



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 5: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I

*National minorities;
Prevention of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism, and ethnic cleansing.
Follow-up to the 29-30 May 2008 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on
the Role of National Institutions against Discrimination in Combating Racism and
Xenophobia with a Special Focus on Persons Belonging to National Minorities
and Migrants.*

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Cliff Bond
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, October 1, 2008

Mr./Madam Moderator:

The protection of minorities remains every bit as relevant today as it was when our governments committed to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. The OSCE has completed almost two decades of institutional development intended to achieve this goal. The Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities is unquestionably a success and continues to be actively engaged in preventive diplomacy. The same can be said about the OSCE field missions and their work on minority issues.

The United States offers Ambassador Vollebaek its best wishes and full support in his ongoing work as High Commissioner. We are confident in his ability to maintain the effectiveness of the office in responding to changes that continue to take place across the OSCE region, such as the new minorities being created in Europe through immigration. Our emphasis should be on the on the non-discrimination and integration of national minorities and on education and policing as they relate to minorities, with due respect for linguistic, cultural and religious traditions.

The United States welcomes the High Commissioner's timely efforts to clarify what should be done to protect minorities and citizens abroad. With respect to Georgia, we agree fully with his advice that "States should refrain from conferring citizenship en masse to residents of other States, which is in violation of the principles of sovereignty and good neighborly relations. The presence of one's citizens or 'ethnic kin' abroad must not be used as a justification for undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States." Russian actions in this respect in Georgia have been incompatible with this sound advice.

In line with this advice the United States supports the integration of the Russian-speaking minorities into Estonian and Latvian society. We are concerned about the difficulties faced by Russian speakers and other national minorities in Central Asia, particularly Turkmenistan. Gradual changes in that country in recent years give hope that the situation there could improve generally, to the benefit of national minorities.

Officials in Turkey have acknowledged that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the social, political, and economic problems that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has tried to use as a justification for terrorism. We welcome the steps Turkey has taken to allow expanded Kurdish language broadcasting, and we hope the Turkish government will continue these efforts, in line with its OSCE commitments.

The United States looks forward to working with Greece as it prepares to lead this organization in 2009. We renew our commitment to our shared values, which includes a more comprehensive approach to ethnicity and human rights, in accordance with OSCE commitments. These encompass the ability of individuals to identify their nationality without disadvantage.

In southeastern Europe, we have continued to see progress overall in recent years. We welcome the Government of Kosovo's establishment of a strong constitutional foundation for protection and integration of the nation's minority communities, and call on Kosovo authorities to continue outreach to its minorities as well as facilitation of the return of refugees and displaced persons. We also call upon the leaders of minority communities to respond and engage, including through participation in Kosovo's political process and institutions.

The United States welcomes the Serbian government's action in the capture and transfer of Radovan Karadzic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and encourages Serbian authorities to ensure that the remaining two at-large indictees, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, are also apprehended and transferred.

Also on a positive note, we would like to take this opportunity to commend Slovakia for the amendments to the anti-discrimination law passed in February that should improve the authorities' ability to combat discrimination. We note the cooperative spirit with which Slovak authorities and non-governmental organizations worked together to draft the new law.

Thank you Mr./Madam Moderator.