



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address of the President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, Dominique Hasler

As delivered by Ambassador Michael R. Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 1, 2024

Minister Hasler, welcome to the Permanent Council and thank you for sharing your clear, principled vision for the Council of Europe.

As we approach the third year of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the United States remains staunchly committed to aiding Ukraine and its people. We will also continue to defend our shared values across the OSCE region. We cannot allow Russia to relativize or delegitimize human rights and fundamental freedoms, or to cast democratic norms as a manifestation of "Western hegemony." The Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris are arguably more relevant today than ever, even if two participating States seem intent on renouncing their content.

The United States welcomes your priority to strengthen implementation of the decisions of the May 2023 Reykjavik summit that seek to hold Russia to account for its crimes in Ukraine. A Register of Damage is a crucial step towards supporting comprehensive justice by creating a repository for claims of damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It can benefit from the important work of the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism, which we and many other participating States have invoked three times, in cooperation with Ukraine.

We and our partners have also employed the Mechanism to examine the deepening repression within Russia, including against those who criticize the war. Consider the case of Yevgeniya Maiboroda, a 72-year-old woman who was just sentenced this week to five and a half years in prison for sharing a social media post with casualty statistics that differed from Moscow's official narrative. Or consider Vladimir Kara Murza, who this past week was transferred to solitary confinement in a new penal colony with tougher conditions for "maliciously violating" the prison rules by not standing up on command.

Madam Minister, Russia's egregious human rights violations and abuses in Ukraine and in Russia are not the only challenges we face. Belarus also undermines our rules-based order by enabling Russia's war against Ukraine and by its utter disregard for the democratic will of its people, as evidenced by the fraudulent August 2020 presidential election and the regime's brutal crackdown on protestors ever since. That is why the United States, together with many other participating States around this table, invoked the Moscow Mechanism in 2023 to document widespread human rights violations and abuses and increasing political repression.

We continue to support the Belarusian people and their right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and due process, as well as other key political and civil rights. We are appalled by the recent cases of Belarusian authorities detaining the family members of political prisoners, many of whom were targeted for simply seeking food aid from so-called “extremist organizations.”

Antidemocratic trends in other participating States are also cause for concern and have given rise in too many places to efforts to inhibit or suppress voices of dissent and freedom of the media. In both the OSCE and in the Council of Europe, we must redouble our efforts to support and strengthen accountable, democratic governance, including free and fair election processes, to defend human rights and advance the rule of law, and to combat corruption and other abuses of power. The joint international election monitoring missions of ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly foster transparency during elections, thereby strengthening accountability and public trust in electoral processes. We share your regret that Russia and Belarus have said they will not invite OSCE and COE observers to their upcoming elections.

Madam Minister, the Group of States against Corruption, or GRECO, also helps build trust and confidence as governments and civil society monitor compliance with the Council of Europe’s anti-corruption measures. We celebrate the 25th anniversary of GRECO and welcome Secretary General Burić’s roadmap to increasing engagement between the Council of Europe and civil society. Promoting and protecting the role of civil society in the fight against corruption is critical to our efforts to combat kleptocracy, which often goes hand in hand with repression. This is a key priority for the U.S. presidency of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, as is preserving and strengthening existing multilateral anti-corruption architectures. We encourage the seven OSCE participating States that are not already members of GRECO to consider joining.

We welcome the Council of Europe and the OSCE collaborating on the important standard setting work both organizations provide for member-states, including to combat trafficking in persons, advance gender equality, and give youth a voice to build a better future. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the OSCE’s Ministerial Decision on the Promotion of Gender Equality, and we acknowledge the importance of the Istanbul Convention to combating violence against women throughout the region. Preventing and responding to all forms of gender-based violence is a cornerstone of the U.S. government’s commitment to promoting democracy, advancing human rights, and furthering gender equity and equality.

We also must take stock of our accomplishments, be mindful of emerging challenges, and redouble our efforts as there is more work to be done to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This includes strengthening the meaningful civic and political participation of women in all their diversity, and improving women’s economic security.

In closing, I want to thank you again for your appearance at the Permanent Council and wish you success with Liechtenstein’s ambitious program during its Council of Europe presidency, particularly as the Council of Europe prepares to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

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