



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report of the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Michael Davenport

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 4, 2023

Ambassador Davenport, dear Michael, welcome back to the Permanent Council.

Since you presented your last report to us in October, Russia has continued to egregiously undermine the founding principles of this Organization. Its full-scale invasion of Ukraine is now in its 15th month and the related regional consequences such as inflation, food and energy insecurity, and economic misery are ever widening and increasing in their impact. Families across the Western Balkans are affected daily by this heavy toll as they try to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the Kremlin continues to cynically use disinformation and proxy actors to stoke political tensions across the region and further erode stability and prosperity. We commend your principled leadership in guiding OSCE’s Mission in Kosovo -- important work which is challenging even without the added concerns for all people in Kosovo and the region caused by Russia’s irresponsible actions.

Your team’s implementation of its mandate, such as its work to promote democratization, security and public safety, and human and community rights, remains essential to the OSCE’s ability to improve human security on the ground in Kosovo. The Mission’s continuing focus on institution building is a priority we share and support. Moreover, the early warning function the Mission performs every day on behalf of the international community in all 38 municipalities of Kosovo is critical to conflict prevention and the maintenance of security and stability.

I note especially the Mission’s impressive success promoting the human rights of members of vulnerable groups. You fostered the government’s Strategy for the Advancement of the Rights of Roma and Ashkali Communities and related action plan. You delivered achievements in the fields of property rights and religious freedom. The Mission helped victims of domestic violence and promoted the economic empowerment and public participation of women.

I recognize the Mission’s work is taking place despite the real uncertainty stemming from not having an approved 2023 budget, as well as the accumulating erosion of the Mission’s purchasing power and ability to hire and retain qualified staff. Please be assured that we are advocating every day in Vienna for your mission, and all Field Missions, to have the budget resources you need to succeed and please pass that message to all of your staff as well. I urge all delegations, especially those playing politics with the budget, to set aside their narrow parochial agendas and move with urgency to approve the Chair’s 2023 Unified Budget proposal.

Ambassador,

I welcome the European Union-facilitated agreement Kosovo and Serbia reached in Ohrid, North Macedonia on March 18 on the implementation of their February 27 Agreement on the Path to Normalization of Relations. I also commend the President of Serbia and Prime Minister of Kosovo for their leadership in reaching this agreement. When Kosovo and Serbia fulfill their obligations

under the Basic Agreement, as part of a sustained commitment to reconciliation, it will secure significant opportunities for the people of both countries and accelerate their paths to European Union membership. My country will remain actively engaged, in coordination with EU partners, to support Serbia and Kosovo as they implement the agreement in pursuit of a predictable and peaceful relationship. We will jointly continue to support the advancement of stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans. I also would like to thank the Government of North Macedonia for their leadership in hosting the parties and supporting finalization of this agreement.

I regret to note the unhelpful rhetoric around the April 23 elections in the northern municipalities of Kosovo directed specifically at OSCE leadership, staff, and operations. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has a long history of fair, balanced, exemplary work to build institutions and promote respect for the human rights of everyone in Kosovo regardless of ethnicity or nationality. Misrepresentations and unfounded allegations complicate our task of encouraging successful implementation of the accord agreed to in Ohrid.

The United States seeks peace, justice, and prosperity in a Kosovo that is fully integrated into the international community and a free, resilient, thriving Europe. Yet, only by hearing from host country officials in conjunction with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo can we fully understand the dynamics on the ground and determine how best to address them. We welcome this practice and encourage it be continued in the future. It is unfortunate that Kosovo is not a member of this body and is therefore unable to speak for itself in this forum. We look forward to the day when Kosovo is an OSCE participating State and can directly address this forum as such.

Again, thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, and please do express our appreciation to all of your staff for the work that they have been doing.

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