

Press Releases: INL Hosts Event To Highlight Corrections Partnerships

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 14, 2017

Today, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) hosted U.S. corrections departments for the inaugural Corrections Partnership Day. The event, at which Assistant Secretary William R. Brownfield delivered remarks, brought together 25 senior leaders from eleven U.S. state and federal correctional agencies to explore further collaboration to advance U.S. and international prison reform and development efforts.

In the fight against transnational criminal organizations, INL partners with U.S. state and local law enforcement, state departments of corrections, legal agencies, seaports, academic institutions, and professional associations to provide corrections, justice, and police assistance to partner countries overseas. INL currently has 105 such partnerships in 31 states and the District of Columbia.

These partnerships are mutually beneficial: Department of State criminal justice programs benefit from the up-to-date knowledge and expertise of active serving police officers, corrections officials, legal professionals, and port security experts. State and local partners expand their ties with particular countries of interest to their communities, form operational relationships with foreign counterparts, and develop new skill sets.

During his remarks, Assistant Secretary Brownfield underscored the importance and impact of U.S. corrections expertise on foreign corrections agencies to improve their operations in ways that support U.S. national security interests. Deputy Assistant Secretary Alexander A. Arvizu moderated a Town Hall to explore how INL's corrections programs are contributing to U.S. and international stability and security, including the fight against transnational organized crime.

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Press Releases: Release From Pre-Trial Detention of Mehman Aliyev

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 13, 2017

The United States notes positively the September 11, release from pre-trial detention of Mehman Aliyev, the respected editor-in-chief of the Turan News Agency. We ask the government to drop the remaining charges against him and allow Turan to perform its important work unhindered. We further call on the authorities to build on this positive step by taking action to strengthen freedom of expression and other human rights in Azerbaijan. We continue to urge the government of Azerbaijan to release all those incarcerated for exercising their fundamental freedoms.

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Press Releases: Sentencing of Akhtem

Chiygoz, Deputy Head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 13, 2017

We are deeply troubled by the conviction and 8-year sentence handed down on September 10 in Crimea to the Deputy Head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Akhtem Chiygoz, in connection with baseless charges related to a demonstration that took place before Russia's occupation even began. This is just the latest in a long line of politically-motivated legal actions against the Mejlis and its leadership, which is being targeted for its opposition to Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea.

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Press Releases: Background Briefing: Previewing the Community of Democracies Governing Council Ministerial

Special Briefing
Senior Administration Official

Via Teleconference
September 13, 2017

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Justin, and thank you, everyone for joining us today for this background call on the Community of Democracies Governing Council Ministerial, which will be hosted by Secretary Tillerson this Friday, September 15.

On the phone with us today is [Senior Administration Official]. [Senior Administration Official] will be identified as the senior Administration official. This call, of course, is on background and is embargoed until the end of the call.

So now, let me turn it over to [Senior Administration Official], who will make some opening remarks and then take your questions. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, [Moderator]. Well, as [Moderator] said, Secretary Tillerson will be hosting a meeting of the Community of Democracies Governing Council on September 15th, this Friday. This ministerial is the culmination of the U.S. presidency of the Community of Democracies. We assumed that presidency in 2015, and it is indeed traditional for the president of the Community of Democracies to hold such a meeting.

The United States was integrally involved in founding the Community of Democracies in June 2000 along with Poland as a vehicle to sustain and strengthen democratic values. And the U.S. continues to be very supportive of the CD's core mission to build a network of governments, legislators, and civil society to sustain and strengthen democratic values.

And why don't I leave it at that.

MODERATOR: All right. We'll now go – take – begin with your questions. So we'll take the first question.

OPERATOR: And just a reminder, it is *1, ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to queue up here for a question, *1 if you'd like to queue up at this time. And again, ladies and gentlemen, it is * followed by 1 if you would like to queue up for a question at this moment.

It looks like our first question will come from the line of Conor Finnegan of ABC News. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hey, thanks very much for holding the call. Just wondering if you can tell us a bit more about what Secretary Tillerson's message will be to these other countries – and I guess more broadly, to the world – about democracy and about what value this administration places on promoting democracy, given his past comments that sometimes those values should be second to national security or economic interests. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, obviously, I want the Secretary to speak for himself, so I don't want to get ahead of exactly what he will say. But suffice it to say that he will – the message will be loud and clear that democracy is very important not only for its own sake, but for sake – the sake of promoting security, promoting economic prosperity, and generally helping societies to advance.

