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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the Head of OSCE Presence in Albania Ambassador Pavel Vacek

As delivered by Political Counselor Sam Laeuchli
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 20, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to welcome Ambassador Vacek and thank him for his report and for his efforts over the past three years as Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania.

Like Ambassador Vacek, we welcome the progress Albania has made, particularly on fighting corruption, on property reform, and on legislation concerning the police.

As the latest report from the OSCE Presence in Albania notes, a recent inspection by the High State audit found that millions of euros had been misused by government officials. Such inspections are crucial to Albania's fight against corruption and help increasing good governance. We urge Albanian authorities to continue such actions. The Presence should encourage Albania in this process.

In addition to fighting corruption and promoting good governance, the United States supports the Presence's priorities in electoral reform, assistance in judicial and property reform, capacity building of the Albanian Assembly, and support to the border police.

We agree that the Presence should continue to assist in further improving voter's lists and registration procedures and establishing an effective address system country-wide.

We also support the Presence's activities to assist Albania in promoting the rights of the Roma community and in combating trafficking in human beings.

Nonetheless, we continue to believe that the work of the Presence could be better focused on its priorities.

For example, we are not convinced that the Presence should be involved in promoting road safety - however important this topic may be. Issues like this that do not fall under the mandate of the Presence may be better addressed by other organizations. The OSCE has increasingly limited resources, and we need to be sure that our efforts are focused on mandate priorities.

Again, I would like to thank Ambassador Vacek for his work on behalf of the OSCE, as well as that of his staff.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.