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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Center in Bishkek, Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 27, 2010

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Tesoriere to the Permanent Council. At the outset, Mr. Ambassador, let me add my voice to those of our colleagues who have expressed their thanks and appreciation to you personally and to your team who have worked so diligently and capably to meet the full measure of your mandate and ensure we are fully informed regarding events in Kyrgyzstan. We agree with you in saying that the Center in Bishkek has certainly shown the 'value added' that the OSCE brings to the table in international conflict resolution, and you have our profound gratitude.

Since the events of April 6 and 7, the Center has been integral in working to restore public order, reduce ethnic tensions, and restore democracy to Kyrgyzstan. The United States continues to follow closely the situation in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the south. We join you in expressing a desire that the fragile gains made to date will begin to take hold and to become institutionalized. We support how the Emergency Contingency Fund has been used thus far. We see value in the Center fostering dialogue in connection with the drafting of the new constitution and the work you are doing to help prepare for the referendum next month and the parliamentary elections next October.

For our part, the United States intends to move ahead with assistance, including the full development budget set for 2010 of \$54 million. We are also prepared to redirect certain programs to address the short-term challenges of maintaining stability and ensuring the successful process for the upcoming elections. To that end, the United States will also provide an additional \$1.5 million to support elections.

Our humanitarian response totals over \$1 million to date, including medical supplies, fuel and food. In the economic dimension, an initial \$5 million has already been made available for technical assistance and infrastructure development.

Regarding the specifics of your report, I will limit myself to three brief points:

First, we concur with the focus by the Center on immediately restoring public order in Kyrgyzstan. Without doing so, there is little else that we will be able to achieve. The deaths and injuries on May 19 in Jalalabad only underscore this point and we extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who died. As we have said before, it is important that law and order and democratic governance be re-established as soon as possible in accordance with democratic principles and respect for human rights.

A part of that process obviously includes the need for the upcoming elections to be clearly in keeping with Kyrgyzstan's OSCE commitments. The work the Center has undertaken in support of the ODIHR Referendum Observation Mission is crucial to this effort.

Additionally, the publication by the Center of more than 40,000 copies of the draft constitution -- in multiple languages -- should encourage public confidence and participation in the process.

Second, we agree with your sentiment, Mr. Ambassador, that the events of the recent past only serve to accentuate the need to continue the work the OSCE Center in Bishkek began long before the first weeks of April 2010. The projects addressing human rights, police reform, media freedom, and penal reform must go forward with a renewed sense of urgency for the sake of all Kyrgyzstan's citizens. This is especially true of your work with Kyrgyz police officers. We agree that it will be essential for the police to earn back the trust and the confidence of the people, and there is no organization as well situated as the OSCE to help deliver on that pressing demand.

Third, and last, Mr. Ambassador, you rightfully draw attention to the threats and the challenges that lie ahead. On some of these issues -- organized and juvenile crime, narcotics trafficking, environmental dangers, and religious extremism -- we can all agree that there is a moral obligation for participating States to do more and to learn more about the magnitude of these perils in Kyrgyzstan and in the entire region. Some dangers emanate specifically from Afghanistan and these will, likewise, require our joint efforts. We expect that the Bishkek OSCE Academy could be instrumental in helping us begin to do so.

In closing, Mr. Ambassador, thank you again for your extraordinary service.