



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by Head of Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofer

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 10, 2009

Madam Chair,

The United States joins other delegations in welcoming Ambassador Almhofer back to the PC.

We thank you for your thorough report.

The United States notes with satisfaction that the situation in Kosovo continues to evolve in a positive direction. Kosovo has been invited to become a member of the World Bank and the IMF. A number of key institutions such as the Kosovo Judicial Council, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Constitutional Court, have now been established. Plans for energy and infrastructure development show the Government's determination to improve economic and social conditions, despite lingering effects of the global financial crisis. The security situation, with some isolated exceptions, is stable, as reflected by the generally peaceful environment and KFOR plans for gradual downsizing. Kosovo is on the right path.

In that regard, we welcome the progress the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) has made in adjusting its work to the evolving needs of Kosovo's people and institutions. We are pleased that OMIK's important work in core human rights monitoring is now being complemented and amplified by effective assistance and capacity building efforts at the local and central level. We urge OMIK to continue to draw attention to shortcomings in Kosovo's institutions at the same time as it works to build capacity and help solve problems. The mission's recent work in democratization is commendable.

Consolidating this progress requires continued international engagement, capacity building, and active cooperation with Kosovo institutions and community leaders. I would also like to highlight that the issue surrounding housing reconstruction in the north is a sensitive one. We encourage the Government of Kosovo, community leaders, and all stakeholders to continue efforts to find peaceful solutions to this and other issues in a way that reinforces stability and strengthens the rule of law.

As we have stated before, the engagement of all communities, including Kosovo Serbs, in Kosovo's politics and with its administrative institutions is critical for the development of a prosperous, multi-ethnic, democratic state, in which minority communities have a strong voice in their affairs. Practical solutions to the challenges facing Kosovo's citizens in building thriving communities, including issues such as public services, property claims, and protection of cultural and religious heritage, depend on this constructive engagement. We welcome efforts by the mission to foster this engagement.

In keeping with Kosovo's evolution, the United States believes that further streamlining of OMIK should be possible without having a major impact on programmatic results. The upcoming budget cycle will provide an opportunity for us to fine-tune OMIK's course to ensure that the mission's activities focus on areas where the OSCE has proven competency and is not redundant with the activities of other international actors in Kosovo. We look to the mission to use its expertise and

vision to inform decisions on the strategic changes that will make the most of the OSCE's resources. It is crucial to work toward the right balance between headquarters and field staffing, and between monitoring and effective capacity-building.

The United States will continue to strongly support Kosovo's development as an independent state. In the context of the OSCE, we will keep working with other participating States to enhance OMIK's contribution to Kosovo's stability. Supporting a multi-ethnic democratic Kosovo, which protects the rights of all its communities and preserves religious freedom, which has strong and stable institutions that can deliver economically for its citizens, and which is increasingly integrated into European and regional institutions are goals that are consistent with OSCE principles and which we should all support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.