



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by HoM in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofer

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 5, 2009

Madam Chairwoman.

The United States joins other delegations in welcoming Ambassador Almhofer.

As your comprehensive report shows, major transitions are still underway in Kosovo. These transitions present challenges for the international community and demand that our respective roles continue to adapt and evolve.

The successful and peaceful deployment of EULEX throughout Kosovo is a significant achievement that could not have been possible without the constructive participation of all stakeholders.

The recent transition from the Kosovo Protection Corps to the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) has been largely trouble-free, and is another step in the right direction.

The engagement of the Serbian community in Kosovo's politics and municipal administrations is a critical element for the development of a prosperous, multi-ethnic, democratic state that also simply makes life better for Kosovo Serbs by improving local governance and services. We hope Belgrade will work in good faith to encourage and foster practical cooperation with the Kosovo authorities and the international community and to support pragmatic solutions on topics including public services, property claims, and protection of cultural and religious heritage.

The United States continues to believe that OMiK serves vital functions in Kosovo; at the same time, we have some concerns about possible duplicative activities of the international organizations in Kosovo, and believe that OMiK could be reduced without compromising its mission. Now is a good time to look at things from a fresh perspective to ensure that the Mission's activities are complementary with those of other organizations and are focused in areas where the OSCE has proven competency. We would welcome your views, Ambassador Almhofer, on areas where you think OMiK's activities could be streamlined or improved.

As the first report presented to this council noted, 54 UN member states have now recognized Kosovo. I know that a revision to that report was put out after the complaints by some governments who seem to object to the inclusion of facts in your report. Moreover, we note that a majority of OSCE participating States have also recognized Kosovo as an independent state. The European Commission has pledged significant resources to help strengthen institutions and improve social and economic development. We also believe that there is a perfectly legitimate role for our OSCE Mission to play in accordance with UN Security

Council Resolution 1244 which specifically charged UNMIK and those organizations operating under its umbrella with the role of developing local institutions of self government and helping to develop functions to those institutions.

The development of a multi-ethnic democracy in Kosovo which protects minority rights and religious freedom, and which has government institutions that can deliver stability and prosperity for its people, is a goal that we should all support, and in our view that should also include our Mission of the OSCE in Kosovo. The United States will continue to strongly support and assist Kosovo. Continued international engagement in Kosovo will help facilitate its integration into European and regional institutions, such as the OSCE. This will help secure the future for Kosovo and its citizens and will also contribute to stability for its neighbors in Europe and the wider OSCE region.

The United States is eager to work constructively with all participating States to identify ways this organization can continue to contribute to Kosovo's stability and the welfare and security of its people.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.