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

### **Response to the Address by the Foreign Minister of Albania, Besnik Mustafaj**

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
March 8, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Mustafaj to the Permanent Council and to thank him for his statement.

My country greatly appreciates and supports the Government of Albania's efforts to build a strong democratic society, based on the rule of law. In that regard, Mr. Minister, I would also like to thank through you the efforts of the Albanian delegation here, led by our colleague and your able representative, Ambassador Mazi, to contribute to the work of the OSCE.

The process of building a strong and democratic society is not always easy or quick. In Albania as elsewhere, it is crucial that all political leaders cooperate to achieve national priorities such as an independent legislature and judiciary, and to fight corruption and organized crime.

Progress on these issues will help move Albania forward on integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. But most importantly, it will serve well the citizens of Albania.

One of the foundations of a democratic society is holding free and fair elections. As we have said previously, the Government of the United States was pleased that the February 18<sup>th</sup> local elections were generally peaceful and democratic. At the same time, we support ODIHR's view on the need for a cooperative approach to electoral reform. In this regard, I very much welcome what we heard today from you, Mr. Minister, about your government's intention to follow up on ODIHR's recommendations.

Looking to Albania's role in the region, we appreciate your government's support for the Ahtisaari recommendations and the principles that underpin them; we hope that this process can come to a successful close very soon.

The United States also appreciates Albania's support in the war against terrorism, not only in words, but also through actions including troop deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United States believes that Albania has valuable insights to share on promoting inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, and hopes that Albania will play a strong role in this year's

OSCE activities focused on Tolerance-related issues, starting with the upcoming Cordoba follow-up conference in Bucharest.

We have taken note also of Albania's offer to chair the OSCE in 2012. As we have emphasized to other delegations that have expressed an interest to lead our Organization, an important factor in our consideration of any candidate is the country's record in upholding OSCE commitments, norms, and values. We very much welcome Albania's interest in taking on a leadership role in the OSCE and we look forward to future discussions concerning your candidacy.

Once again, thank you Mr. Minister for coming to the Permanent Council today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.