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## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Report by Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Werner Almhofer**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 2, 2010

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

We note that the situation in Kosovo remains stable and that there have been significant positive developments, including the mitigation of further violence after recent events in northern Kosovo, and the smooth transition to new municipal governments and mayors after elections that generally complied with international standards. The elections represented a milestone in Kosovo's decentralization process and the ongoing efforts to integrate all of Kosovo's communities. We welcome recent announcements by the Kosovo government to commit additional resources in support of the newly created municipalities and for the development of municipalities north of the Ibar River.

Despite this progress, the violence that resulted in the killing of a pediatrician and injuries to several others during a demonstration on July 2 in north Mitrovica is indicative of persistent underlying tensions in northern Kosovo that can be easily manipulated for destructive political purposes. It points to the need for all stakeholders to refrain from incendiary rhetoric and to cooperate in strengthening the rule of law in northern Kosovo. We support continued efforts by the Government of Kosovo, the Kosovo Police, and EULEX to ensure that those who would use violence, or the threat of violence, do not succeed in their efforts to sow instability in Kosovo and the region.

OMIK can play an important role in easing tensions and facilitating better relations between Kosovo's communities. By building institutional capacity at all levels, OMIK can support the development of multiethnic, democratic institutions that can serve all citizens in all communities. OMIK can also play an important role in core human rights monitoring. 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 with Kosovo authorities to identify and address shortcomings.

OMIK's work in these areas, as well as new initiatives that support integrity in journalism, gender-responsive local governance, anti-human trafficking training and cultural heritage protection, are indicative of the positive influence that the OSCE can wield, which will become even more important as other international organizations, including NATO, downsize their presence. While continuing to focus its efforts on activities that complement the work of other international actors on the ground and which reflect OSCE's unique strengths, OMIK can be instrumental in reinforcing the capacity of local Kosovo institutions to uphold their responsibilities in this regard.

We believe all delegations present here today can support the continued development of a strong, stable, multi-ethnic democracy in Kosovo that protects the rights of all its communities, preserves religious freedom, and delivers services effectively to all its citizens. 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 OSCE's participating States to enhance OMIK's contribution to Kosovo's stability and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.