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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Amb. Robert Bosch

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d'Affaires Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 22, 2009

We warmly welcome you back to the Permanent Council, Ambassador Bosch, and thank you for your informative report. Since your last appearance at the Permanent Council Albania has achieved a number of milestones on its path to Euro Atlantic integration, including NATO accession, submission of its EU candidacy application, and several tangible improvements in the June 28 parliamentary elections. Despite the current economic climate, Albania attracts increasing foreign direct investment, and has advanced with privatization plans. We also note further improvements in the business climate, as recognized by a September World Bank/IFC report. Albania deserves recognition for these accomplishments.

Your report gives due attention to both the progress Albania has made on important reforms over the past year and to the challenges remaining. It also highlights the unsettled political landscape that persists in the wake of June's parliamentary elections.

Work remains to consolidate gains and ensure implementation of reforms. The United States highly values the Presence's work with the government of Albania to bolster the independence and transparency of institutions, such as the judiciary and prosecution, and to establish and implement needed legislation and institutions to counter corruption.

As we noted in our September 17 statement on the parliamentary elections, we believe that ODIHR's final report provides a useful guide for making further improvements to Albania's electoral system. The comments in your report regarding potential improvements are also insightful and are worth further consideration.

The United States fully supports the work of the Presence in Albania and its mandate. You and your team are doing effective and important work. We recognize your efforts over the past years to focus and prioritize the work of the Presence. The 2010 budget shows your intent to continue this process, and to begin the gradual handover of OSCE activities where warranted, for example, by converting some international positions to national staff.

Ambassador Bosch, we commend your close attention to coordinating the Presence's work with that of the government of Albania and with other local and international actors. We also note the positive relationship between the Presence and the Government of Albania. The United States looks forward to continued close cooperation with you and your team.

Thank you, madam Chair.