



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission in Skopje, Ambassador Killian Wahl

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 18, 2024

Ambassador Wahl, welcome back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for leading the OSCE Mission in Skopje and helping North Macedonia advance its reform agenda.

Your team's partnership with government agencies, academic institutions, and civil society to strengthen human rights and good governance, to advance judicial reform, and to combat corruption is critical for North Macedonia. The Mission's work to reduce inter-ethnic tensions and promote social cohesion is vital to improving human security.

The United States is committed to helping North Macedonia become fully integrated into a secure and democratic Europe. We believe North Macedonia needs to make more progress in implementing its anti-corruption recommendations related to Members of Parliament, judges, and prosecutors. Judicial reform, including merit-based criteria for selection and promotion of judges and prosecutors, is important to unlocking the EU's Western Balkans Growth Plan funds.

We welcome the invitation for ODIHR to observe North Macedonia's presidential and parliamentary elections on April 24th and May 8th. As elections approach, the United States encourages political parties to focus on their platforms rather than on negative rhetoric. We understand that the OSCE Mission has delivered a similar message. We are encouraged that for these elections, ODIHR will measure the participation of women. This will provide useful data to understand and strengthen women's role in helping North Macedonia build a more equal and democratic society.

The United States also encourages North Macedonia's post-election government to implement systemic reforms that complement the substantial contributions of North Macedonia's civil society to improving human rights. In particular, we would like to see reforms addressing corruption and accountable governance, violence against journalists, and treatment of detained and convicted persons. Enforcing laws already on the books against gender-based violence and anti-discrimination is imperative.

Ambassador Wahl, many thanks to you and your team for your outstanding work to help North Macedonia deliver for its citizens, and as you said, to change people's lives. We are deeply concerned about the harm inflicted upon field presence operations by the lack of a Unified Budget. We call once again for an OSCE budget that is robust enough to ensure your Mission can carry out its important mandate. Congratulations, Ambassador Wahl, to you and your team on excellent results in a difficult financial environment.

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