



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Almhofer

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 4, 2010

Thank you, Mister Chairman,

Ambassador Almhofer, the United States joins other delegations in welcoming you back to the PC, and we thank you for your comprehensive report.

We note that the situation in Kosovo remains generally stable, with numerous significant positive developments. In particular, Kosovo held municipal elections in November 2009 which were generally viewed by observers as being in compliance with international standards. These elections represented a milestone in Kosovo's growing capacity to manage its democratic affairs and in the process of fully integrating Kosovo's different communities. Overall turnout was generally higher than in previous municipal elections, with a record turnout among ethnic Serbs in southern Kosovo. We are pleased with the OSCE's contribution to strengthening Kosovo's electoral system.

OMIK continues to play important roles in the core human rights monitoring and in capacity building efforts of Kosovo institutions. Its presence in the Regional Centers and Municipal Teams, in addition to its headquarters in Pristina, provides a unique platform for direct and effective engagement. But it is also the largest OSCE field presence, and participating States should continue to ask for the results which justify its size. The mission should focus its efforts on activities which complement the work of other international actors on the ground and reflect where the OSCE's unique strengths lie. Specifically, it should focus on targeted capacity building aimed at strengthening the institutions necessary for a prosperous, multi-ethnic, unitary democratic state.

Issues in northern Kosovo relating to housing reconstruction, the judiciary, customs, elections and provision of services remain sensitive. We encourage the Government of Kosovo, community leaders, and all stakeholders to continue efforts to find peaceful solutions to these issues that reinforce stability and strengthen the rule of law. This includes the issue of provision of electricity services in the north, where we urge those involved to act swiftly to resolve differences and to respect the existing legal framework.

We believe OMIK should avoid engagement with parallel institutions. UNSC Resolution 1244 does not recognize these parallel institutions, which pose a threat to stability and the rule of law in Kosovo. Recent remarks by EULEX and NATO, both status neutral organizations, underscored again the unhelpfulness of these so-called parallel institutions.

Ensuring Kosovo's continued development as a multi-ethnic, democratic state which protects the rights of all its communities and preserves religious freedom, which has strong and stable institutions that can deliver services to all its citizens, and which is integrated into Euro-Atlantic and regional institutions. These are goals that are consistent with OSCE principles and that are fundamentally in line with our common interest. Ambassador Almhofer, the United States looks forward to continuing to work with you and with the OSCE's participating States to enhance OMIK's contribution to Kosovo's stability.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.