



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

# **Statement on the OSCE to Facilitation of Participation of Serbian Citizens in Kosovo in Serbian National Elections**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 10, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States extends its congratulations to the OSCE's Mission in Kosovo and CPC staff here in Vienna for their excellent work in the facilitation of Serbian parliamentary and presidential elections in Kosovo on Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. Even with a severely compressed timeframe and the potential for disruption, the Mission staff, as well as volunteers from the other OSCE Missions in the region, created an atmosphere of calm and safety that allowed for Serbian dual citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote in a safe environment.

Much credit also goes to Secretary General Zannier and the Chairmanship for assisting in the creation of a Concept of Operations acceptable to all parties. We thank the governments of Kosovo and Serbia for putting the needs of people before politics. Additionally, we would like to specifically praise the work of Head of Mission Ambassador Werner Almhofer and Deputy Head of Mission Ed Joseph for their impeccable leadership. In addition, we offer our appreciation to Head of Mission Fletcher Burton and the 62 staff members from the Mission in Sarajevo who contributed to the operation and proved the value of teamwork and cooperation throughout the OSCE family. We commend OSCE for accepting a challenging mission and for its contribution to democracy and stability in the Balkans.

We encourage all parties to continue in this atmosphere of cooperation and good faith as we look towards the second round of Serbian presidential elections set for May 20<sup>th</sup>. Even though last Sunday proceeded without incident, we must not be complacent. The United States again extends its full support to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo as it prepares for round two.

We congratulate the Government of Serbia for the generally positive statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, the result of a common endeavor involving the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The United States would, however, like to call attention to the arrests and alleged harassment of ethnic Albanians in the Preshevo Valley area in the run up to voting. As details emerge, we call for the impartial and fair handling of these cases and hope that the appropriate action is taken should it emerge that illegal or inappropriate acts were carried out by Serbian police. It would be unfortunate for such an incident to cast a negative light on what has been deemed an overall success.

Thank you, Chairman.