



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 21, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Minister Jeremić back to the Permanent Council.

Mr. Minister, we welcome Serbia's engagement in the OSCE, as demonstrated by your visit here today. We also support the work of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, and we commend the Government of Serbia for its close cooperation with this field mission.

Mr. Minister, your remarks have highlighted a number of Serbia's recent accomplishments. Serbia has made significant progress on its path toward European integration during the past year. The EU's recent decision to move forward on Serbia's Stabilization and Association Agreement is a positive reflection of Belgrade's efforts. The United States remains committed to helping Serbia build its future in Europe. Visits to Belgrade by Vice President Biden last year and by Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg and Assistant Secretary Gordon in recent months also underscore the message that the United States values a constructive partnership with Serbia.

Serbia has an important role to play in ensuring stability in the Balkans, and we encourage Serbia's leaders to resolve outstanding issues that are standing in the way of regional development and security.

On the issue of Kosovo, we have agreed to disagree. The United States government's policy remains unchanged. Kosovo's independence is irreversible; its borders are settled. It has been recognized by 69 countries. In February of this year, Kosovo celebrated two years of independence. June 15 was the second anniversary of Kosovo's constitution entering into force -- a constitution that provides broad protections for all minority communities and cultural heritage. Kosovo and its citizens have made great progress in strengthening their democracy and governing institutions, progress which contributes to stability in the region.

We continue to encourage Serbia to work with Kosovo to resolve outstanding practical issues -- such as management of customs and courts -- that affect the daily lives of all people who live in Kosovo. We support all efforts to find practical solutions to these issues, and encourage contacts between Pristina and Belgrade to resolve them in a sustainable manner.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo continues to make contributions to reform in Kosovo and to ensuring stability. The OSCE can maximize its contribution by taking every opportunity to engage in capacity building activities, particularly in Kosovo's new municipalities. Any outreach should be directed at encouraging the engagement of ethnic minorities with legitimate Kosovo institutions.

Mr. Minister, we thank you again for your visit here today. The United States stands with Serbia and all Balkan countries as they advance along the path of building stable, secure democracies fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.