



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Response to Report by the Head of the
OSCE Mission in Kosovo,
Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 12, 2015

The United States welcomes Ambassador Schlumberger back to the Permanent Council for another comprehensive and detailed report. We commend the tremendous work done by him and the staff of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) during the past six months, in particular those programs involved in promoting human rights, the rule of law, and democratization.

The process of forming a government in Kosovo following the elections held last June was lengthy and required patience from all sides. What emerged was a strong indication of the substantial progress made by Kosovo when it agreed, without outside intervention, to a coalition government. We note in particular the constructive role played by President Atifete Jahjaga throughout this process, mediating between the competing political parties. We look forward to additional progress in Kosovo and call on the new government to focus on needed reforms.

Ambassador Schlumberger, you have noted in your report that the technical track of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue continued even during the formation of new governments in Kosovo and Serbia. This type of cooperation is an indication of the desire of both sides to work through difficult issues. We welcome the resumption of high-level talks earlier this week in Brussels, which led to the signing of an agreement on justice arrangements. This was an important substantive step forward in the normalization process, and we look forward to additional progress on key areas of cooperation and interaction.

In regard to recent demonstrations in Pristina, the United States reiterates the importance of the fundamental right to peaceful assembly. Violence, however, cannot be tolerated. We condemn the attacks and threats by individual demonstrators against journalists who were reporting on the recent protests, and we encourage authorities to investigate those incidents thoroughly.

Ambassador, you have highlighted the recent trend of increasing migration from Kosovo, including by the majority Kosovo Albanian community. We commend the attention paid to this issue by OMiK and the efforts of you, your staff, and other organizations to ensure a more prosperous and stable future for residents of all nationalities in Kosovo. We welcome your ideas on additional ways to address this challenge.

We reiterate the need for OMiK to continue engaging in comprehensive strategic planning that involves cutting activities that are non-essential and focusing on those that are most vital and which the Mission does best. OMiK should end activities that do not make the most

efficient and effective use of the OSCE's limited resources. The Mission must take steps to ensure that its efforts are well focused and that it is not spreading itself thin trying to do too much, across too wide a spectrum.

In reviewing your comprehensive report, we have observed another trend worth highlighting: the engagement of the Mission, and of the Government and people of Kosovo, in regional cooperation. Your report highlights multiple regional activities in which the Mission and a range of Kosovo Government officials were engaged—from a seminar for representatives of legislatures of the Western Balkans to activities in the realm of security and public safety. The productive cooperation ongoing in the region should also be reflected here in Vienna. The United States again calls for the OSCE and its participating States to recognize that Kosovo deserves a seat at this table. There are many ways to achieve this goal, and we look forward to continuing conversations here in Vienna on how to do so. We urge the Chairmanship to raise this issue proactively within the format of the Brussels Dialogue. Progress on this front would be a strong demonstration of Serbia's commitment to a region that values cooperation and explores every opportunity to promote the well-being of all people of the Balkans, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or background.

We again thank you, Ambassador Schlumberger, for all the work that you and your team do, and we wish you the best in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.