



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Skopje Ambassador Kilian Wahl

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 20, 2023

Ambassador Wahl, dear Kilian, welcome to the Permanent Council and thank you for your thorough first report as Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje. We value the Mission's assistance to North Macedonia, which is well aligned with the government's own domestic reform agenda. These reforms are particularly important now given the recent progress on North Macedonia's path to EU membership – a goal the United States strongly supports and that we hope is realized in the nearest possible future.

North Macedonia, as the Chair of this organization, has adopted the guiding theme, "It's About People," to which we also subscribe. Your Mission, like the other OSCE field missions, seeks to make a positive, practical contribution to the welfare and security of the people of North Macedonia and the broader region. But you cannot fully implement your mandate, nor indeed can the other heads of mission across the OSCE region, without resources. For too long, a small number of participating States have played politics with this Organization's budget. Now is the time to move past such narrow parochial agendas and support the broader work of the OSCE, including the Mission to Skopje. We urge all delegations to move with urgency and approve the Chair's 2023 Unified Budget proposal to ensure the ability of all of our missions to carry out their mandates.

As your Mission enters its 31st year of operation, we applaud your team's continuing cooperation with a wide range of government agencies as well as your extensive engagement with academic institutions and civil society organizations in North Macedonia. Your report notes the Mission's impactful efforts in the areas of: trafficking in illicit arms and human beings; human rights; gender equality; tolerance and nondiscrimination; and reducing inter-ethnic tensions. Your team's support for democratic governance, the rule of law, including judicial and police reform, as you just mentioned, and combating corruption are critical contributions to building accountable, responsive, and resilient democratic institutions in North Macedonia, and all these activities should remain at the forefront of your work. Indeed, North Macedonia is a good example of a country that has turned its multiethnic character into an advantage by building up the institutions of a vibrant pluralistic democracy. As a current NATO ally and capable chair of this organization, we should recognize this tremendous progress and also give some credit to the OSCE Mission for supporting our Macedonian friends on their Euro-Atlantic path.

Ambassador Wahl, one of the Mission's key advantages remains its unrivaled presence throughout the country and its ability to closely monitor and report on local developments. This enables early action and timely interventions when needed.

No other international organization has an equivalent ability or function in North Macedonia. As is the case with OSCE's field presences in other parts of the Balkans, your Mission's ear to the ground and your partnerships with both government and non-governmental stakeholders add real value in promoting human security and stability across the entire region.

In conclusion, Ambassador, we thank you again for your leadership. The Mission's outstanding work is advancing its mandate in all three dimensions of security. You have our full support for your work.

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