Over the course of our presidency, we have had three priorities. The first was to promote and protect civil society, especially given the threats to civil society that have grown over the past several years; secondly, to focus on the issue of democracy and security, to demonstrate that democratic means of addressing security challenges are superior to other ways of addressing such challenges; and thirdly, that indeed, democracies do provide for greater stability, security, and economic prosperity over the long term.

MODERATOR: We'll take the next question now. If you have a question, you can queue up.

OPERATOR: Our next question comes from the line of Laura Koran, CNN. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks so much for doing the call. I was wondering if you could walk through a little bit the actual agenda and what meetings the Secretary's likely to have on the sidelines of this event. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I'm not aware of any particular meetings on the sideline – sidelines of the event that the Secretary will be holding, but the Secretary will be offering welcoming remarks to the group at the beginning of the meeting. There will be agenda items dedicated to each of the priorities I identified in the last answer, namely protecting civil society, one; democracy and security, two; and then democracy and development, three.

There will be a high-level lunch as well – working lunch to look specifically at the issue of terrorism and how democracies can best address the challenges of terrorism, and indeed, as I said earlier, why it is that democratic means of addressing terrorism are superior to other means of doing so.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll take the next question now.

OPERATOR: And just a reminder, ladies and gentlemen, it is *1 if you'd like to queue up. Our next question comes from Alicia Rose of NHK. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Yes, hi, thanks for taking the question. I was wondering if you could offer more information on how many and which countries are participating, at what level, and also what deliverables you're hoping to get out of this meeting.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks for the question. So there are 30 members of the Community of Democracies Governing Council, all of whom will be participating, and then there are 110 other countries that have been invited to participate. The process of selecting those 110 is undertaken by the governing council prior to each ministerial, and through that process,

countries' records on democracy are evaluated and invitations are issued based on the governing council's assessment of those countries' most recent record.

Acceptances of the invitations are still coming in, so I don't think I can say definitively who will be coming at this stage. But we have received robust response and we do expect a large number of delegations will be coming, including high-level participants. As well, the Community of Democracies includes a very robust civil society component, and there will be 50 to 100 civil society representatives in the room who will also be participating in the discussion.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Are there additional questions? If so, please register them.

OPERATOR: And at this point, we have no further questions here in queue.

MODERATOR: Very good, then. We thank everyone for participating and thank you very much, [Senior Administration Official], for this overview. The embargo on this call has now been lifted. As a reminder, it is on background to a senior administration official. Thank you very much, everyone, and have a good day.

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[Press Releases: State Department Releases Annual Fiscal Transparency Report](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

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The State Department, on September 12, 2017, released the 2017 Fiscal Transparency Report (the Report) consistent with section 7031(b) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017 (Div. J, P.L.115-31) (“the Act”). The Report found that 73 of 141 governments reviewed by the Department met minimum requirements of fiscal transparency. The report identified eleven governments found not to meet minimum requirements, but which had made significant progress toward meeting minimum requirements.

The Department evaluated the public availability, substantial completeness, and reliability of budget documents, as well as the transparency of processes for awarding government contracts and licenses for natural resource extraction. The Report can be found on the Department’s website at <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/ifd/oma/fiscaltransparency/>.

Fiscal transparency is a critical element of effective public financial management, helps in building market confidence, and underpins economic sustainability. It fosters greater government accountability by providing a window into government budgets for citizens, helping citizens to hold their leadership accountable and facilitating better-informed public debate. Annual fiscal transparency reviews provide opportunities for dialogue with governments on the importance of fiscal transparency.

The Report describes the minimum requirements of fiscal transparency developed, updated, and strengthened by the Department; reviews 140 governments that were originally identified as recipients of assistance in the 2014 Fiscal Transparency Report, plus Equatorial Guinea; assesses those that did not meet the minimum fiscal transparency requirements; and indicates whether governments that did not meet those requirements made significant progress during the review period of January 1 – December 31, 2016, to publicly disclose national budget documentation, contracts, and licenses, which are additional to information disclosed in previous years. The fiscal transparency determinations may change from year to year due to updating and strengthening minimum requirements of fiscal transparency as required by law, changes in governments’ performance on public financial management, or new information coming to the Department’s attention. As a result, some governments may fall short of these requirements, despite in some cases maintaining or even improving their overall level of fiscal transparency.

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