



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of the OSCE Office in Skopje Ambassador Ralf Breth

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 22, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Ambassador Breth to his first appearance at the Permanent Council and congratulates him on his appointment. We thank him and his staff for the informative and comprehensive report. The United States strongly supports the OSCE Mission to Skopje, and believes that it continues to play an important role in supporting Macedonia in its reform process.

The Mission's work to review the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) is an excellent example of good cooperation among the Government of Macedonia, the OSCE, and other members of the international community represented in the Security Principals Group. We view continued implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement - both in letter and in spirit - as an ongoing process, not simply a formality or a box to be checked. We share your concerns regarding the lack of equal educational opportunities and appreciate the Mission's considerable work done to support the HCNM's Strategy on Integrated Education.

We commend the Mission for its efforts to stay focused on issues where the OSCE's assistance will be of the most benefit. The United States continues to view the Mission's work on Rule of Law issues as among its top priorities. Implementation of commitments regarding transparency and independence of the Judiciary is crucial. We are very concerned about the continued politicization of the judiciary and the lack of incorporation of the comments of the judicial community into the new judicial reform laws. We have serious concerns about efforts by the Executive to exert pressure on the Judiciary, and we encourage the OSCE to continue its work to help Macedonia address these issues.

The United States shares the concerns expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media that pluralism in print media was practically eliminated on July 4 by the closure of three newspapers for alleged tax evasion. We call on Macedonia to restore pluralism to local media and to ensure media oversight councils are politically independent, and we hope the Mission will be a partner in that reform.

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. Recent events at the Skopje fortress remind us that we must not become complacent about inter-ethnic tensions. The government of Macedonia responded quickly and responsibly, and while these incidents seem to be limited and contained, they underscore the need to promote ethnic harmony. The confidence

building and monitoring activities carried out by the Mission, including through the Tetovo field office, remain relevant.

Ambassador Breth, your Mission's programs in the areas of rule of law, police reform, good governance, and confidence building have made significant contributions to stability and progress in Macedonia. The United States continues to support the work of your Mission with our contributions of seconded staff and our engagement both here and in Skopje. We thank you and your team for the hard work that has made it possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.