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United States Mission to the OSCE



Statement in Response to Michael Leigh, General
Director of the Directorate General for
Enlargement of the European Commission

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 17, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank Mr. Leigh for his presentation and take this opportunity to welcome him here. My country had the opportunity, and I personally had the opportunity, to work very closely with Mr. Leigh in his previous capacity in the external relations side of the European Union. I would like to wish him the best of luck and just state that we very much admire his significant skills and his diplomatic capabilities. We just regret however, that in moving over to enlargement we will probably have less to do with you in the future because we recognize that the EU enlargement is first and foremost a process between the European Union and its aspirant countries.

That said, the United States, as a matter of policy, remains a strong supporter of European integration, including EU enlargement, because we believe it is a means of promoting stability and reform in Europe.

The prospect of EU membership has proven essential, in our view, to promoting much-needed reforms in Southeastern Europe. The European Commission recently signaled that Croatia is off to a strong start in its accession negotiations, and that Macedonia is on its way to meeting the political and economic criteria to begin negotiations. This "European perspective" for other Southeast European countries is an integral part of promoting peace and stability in the region. In view of my delegation's support of these efforts, it should also be an integral part of the work of the OSCE and one that deserves recognition at our Ministerial.

We realize that your focus today has been mainly on the Western Balkans, but I think it is appropriate to recognize and applaud the fact that the EU enlargement process writ large has had a profoundly positive impact on peace, stability and prosperity, not only in Southeast Europe, but also across the entire OSCE region. Enlargement helped to transform Spain, Greece and Portugal. The ten countries that joined in the most recent enlargement have been among the most dynamic regions in Europe in recent years. Now, Bulgaria and Romania will join the European Union in less than two months' time, pending European Council approval. We congratulate those two countries for carrying out important economic and political reforms, and encourage them to continue to address the areas of concern identified by the European Commission even after their accession.

In all these cases, the prospects and the process of joining the European Union have been a major motor for reform, and a major contributor to the economic prosperity and political

stability of all of Europe, and thus to the fulfillment of the goals of our Organization here. That is why my country has always been a strong supporter of this process.

That brings me to one final issue: Turkey's interest in joining the European Union. In his October 2 meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, President Bush reiterated the United States' support for Turkey's EU aspirations. The prospect of EU membership is essential to encouraging important economic and political transformations in that country as well.

We also would like to applaud the efforts of the Finnish EU Presidency to keep Turkey's accession negotiations on track.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Leigh, the United States recognizes that the enlargement process is not an easy one. The history of my country is different. Our political system is different from that of the European Union. Yet we also have gone from 13 states over the course of a century and a half to 50. We recognize the difficulties that such a transformation can entail. But it does not change our basic conclusion: we remain a steadfast believer in the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration, and in this respect we wish the best of luck to the European Union and the EU aspirant countries throughout the OSCE region in their continuing discussions and deliberations.

Thank you.