



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to Ambassador Fieschi, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 29, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to welcome Ambassador Fieschi back to the Permanent Council today. We thank him for his presentation and for the frequent and detailed reporting from the Mission on the challenging situation in Kosovo.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Soren Jessen Peterson as the new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in Kosovo. He has our full support as he leads the work of the United Nations Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo in helping Kosovo implement the UN-endorsed standards.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo, as part of UNMIK, also has the full support of the United States. We agree with Ambassador Fieschi that OMIK has a unique role to play in Kosovo and that it is well positioned to carry out its mandate, despite the many obstacles and tensions that now complicate the situation.

The rioting and violence that erupted in March of this year was a setback to the steady progress that has been made in developing democratic institutions in Kosovo. These events, however, have not shaken our support for the "standards before status" policy and a comprehensive review of Kosovo's progress around the middle of 2005. The international community must study the incidents and apply what we learn to face Kosovo's challenges with renewed vigor.

This, we are pleased to say, is precisely what OMIK has done. Through its five Task Forces, the Mission has completed a thorough self-assessment, identified shortcomings, and developed new priorities. We fully support these new policy priorities, as well as the many ongoing programs that have brought about positive results this far.

The Mission's plan to reach out to all sectors of Kosovo society – including youth and those who have been isolated or disenfranchised – should help to increase the OSCE's already high credibility in Kosovo. We read with interest the June 24th background report on the Mission's meetings with Kosovo's war veterans and we look forward to getting more information on the Mission's outreach efforts.

We appreciate the Mission's contributions to the implementation of the United Nations-endorsed standards. As I have said before, the United States stands firmly behind the "standards before status" policy and holds the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government accountable for

implementing those standards. Significant progress is still needed on the standards, especially strengthening democratic institutions, securing the rule of law, ensuring that all IDPs who want to return to Kosovo are able to do so and to live free from fear, and bringing about dialogue with Belgrade.

On decentralization, we believe that creating more effective government at the local level will bring government closer to all of Kosovo's citizens. It will also address issues of multi-ethnicity by empowering minority communities – and indeed all communities – to govern their local affairs. We support OMIK's participation in the decentralization working group and we look forward to seeing the group's proposal, we hope, by the middle of next month.

We appreciate the update from Ambassador Fieschi on the Mission's preparations for the October elections too. Local Kosovo officials will be primarily responsible for running these elections, with the OSCE's role this time limited to advising and monitoring. We are, however, discouraged that only one Serb party has registered to participate in the elections and that OMIK has been unable to contact displaced voters in Serbia and Montenegro. The upcoming election represents a chance for all of the citizens of Kosovo to exercise their right to participate in the democratic process – we hope they will do so.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by expressing our genuine appreciation for the work of all of the OSCE Mission members in Kosovo. These men and women have faced challenging conditions in recent months and, even in the face of danger, not to mention criticism, chose to selflessly serve the OSCE and the people of Kosovo.

We may set the policies here in Vienna, but it is our colleagues in the field who turn our ideas into concrete results. We would ask Ambassador Fieschi to please pass on these words of support and appreciation to your fine staff.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.