measures of the Vienna Document to bring it in step with the realities of today's security environment. We must modernize our arms control and confidence- and security-building instruments to enhance their relevance to the current political situation and improve reciprocal military transparency. Although specific elements of these arms control agreements are in need of updating, their core principles of transparency, openness, and confidence are no less important now than when they were agreed. Our commitment to their full implementation and further development is essential for enhancing stability and security within the OSCE area.

Along with these traditional threats to European security come a variety of new and unconventional transnational threats and challenges. These comprise such phenomena as global terrorism, including nuclear terrorism; cyberattacks; climate change; global criminal networks that traffic in weapons, drugs, and human beings; and the potential for disruptions to Europe's energy supply that could have severe economic and humanitarian consequences. Responding to these will require new means and methods of co-operation and collaboration across borders and disciplines. One of our priorities for this year is to build the capacity of participating States to develop an integrated approach to counter, individually and collectively, twenty-first century threats and challenges.

While the OSCE participating States have made much progress in the past 35 years, we all recognize that more must be done to ensure full respect for, and implementation of, our core principles and commitments, particularly in the human dimension. The US is profoundly concerned about the failure of a number of participating States to honour some of our most basic human dimension commitments. While the end of the Cold War marked the fall of the great divide down the middle of Europe, a new line has appeared further east, with some countries of the former Soviet Union adhering to a more vertical and autocratic model of governance. The events in early 2011 across North Africa and the Middle East have shown in dramatic fashion that governments founded on personalities, and not on accountable governments, are inherently fragile, with obvious security implications for all. As Secretary Clinton said in Astana, one of the defining characteristics of this Organization is its recognition that true security and stability requires not only security among states but democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms for individuals within states. We are proud that the Astana Commemorative Declaration reasserts the centrality of these fundamental principles.

We are nevertheless concerned by some of the negative trends we are seeing in the OSCE space that run counter to our pledges in Astana. Restrictions on independent media, NGOs, and political parties, and even more disturbing, verbal and physical attacks against journalists, are occurring far too often in the OSCE area. It is not enough to design a national human rights plan if it is not implemented. It is not enough for governments to empower only the civil society organizations they agree with, while crippling others

with legal restrictions and red tape. And it is not enough for a constitution to guarantee freedom of the press if, in reality, journalists are put under pressure and even assaulted or jailed for their work. In fact, it is not enough just to hold elections. The whole process must be free and fair, with the benefit of monitoring by the OSCE. And, once in office, elected officials must govern democratically and build strong institutions. Yes, the list is long, but we are not asking participating States to accept new principles or rights – only to honour their existing commitments.

The US supports the OSCE's efforts to empower civil society and free and independent media, and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We believe that the OSCE should encourage greater dialogue between governments and individual citizens. We also believe that the OSCE should foster dialogue among civil societies and individual citizens across national, ethnic, religious, or other divides and promote efforts at reconciliation at the grassroots level. We welcome the participation of civil society in our efforts to improve security for our citizens. Empowering civil society is key to the future of this region and the OSCE as a whole.

At the same time, no measure, institution, or mechanism can take the place of the political will and leadership of each participating State to implement fully its OSCE commitments, work towards consensus, and enable the Organization to achieve the goals we have set out for it. Such political will was on display as the OSCE reacted to the clashes in 2010 between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan. With the support of the participating States, the Kazakhstani Chairmanship took prompt action to mitigate the crisis, dispatching a special envoy to facilitate dialogue and address potential sources of instability. The participating States responded rapidly to the appeal for assistance by the Provisional Government by agreeing to launch the Community Security Initiative, which is designed to promote more trust between law enforcement agencies and ethnic communities. The continued involvement of OSCE institutions, particularly the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), will be essential in the OSCE's efforts to promote peace, democracy, and the rule of law in Kyrgyzstan.

The stability of all of the countries of Central Asia, and the OSCE region as a whole, is intertwined with that of Afghanistan, an OSCE Partner State with which participating States share nearly 2,000 km of borders. Instability in Afghanistan is dangerous not only for Central Asia, but for the OSCE region as a whole. Individual participating States have been important partners in helping the Afghan people rebuild their country and pursue comprehensive security. But the OSCE itself should play a greater role. The OSCE has valuable experience and resources in border security and promoting border practices that facilitate licit trade, and is uniquely situated to help maintain stability along the northern border of Afghanistan. It can also help to build up trade relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan, which will

contribute to stability inside, and co-operative relations among, these countries. ODIHR has helped other countries in transition to develop transparent electoral processes that promote accountability and defuse political confrontations during and after elections. The OSCE is capable of making a similar contribution in Central Asia and Afghanistan. OSCE expertise in empowering women, promoting tolerance, and supporting civil society also contributes to stability in participating States, and would be effective in Afghanistan as well.

Recent events in North Africa and the Middle East testify to the relevance and appeal of OSCE values beyond its geographical area, demonstrating how freedom and democracy are closely related to sustainable economic development and how they jointly contribute to creating more peaceful and secure societies. We believe the OSCE can make a positive contribution to this process of transition. Not only does the OSCE have a vast amount of expertise in managing democratic transitions, but the OSCE participating States have consistently manifested their willingness to share the OSCE's experience with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation. This willingness to share experience and provide assistance – not only to Afghanistan but also to the southern Mediterranean region – is comprehensive, encompassing topics in all three dimensions of security, including police reform, border security and management, good governance and anti-corruption, judicial reform, and elections. In order to be meaningful and effective, OSCE support would need to be tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned.

The OSCE agenda is ambitious, and has always been so. The OSCE's record on the promotion of democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, together with its efforts in building civil society, is second to none. Overall, we need to use OSCE institutions and consultations to ensure that the OSCE region leads the world in the implementation of best practices and multilateral co-operation in advancing democracy and countering twenty-first century threats. We must work together to ensure that the OSCE has the tools and capabilities at hand to enable it to carry out the mandates we have given it. The Organization must remain true to its principles and commitments, while finding a way to apply them to new challenges.

In many ways, this means that the OSCE should focus on its historical strengths – serving as a vehicle for building confidence and trust, shining a light on violations of our common commitments, emphasizing the importance of a vibrant civil society to our mutual security, and promoting military transparency and predictability. Decades ago, the CSCE spoke up for the rights of Soviet dissidents who could not find a voice for themselves. Today, ODIHR supports those in OSCE participating States who wish to promote democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law. Although we can be proud of what we have achieved, much remains to be done to fulfil the promise of our Organization. The United States agreed to hold a Summit in Astana in 2010 precisely because we believe that the OSCE needs to be put

back onto the clear path laid out more than 20 years ago in the Charter of Paris, which set forth a framework for common action in all three dimensions essential to our security.

Although the participating States did not find agreement on a substantial action plan at the Summit as we would have hoped, the United States believes the participating States must continue our concerted efforts to address “unfinished business” in the OSCE region. As our Heads of State or Government declared more than 20 years ago, ensuring the security, dignity, and rights of each individual within our borders is the most important responsibility of government.

We all benefit when we deliver on the promise of the Organization’s principles. The implementation of Helsinki commitments is a road we have committed ourselves to travel together, not a destination. But it is a road that must be open to all people wherever they live. This has always been a process, one that requires adherence to founding principles and a continuing engagement to build upon them. We should all embrace the vision of Helsinki and apply it faithfully in this new century. The standards and promises of the OSCE have helped develop, and can continue to contribute to a freer, more prosperous, and more secure Europe and Eurasia. We owe it to our citizens to move beyond rhetoric to action.