



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to the Address by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Timothy Hanway  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 25, 2024

Madam Secretary General, welcome back to the Permanent Council. The United States appreciates your leadership of the Council of Europe during a very turbulent period.

Since your last visit, Russia has continued its war of aggression against Ukraine, causing massive destruction and grievous suffering. In the face of the Kremlin's appalling behavior, and the Lukashenka regime's enabling of it, organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE are essential as we seek to hold those regimes to account and to uphold support for the rules-based international order. Strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and rule of law are the foundations of our regional security.

The United States is pleased to have joined the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine as a Founding Associate Member. As you know, the Register will collect and record evidence and claims of loss and damage resulting from Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Now that the Register has started accepting certain claims as of April 2, 2024, we see this as a crucial first step toward comprehensive reparation for the destruction Russia's war has wrought.

On February 29, 45 OSCE participating States invoked the Moscow Mechanism to establish an Experts Mission mandated to look into mounting concerns about Russia's systematic and abusive arbitrary detention of Ukrainian civilians. Today, the report of the Experts Mission is being made public, and its chilling contents will help inform accountability efforts. This latest report builds on the OSCE's work to document Russia's forcible transfers and deportations of children from Ukraine, with support from Belarus, as well as to document human rights abuses and violations inside both Russia and Belarus. We welcome the work that the Council of Europe is doing in these areas as well on this matter.

We value greatly the Council of Europe's actions to support the aspirations of the Belarusian people for a democratic Belarus, which align with our goal of seeing the Belarusian people freely determine their country's future. We appreciate the Council of Europe's Contact Group on Relations with Belarus and its vital support to representatives of Belarusian civil society and democratic opposition.

Madam Secretary General, in this year of elections, more than 20 OSCE participating States will have held or will hold elections, including my own country. It is imperative that ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly

cooperate to enhance transparency and the freeness and fairness of election processes, and to ensure that elections reflect the will of the people.

The United States is proud to be a member of both the *Venice Commission* and the *Group of States Against Corruption*. We appreciate the *Venice Commission's* cooperation with ODIHR and its legal advice to the governments of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia as they work towards EU accession.

We congratulate the Council of Europe's Committee on AI on the finalization of this first-of-its-kind Framework Convention that defines a shared vision of how AI can be designed, developed, and used in ways that protect and promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

As the Council of Europe celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the OSCE moves towards its 50<sup>th</sup>, we should recognize and be proud of our achievements, while working even harder together to ensure robust observance of human rights, democracy, and rule of law commitments. The OSCE-Council of Europe Coordination Group's work is critical to building resilient societies and healthy economies that enhance security in Europe.

Madam Secretary General, thank you for your service and leadership of the Council of Europe. We wish you well. We look forward to welcoming your successor to the Permanent Council next year.

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