

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 4, 2014

The United States welcomes Ambassador Schlumberger back to the Permanent Council for another comprehensive and detailed report. We applaud the continued diligence and devotion of the staff at the Mission and the tremendous work they have done during the past six months.

Ambassador Schlumberger, in the crush of security-related developments in the OSCE area since your last report, it is easy to forget just how much you and your team, along with help from neighboring OSCE field missions, have done to support ongoing electoral processes in Kosovo. The United States praises the OSCE for its active and supportive role in Kosovo's national elections in June. From the municipal elections early in the year and facilitation of extra-territorial voting in the Serbian parliamentary elections in March to the landmark Assembly of Kosovo elections in June, the Mission in Kosovo has had a full schedule of activities to support democratic institutions in Kosovo. The Mission's assistance has helped ensure a free and fair election with increased participation by ethnic minority communities, including in the four northern municipalities. The result of that work and of the tremendous efforts of Kosovo's elections officials, civil servants, civil society, and the voters themselves, is that successful elections in Kosovo no longer seem extraordinary. That in itself represents a strong sign of Kosovo's progress. Work remains in this area, as the electoral reform process is yet to be completed, but we are confident in the future of this core democratic institution in Kosovo.

We await the formation of the new government and look forward to a timely and constructive resolution of that ongoing process, in line with recent Kosovo Constitutional Court decisions. We praise Serbia and Kosovo for their continued commitment to the EU-facilitated Dialogue and their steps to implement the April 2013 agreement. Both countries have made difficult decisions to make the Dialogue a success and build a stable, peaceful, and prosperous region. We are pleased that meetings in Brussels continue, and we look forward to further results.

Ambassador, we appreciate that the Mission has been engaged in a host of other activities as well. We are pleased to see the establishment of a "Task Force North" to look specifically at ways the Mission can support further cooperation and integration on local governance and police and judicial training in northern Kosovo, among other issues. We look forward to hearing more about how this new, targeted approach can spur additional progress. Effective, transparent, and equitable local governance will be a foundational element of multi-ethnic democracy in Kosovo, both in northern Kosovo and across the rest of the country, and we are confident that the OSCE will continue to have a leading role in its establishment.

We reiterate our call for the Mission to continue engaging in comprehensive strategic planning, cutting activities that are non-essential and focusing on those that are most vital and that the Mission does best. As we look to the start of the 2015 Unified Budget process, we urge you to use that process as an opportunity to move the Mission's focus away from any activities that do not make the most efficient and effective use of the OSCE's limited resources.

We again call for the OSCE and its participating States to recognize that Kosovo deserves a seat at this table. We could begin by inviting representatives of the Kosovo government to working-level meetings where activities and issues involving Kosovo are discussed. We urge Special Representative Stoudmann to redouble his efforts to find ways this can be accomplished, and we stand ready to assist in that effort.

We again thank you, Ambassador Schlumberger, for all the work that you and your team do, and we wish you the best in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.