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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Special Rep of the UN SYG UNMIK, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna, September 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins other delegations in welcoming the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for the UNMIK, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier and the Head of the Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Tim Guldemann.

As your comments today indicate this has been a transformative year in Kosovo. The mission and role of the international community has undergone a profound change and we clearly need to adapt to the new circumstances.

One of the most significant aspects of this transformation has been finding a meaningful role in Kosovo's society for the Serbian community. Many Serbs have been coerced by Belgrade into dropping out of any public role, starting of course with the boycott of last year's Parliamentary elections. But, the United States is encouraged by some tentative steps the Serbian community in Kosovo is taking to re-engage in Kosovo's politics and municipal administration. This will be essential to the government's efforts to gain broad-based political acceptance and support. The United States is confident this will be a key priority for you in the months to come.

In that respect, of course, Serbia's attitude and role will be critical. Belgrade must continue to demonstrate a willingness to step up and work out practical ways to engage with the Kosovar authorities and the international community to ease the plight of the Serbian community in Kosovo. We look to them for leadership in this very important area.

The United States will continue to assist Kosovo as it builds its multiethnic government and its democratic institutions. We note that more than 45 countries have now recognized Kosovo's independence, including two thirds of the European Union and NATO, and a majority of OSCE participating States as well as a majority of the United Nations Security Council members. The United States will continue to assist Kosovo as it builds its multiethnic government and its democratic institutions.

Kosovo needs to focus on building its multiethnic democracy, protecting minority rights, protecting religious freedom, creating institutions that can deliver for its people economically. These are the things that will ensure a bright future for Kosovo and all its citizens.

As has been the case, Mr. Chairman, the United States remains 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, Mr. Chairman.