



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by HoM to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Ambassador Davidson

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 3, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome back to the Permanent Council, Ambassador Davidson, and thank you for an excellent report. The United States regrets that little has changed since your last report and that political tensions within the country appear undiminished.

The United States is particularly concerned over the apparent determination of some politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina to undermine state-level institutions at every opportunity and to advance their nationalist policy, both in rhetoric and in practice.

The statements and actions of Republika Srpska officials and government bodies, in the past few months in particular, are cause for concern. Entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have no right to secede under the Dayton Peace Accords and Bosnian Constitution. At the same time, unilateral calls for the abolition of entities also are unacceptable and anti-Dayton.

We also are concerned by the state of freedom of expression for members of the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the Republika Srpska, where there have been allegations of violations of such freedom and harassment of NGOs. We hope that the OSCE will soon send its media freedom representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina to look into these issues.

The good news, however, is that the OSCE Mission continues to make meaningful contributions to the reform process despite the current political climate in the country.

We value the Mission's efforts, for example, to promote better governance at the municipal level, and we support the Mission's increasing focus on helping certain struggling municipalities address high unemployment and promote outside investment. We similarly appreciate the assistance the Mission continues to provide to the parliaments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Missions field offices are one of its key advantages over other international bodies. We recognize the important work the Mission is doing to monitor court proceedings throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the Mission's role in supporting the drafting of a Justice Sector Reform Strategy.

There are many more Mission activities we could commend, as we have done in the past, including the vital work the Mission is doing with respect to rule of law, the return of refugees and displaced persons, arms reduction and war crimes monitoring.

The United States would also like to commend you and your staff for your excellent management of the mission. You have consolidated operations, found efficiencies, prioritized and rationalized. Please be assured that we will continue to support you in your efforts to promote budgetary discipline and streamlining activities while ensuring that the important work of the mission is carried out.

In sum, Ambassador Davidson, your dedicated staff is making a real difference in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina address the many challenges it faces. But the Mission's efforts can take the country only so far along its reform path. At the end of the day, political leaders must work with each other and find compromise for the country to walk proudly down the path toward Euro-Atlantic integration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.