



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### Statement on Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 6, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would like to join others in welcoming Ambassador Nicholas to Vienna. I had the pleasure of meeting with Ambassador Nicholas during my recent visit and came away very impressed with the enthusiasm and the dedication of his staff and the important work they are carrying out.

The United States appreciates the work the Project Office is carrying out in a wide variety of areas. The Office's work reinforces other ongoing efforts to support Ukraine's transition to democracy and to improve the standard of living of its people.

The Office's training and education programs for former military personnel and conversion of military bases help to facilitate military reform, an area that is closely related to Ukraine's efforts to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures.

We support the Office's efforts to promote economic activities, particularly its efforts to promote development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which can serve as an engine for job creation and economic growth. We have long been aware of Ukraine's need for foreign direct investment and are also pleased that the Office is working to help attract investment at the oblast level. Other Missions could benefit from the Office's experience.

We appreciate the Office's work to foster rule of law: engendering respect for rule of law is perhaps the most critical challenge facing the Ukrainian government. This requires the development of an independent, professional judiciary; thus, the training programs for judges fill an especially critical need. We encourage the Office to develop a project on implementation of new legislation. We applaud the Office's efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, including its collaborative engagement with NGOs in conducting prevention campaigns.

We consider the Office's efforts to coordinate election assistance activities particularly valuable in view of the importance of the upcoming presidential election. This election is an important test of Ukrainian democracy and of its will to uphold OSCE commitments. We remain concerned by reports of campaign-related human rights violations and harassment of the opposition. We are also concerned about reports that pro-government forces are abusing administrative resources in order to tilt the playing field against opposition candidates. Tax investigations of businesses affiliated with the opposition are especially troubling. The Ukrainian government announced a moratorium of investigations by state agencies of media

companies for the duration of the campaign, which we support. The United States would welcome a similar moratorium on investigations of businesses.

We believe the Office is playing a positive role and encourage it to continue to coordinate closely with ODIHR, which will observe the election process. ODIHR representatives were present at the April 18 mayoral election in Mukacheve and issued a statement outlining some of the problems they found.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, the United States attaches great value to continued cooperation between the coordinator's office and the Ukrainian government in the implementation of the office's activities. We commend the Office and Ukraine for the cooperation that continues to characterize the activities outlined in Ambassador Nicholas's report. We believe such cooperation is vital to both the success of the Office but more importantly Ukraine in fulfilling its Euro-Atlantic ambitions. We welcome future reports on the achievements that such cooperation yields.

Thank you.