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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Albania

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 17, 2011

We would like to express our support for the progress made by Albania and its people over the past twenty years. Regarding the current situation, the United States and our European partners have been of one voice in our messages to the government of Albania and the Socialist Party (SP), and to the Albanian people. All must adhere to the constitution, uphold the rule of law, respect the independence of institutions, and engage constructively and fully in the electoral process. In the wake of the events of January 21, the international community has worked intensively with both sides to restore an environment conducive to normal political dialogue. Provocations, including strong rhetoric, do not serve Albania's interests.

The investigation by the Prosecutor General into the events of January 21 must be comprehensive, thorough, and credible. Recognizing the importance of this investigation, the United States is providing technical assistance to the Prosecutor General's office in carrying out this investigation. Both sides have politicized the Office of the Prosecutor General. This is unhelpful, in fact harmful, and we deplore any attempts to undermine the institution of the Prosecutor General. We have called on the Government of Albania and the Socialist Party to show public support for the Prosecutor General's authority to conduct this investigation impartially.

The local elections on May 8 are the legitimate forum for discussing and effecting political change. The deadline for party registration has passed, and we are pleased to hear that all interested parties have registered. All parties should participate in good faith in these elections, which are important for the future of Albanians. Citizens should take note of what the politicians are saying--and what they represent--and make their decisions accordingly. We applaud Albania's invitation to ODIHR to observe these important local elections and ODIHR's response. The OSCE/ODIHR is committing hundreds of election observers, including some from the United States, to these elections and has committed its support through technical advice and consultations. The United States will continue to closely watch the election preparations and stand ready to help ensure a process that is free, fair and credible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.