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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to UN Special Envoy,

Mr. Martti Ahtisaari

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 20, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you very much, President Ahtisaari, for appearing before the Permanent Council for the third time since your appointment fifteen months ago as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Kosovo.

The United States believes firmly that the status process is now entering its concluding phase. I understand from your presentation that you share this view, Mr. President. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo is poised to play an important role in helping to monitor and report on implementation of the terms of the status settlement – and that is as it should be.

The settlement package you have crafted and put forward to us today is excellent. It reflects fully the Guiding Principles from the Contact Group. And as you have outlined, it contains extremely broad and generous protections for Kosovo's Serb and other non-Albanian communities.

We believe the proposal is fair and balanced and recognizes the need for both sides to reach out towards the other.

In sum, Mr. President, we are convinced that you have fashioned a proposal that will lay the foundations for a Kosovo that is viable and stable; where members of all communities - in particular the Kosovo Serb community - can live a dignified, safe and economically sustainable life; and where those who today are still outside Kosovo can return safely.

Now that you have done your part, President Ahtisaari, it is up to the Serbian and Kosovo authorities meeting here in Vienna tomorrow to do theirs -- by engaging constructively with you according to the workplan and timelines you have laid out. And we as OSCE participating States can do our part by remaining united in supporting a settlement that is fair and workable, and most importantly by committing the resources of our Organization to play a role in that outcome. The status quo in Kosovo is simply unsustainable, and your proposal represents the best, and indeed perhaps the only, way forward.

Kosovo and Serbia both deserve clarity about their respective futures and the region needs to move beyond the conflicts of the 1990s towards a Euro-Atlantic future. After years of uncertainty, it is now time for us to resolve the last major unsettled issues related

to breakup of Yugoslavia. Therefore, we hope that you will be able to complete your work soon and submit your proposal to the UN Security Council.

At the end of the day, however, we recognize that the parties themselves bear ultimate responsibility for bringing this chapter of Balkan history to a peaceful close. The choices for both sides are stark: each will have to decide whether they will accept and embrace a European future for themselves or choose to cling to the disastrous policies of the past.

We should not play God and solve the problems of the parties for them. But nor should we ignore our responsibility to prevent the region from descending into new conflict, which would again threaten international peace and security. We can best do this by supporting the way forward which you have proposed.

In conclusion, President Ahtisaari, allow me once again to commend you for the excellent work you have done on behalf of the UN Secretary General. You have demonstrated an uncanny track record for helping to resolve seemingly intractable issues and we have full faith you will achieve the same results with respect to your current efforts on Kosovo.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.