



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Reply to Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 4, 2003

Thank you Mr. Chairman. To begin, let me thank you Mr. Minister for being here with us this morning. It is a fitting culmination to a year in which the OSCE welcomed Afghanistan as a Partner for Cooperation.

As Secretary Powell said in Maastricht on Tuesday, all participating States have an interest in a stable, a peaceful Afghanistan on the OSCE's borders. The OSCE should give meaning to this new partnership with Afghanistan by finding a way to help the Afghan Government. I don't think Secretary Powell could have been clearer in expressing the need for the OSCE to contribute to addressing problems in neighboring states. As the events of September 11, 2001 tragically demonstrated, the greatest threats to the security and stability of participating States are coming increasingly from outside the OSCE space. We absolutely cannot ignore that fact of life today, and the OSCE needs to recognize that fact in its actions and its activities as it performs the role with which it is charged - which is to provide security for all who are in the OSCE space.

Afghanistan's status as a Partner for Cooperation is all the more reason why we should engage actively with Afghanistan to support its efforts to enhance its own internal and external security, establish the rule of law throughout the country, strengthen its nascent democratic institutions, promote human rights, rebuild a vibrant civil society, and create conditions that are conducive to the development of a thriving market economy.

It is far less costly, whether one speaks of financial or human resources, to help a country address its own problems, than to deal with the spillover effects when these problems drift into other countries. We should help Afghanistan improve its border security and enhance its overall law enforcement capabilities, so we can minimize the chances of criminals, traffickers and terrorists creating problems for Afghanistan's neighbors and fomenting regional instability.

We must support efforts to foster an open and tolerant society, with a free and independent media, so all segments of society will have a peaceful means of expressing their opinions. It is essential that we help Afghanistan develop a sound, legal economy, and that we eliminate the dependence on opium production and trade.

Throughout the world we are spending billions to deal with the negative side effects of the drug trade, such as treatment for addicts, health care for those who have contracted HIV/AIDS from drug use, criminal activity to support drug habits, and rampant corruption at all levels that allows for the free flow of drugs across borders.

Mr. Chairman and colleagues, Afghanistan has made a direct appeal to the OSCE for assistance, in the first instance, in two areas of proven OSCE expertise, in elections and in policing. Given the difficulties we and other international organizations have had in providing such assistance to countries unable or unwilling to admit that they need it, we should give no appearance - much less the fact - of hesitance in providing help to a Partner for Cooperation that has asked for OSCE assistance.

This makes sense politically and is also a highly productive investment that yields huge returns when one thinks about the far greater costs of not helping. The United States strongly urges the OSCE to respond quickly and positively to Afghanistan's requests, and to engage actively with Afghanistan in other appropriate areas. Inviting Afghans to participate in border training exercises in neighboring OSCE states leaps to mind as one obvious area of engagement.

Afghanistan has made great progress since the fall of the Taliban regime and has demonstrated its resolve - stated so clearly by FM Abdullah today - to become a full, responsible member of the community of democracies. It is not only in our collective interest, but also our duty, to help Afghanistan achieve this transformation as quickly and as fully as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.