



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofer

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 2, 2012

The United States joins in welcoming back Ambassador Almhofer to the Permanent Council, and we thank you for your comprehensive report.

The Mission in Kosovo continues to exemplify multilateral cooperation—among the many communities that call Kosovo home, as well as within the broader international community represented there. The OMiK staff has established trusting relationships with NGOs and institutions, relationships which have proved valuable during the heightened tensions in Kosovo's north.

These tensions are regrettable and unproductive, and they point to the importance of communication and diplomacy. The United States continues to support peace and stability in Kosovo and throughout the Balkans. We look to OMiK to help inform the international community of developments in Kosovo and to further, through a range of programs, this organization's commitment to human rights and the rule of law.

We welcome the progress the Mission made in facilitating the establishment and functioning of municipal offices for communities and returns to promote and protect the rights of displaced persons, returnees, and community members at the municipal level. OMiK's contributions to Kosovo's institutions have been strong, and we regard the Mission's activities as an investment in the future stability of Kosovo and the region.

The Mission's work on democratization and its engagement with Kosovo's many communities remains important for Kosovo's further development as a multiethnic democracy. We commend the increased coordination between OMiK and OMIS, which produced on January 12th the first of three meetings of two groups of prominent women from politics, academia, and civil society from Serbia and Kosovo. The meeting was an event marked by good will and cooperation, and we encourage further work that brings together people from both sides of artificial dividing lines in an effort to promote tolerance and reconciliation throughout the region.

Regional stability requires regional cooperation. We encourage the governments in Kosovo and Serbia to take full advantage of the EU-facilitated Dialogue in order to resolve key practical issues that will improve the lives of people on both sides of the border. The Dialogue has already produced good results. We encourage both parties to demonstrate a

sustained commitment to the process and to refrain from actions that would deepen divisions to the detriment of the people living there.

Ambassador Almhofer, your report to the PC comes on the heels of difficult budget discussions that took place in December. We expect budget discussions to continue throughout the course of the year on how to ensure that OSCE's field missions have the right resources in order to fulfill their specific mandates. We need your assistance to identify the Mission's core programs through strategic planning, and we look forward to working with our partners to identify ways the OSCE can continue to contribute to Kosovo's stability, welfare, security, and to a democratic path for its people.

Ambassador Almhofer, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo plays a critical role in assisting the development of Kosovo's democracy and new institutions. Your work is making a difference, and we note that Kosovo—through its laws, its constitution, and its actions—is proving that it shares the OSCE's core values. We commend your mission for reinforcing these values, and we look forward to the day when a Kosovo representative sits in this hall as a participating state within the OSCE community.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.