



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**  
**MISSION IN KOSOVO**

**Remarks of Ambassador Werner Wnendt,  
Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo,**

***The Role of the OSCE in Multi-ethnic Societies:  
The case of Kosovo***

**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 2006 Autumn Meetings  
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Dear President de Marco,  
Dear Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
it is a great pleasure and honour for me to address you today.

As you are well aware, the OSCE has become increasingly involved over the past decades in supporting a number of multi-ethnic societies. That is in particular the case in the Western Balkans. A region from which in the recent past hundreds of thousands of people fled from a terrible conflict and many of which have not yet returned to the places where they lived before the conflict. It is OSCE's role together with other international organizations to support development in the region that will allow all ethnicities to live peacefully together.

In Kosovo, as in other parts of the Western Balkans, conflict created traumas, which aggravate relations between communities, damage their trust in each other as well as their confidence in state institutions.

Traumas, which, if not addressed effectively, create the potential for renewed conflicts. To address this risk, trust and confidence have to be re-established in the Balkans, in general, and in Kosovo, in particular. This will not only strengthen the communication between communities and enhance the chances for a reconciliation process, but will also set the stage for Kosovo's regional and European integration. Without that prospect of integration, it is difficult to see sustainable development and lasting stability in Kosovo and the entire Western Balkans.

Let me remind you of the situation in Kosovo after the conflict: thousands had been killed, many more displaced, both internally and abroad; the lives of many had been shattered; the infrastructure and the economic basis had been destroyed. Fear dominated the lives of many people, fear that violence could start again, and fear of each other.

The international community has sought to reduce this level of fear that burdened much of the inter-ethnic relations. Through concerted efforts in the field of security and economic

reconstruction, as well as the extensive engagement of the OSCE and others on the ground in the protection of human rights and support for democratization, the fear has gradually been reduced

But the lack of trust and confidence is still very much present in Kosovo's daily life. Just recently a Kosovo Serb explained to me: "How can I trust an Albanian doctor with the health of my family if I cannot trust him enough to go for a coffee together?" Another example: A Kosovo Albanian taxi driver from Pristina will often not dare to travel into the Kosovo Serb town of Gracanica (close to Pristina), and prefer to drop his customers at the entrance to the village.

This lack of trust between people is replicated in many peoples' relationships with government institutions. Trust therefore becomes crucial to ensure the meaningful communication between individuals, communities and institutions. Communication which gradually allows engagement in reconciliation and more extensive inter-communal cooperation.

Kosovo is not alone in this situation. Other societies in the Western Balkans have been or still are facing similar challenges. In Croatia, it has taken years to recreate a viable framework for a multi-ethnic society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the wounds are still healing eleven years after Dayton.

The building of trust, confidence and the facilitation of communication has been and still is the framework which defines the OSCE's role in Kosovo. We believe that individuals and their communities need to be empowered. Empowered by strong democratic institutions that the OSCE has helped to create, which protect their rights and interests. Institutions which will address their needs and concerns and therefore re-establish a confident relationship between them and assure them of a common future in Kosovo.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has sought to empower men, women and their communities through extensive media programmes, human rights initiatives and civil society building projects. For example, we assisted journalists in developing TV and radio programmes, documenting the hopes they attach to a reconciliation process.

OSCE has strengthened the capacity of institutions in Kosovo since 1999. We have sought to improve their ability to listen and address the needs and concerns, as well as to protect the rights of individuals and communities.

Our Mission has been at the forefront of the development of the Ombudsperson Institution, which strongly advocates the rights of individuals and communities.

We have strengthened the judicial sector, conducting numerous trainings for judges and lawyers through the Kosovo Judicial Institute. We are at the helm of a support initiative, developing the Assembly of Kosovo's capacities. And the great respect that members of Kosovo's public have for the Kosovo Police Service is partly also the result of the OSCE's extensive human rights training for the police.

Many of Kosovo's institutions can help foster trust between individuals, if they facilitate the communication between communities. We have sought to promote and strengthen such efforts where possible. The most recent example of this is our support to Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government in reaching out to all communities, to explain

the ongoing status talks in general and the plans on decentralization and minority protection in particular.

The role of the OSCE goes beyond the support of dialogue and communication between institutions, communities and individuals. The High Commissioner on National Minorities recently started to facilitate a reconciliation process. Seven years after the conflict, and when Kosovo's future status might only be months away from its settlement, Kosovans must get prepared to engage in a reconciliation process which will allow them to overcome past traumas.

However, while reconciliation may take longer time, cooperation between former conflicting parties cannot wait. The example of post-war Europe, where only seven years after the end of World War II, France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries launched an integration process despite the fact that many wounds were still open; and simply that reconciliation just began is an encouraging example. People in the Balkans need to understand that development is possible from which everybody can profit and not as it is at present whereby the attitude in much of the Balkans is to assume that what is good for my neighbour must be bad for me.

Through regional cooperation the Western Balkans can come to political stability and economic growth. Our Mission, therefore, promotes Kosovo's efforts in the region. We have organized numerous regional conferences, whether on higher education standards, or on parliamentary oversight. We have also supported study visits of Kosovo officials abroad, and promoted cross-boundary cooperation between municipalities in Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

Regional cooperation is very much necessary to pave the way to European integration for Kosovo and the entire region. Only under the protective "roof" created through European integration can lasting and sustainable development for Kosovo and the Western Balkans seem possible. It is a two way effort to be engaged in Kosovo, the Western Balkans and the European Union.

A win-win situation becomes clearly identifiable for the Balkans in general and Kosovo in particular: the efforts to adopt European standards, the strength of the rule of law, and the free market and democratic institutions will promote prosperity and stability. This is in the interest of Europe as a whole, which was illustrated in the success story of the successive enlargements that have taken place.

Ladies and gentlemen, trust, courage and positive communication will be ever more important following the settlement of Kosovo's status. It will take trust to allow for a Kosovo with a future for all regardless of their ethnicity. And it will take courage to communicate the necessary inclusive message to everyone.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has worked much over recent years to enhance the relations between Kosovo's communities, in particular Albanians and Serbs. Yet much remains to be done to reconcile and build the trust of communities in Kosovo, which is a prerequisite for regional cooperation and European integration in the Western Balkans.

Thank for your attention.