

Original: ENGLISH



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

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

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 3, 2015

The United States welcomes Ambassador Schlumberger back to the Permanent Council for another comprehensive and detailed report.

Ambassador Schlumberger, as you noted in your report, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) remains a trusted and reliable partner to local and international institutions and communities. The Mission's focus on key areas – including human rights and cross-dimensional issues such as gender equality and media freedom, tolerance, missing persons, and efforts to strengthen civil society capacity – is contributing both to the country's development and to regional stability. OMiK's efforts are helping Kosovo on its path to becoming an economically viable country that offers equal opportunity and protections to all its citizens.

As the Ambassador's report highlighted, Kosovo's coalition government continues to make significant progress on its priorities of economic development, job creation, rule of law, education, and health reforms. Addressing these important issues is essential in order to strengthen citizens' trust in government institutions, improve living conditions, and counter violent extremism.

The United States is especially pleased that the Government and Assembly of Kosovo have passed the constitutional amendments and legislation necessary to establish a Special Court that can issue indictments and try cases, as appropriate, in connection with the evidentiary findings of the Special Investigative Task Force. We recognize that this was a politically unpopular decision that required courageous political leadership, and we commend Kosovo's senior political officials for putting politics aside in the best interest of their country. Voting to establish the court clearly demonstrates the values of human rights and respect for the rule of law that the people of Kosovo share with OSCE participating States. This is a critical step in the country's fulfilling its international obligations and further strengthening relations with its neighbors and partners. We encourage the Government of Kosovo to quickly conclude the EU-facilitated negotiations on a host-state agreement with the Netherlands, enabling the Special Court to be established without delay.

We congratulate the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo for reaching important agreements last week in the Dialogue talks on normalization. Facilitated by EU High Representative Mogherini, these agreements on energy, telecommunications, principles for the establishment of an Association of Serbian Municipalities, and freedom of movement over the Mitrovica Bridge will improve the lives of people in both countries. The United States commends both governments for progress in fulfilling commitments made in the Brussels Agreement and other Dialogue arrangements, thus moving their countries closer to normalization of relations

and along their respective EU paths. We know OMiK is working toward many of these same goals, and we encourage a coordinated approach.

The July 29 Stand-By Arrangement with the International Monetary Fund will help Kosovo continue to meet its fiscal obligations while freeing up capital for investment. We commend efforts by Kosovo and its Western Balkan neighbors to jointly develop infrastructure, including a regional network of highways and rail envisioned at the ‘Western Balkans Six’ ministerial conference. Such projects would have an important multiplier effect in supporting economic growth, creating jobs, and making the region more competitive.

Kosovo’s continued commitment to countering terrorism and the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters is crucial. We note the important work OMiK is doing to assist Kosovo in developing effective preventive and response mechanisms to counter violent extremism. OSCE workshops on CVE have facilitated such efforts. To be effective, it is essential that international cooperation on counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, and law enforcement include all of the Balkans. This is why we fully support Kosovo’s joining INTERPOL in the near term to enhance direct coordination between Kosovo and the international law enforcement community.

Ambassador, we recognize the important progress OMiK is making to improve cost efficiencies, streamline programs, and make more effective use of limited resources. Your report indicates that the Mission continues to focus on those programs that clearly add value, which we enthusiastically welcome.

We again thank you, Ambassador Schlumberger, for the tremendous work and dedication of your OMiK team.

In closing, let me reiterate that the United States looks forward to the day when Kosovo will be present in the Permanent Council as an OSCE participating State.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.