



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of Mission in Skopje, Ambassador Radicati

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 17, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Radicati, welcome back to the Permanent Council.

Often when we discuss countries that have experienced a conflict in the last decade, our focus is on helping consolidate security and stability in a transitional democracy. So it is with great pleasure that today we instead can discuss a country that since the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement seven years ago has made tremendous strides in developing its multiethnic democratic institutions on its path to full Euro-Atlantic integration. With understandable variations, Macedonia's progress has been steady and certain. Its political leadership has remained dedicated to their country's social, economic, and democratic development and committed to fulfilling Macedonia's international commitments.

The United States regrets that NATO at the Bucharest summit did not issue a membership invitation to Macedonia. We are pleased, however, that Allies at the Bucharest summit agreed that Macedonia has met the performance-based standards for membership, and that they decided to issue an invitation as soon as the name issue is resolved, without tying such a decision to future ministerial or summit meetings. The United States hopes a solution can be found through the UN process within weeks, not months.

We understand the disappointment that Macedonia's leadership has expressed with regard to the decision at Bucharest and welcome its commitment to continue its engagement toward a solution to the name issue and redouble its efforts on the reform track.

The OSCE Spillover Monitoring Mission to Skopje has played an integral role supporting the Government in its reform process. We applaud the OSCE's continued contributions to international community coordination and cooperation in Skopje in regular, close consultation with our Embassy, NATO representatives, and the EU Special Representative. We also appreciate that Ambassador Radicati and his mission have kept the Secretariat and delegations briefed on the political situation in the country and the mission's activities.

The U.S. places strong weight on the mission's rule of law programs, which should be continued as a priority for the mission this year. We are pleased with the progress made in judicial and police reform and encourage sustained efforts in this regard. We also welcome the willingness of the mission to monitor any legal proceedings that could result from the return of four files from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to Macedonian jurisdiction. We also place great store in the mission's continued confidence-building work to deepen cooperation and mutual understanding between different political and ethnic communities in Macedonia, in the spirit of the Framework Agreement.

We encourage the mission's continued attention to rightsizing to reflect progress made by the country. Macedonia has made excellent progress in the field of media freedom, and we believe that now is the time to start wrapping up some of the media development programs and start handing over program management and funding to government bodies. We do see utility in keeping the field mission in Tetovo open for now, as its engagement in confidence building activities and monitoring remain productive and useful.

In closing, the United States notes the decision by the Government to hold early parliamentary elections on June 1st. We encourage the Government and political party leaders not to delay reform implementation during the election period and to work together to ensure that the elections reflect Macedonia's democratic maturity. We urge ODIHR to begin planning for a monitoring mission. As domestic election monitoring NGOs have not budgeted for early elections, we also hope that the mission can help host a donors meeting to afford local NGOs an opportunity to appeal for funding.

Thank you very much for joining us today, Ambassador Radicati.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.