



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Ambassador Dimitrios Kypreos

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 3, 2011

Ambassador Kypreos, the United States joins other delegations in warmly welcoming you to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your comprehensive and helpful report. We strongly support the work of the OSCE Mission in Serbia. Serbia continues to make progress on reforms, and in recent months it has achieved a number of tangible results, including further progress towards EU accession as well as strengthened relations with its neighbors, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

The Mission continues to do important work on rights of individuals belonging to minorities and other human rights issues. We commend the support provided for the National Minority Council process, and are pleased to note the direct elections of 19 National Minority Councils. Additionally, we endorse the work done during the International Refugee Conference and commend the Mission's efforts on the success of that meeting. We recognize the significant work of the Mission's presence in south and southwestern Serbia. We fully support these efforts to enhance minority participation and achieve multi-ethnic local governments in these areas, and believe this contributes to security, stability and development.

The United States continues to place a high priority on strengthening Serbia's police and rule of law institutions. We look forward to the implementation of the Ministry of the Interior's Development Strategy for police reform and commend the work the Ministry is doing in combating corruption, increasing transparency and facilitating partnerships with the citizens of Serbia. We also support Serbia's efforts to reform its judicial and legal system. We welcome the news that the Mission is working with the Ministry of Justice in an effort to standardize the reelection of judges and prosecutors. This is an essential part of strengthening rule of law institutions and increasing citizen confidence.

We welcome the increased regional dialogue in recent months on unresolved issues of refugees and IDPs. Resolving these problems is crucial for long-term stability. The parties involved should stay focused on identifying remaining issues of dispute, agreeing on target groups, and finding practical ways to finalize long-standing claims.

The report also highlights Serbia's stance on Kosovo. The United States and Serbia disagree on Kosovo's status as an independent state, but this disagreement has not hindered U.S. desire to strengthen our bilateral relationship and seek cooperation on practical matters that will improve the lives of all of Kosovo's citizens, including issues such as those within the mandate of the OSCE Mission. We are heartened to hear of the Government of Serbia's commitment to dialogue with the Government of Kosovo on issues integral to regional stability and look forward to reports of the success of the talks.

With elections on the horizon, the strength of institutional checks and balances is crucial to the continued success of Serbia. We are confident that the Mission has a role to play in working with the Government of Serbia towards a stable, democratic transition. Ambassador Kypreos, you and your mission team are doing important work in helping Serbia on its reform path and toward its goal of European integration. The United States supports this work not only in words but also with seconded staff and contributions to selected projects. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with you, your mission, the government of Serbia, and other participating states on these important tasks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.