



United States Mission to the OSCE

Intervention on Turkmenistan

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 22, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States also welcomes the decision of the Government of Turkmenistan to lift the exit visa requirement previously imposed upon its citizens. This is an important step in demonstrating Turkmenistan's seriousness in addressing international concerns in the area of human rights. We will continue to observe the situation closely, and we hope that individuals previously denied the right to leave the country will now be permitted to travel freely.

The United States remains concerned, however, over the implementation of new laws on public associations and religion, which appear to violate Turkmenistan's OSCE Copenhagen commitments. We call on the Government of Turkmenistan to facilitate, rather than to hinder, the development of civil society, and to respect the fundamental rights of its citizens to associate freely and to practice freely the religion of their choice.

I thank you.