



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Response to Knut Vollebaek OSCE High
Commissioner on National Minorities**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 26, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes you, Ambassador Vollebaek, to the Permanent Council and we thank you for your very complete and interesting report.

The United States continues its strong support for the Office of the High Commissioner; we believe it plays an important and keen role in identifying and addressing national minority-related issues throughout the OSCE region.

We support your assistance to participating States in the OSCE region and are pleased to note your continued high level of commitment to foster interethnic dialogue and protection of the rights of minorities in Kosovo. In our view, your efforts with the Kosovo Albanian and Serb communities are vital and should continue.

Experience should by now have shown to us all that detailed recommendations and guidelines are often helpful to public authorities and minorities in addressing and implementing national minority commitments. In particular, we believe that you can play a unique role in bringing together neighboring countries to address regional minority issues. We appreciate the your ongoing and energetic efforts to achieve these worthy goals. In this context, we note with interest your intention to launch a new set of recommendations regarding national minorities. We look forward to engaging in a dialogue with you about these recommendations.

The mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities requires your office to work in confidence and independently of all parties. We would like to reiterate our strong support for such continued autonomy of the High Commissioner and as well as that of all OSCE institutions.

Ambassador Vollebaek, we wish you every success in what is, in our view, your very essential work in the coming year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.