



United States Mission to the OSCE

Developments in Macedonia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States is closely following developments in Macedonia. Disclosures made last year in recordings obtained from illegal wiretaps raised concerns about possible electoral fraud, media manipulation, and corruption, suggesting a failure to uphold Macedonia's OSCE commitments.

The United States welcomes ongoing efforts to implement the Przino Agreement, which represents Macedonia's best path forward out of its political crisis. Important steps have been taken by all political parties to implement the agreement, including the return of the opposition to parliament, the appointment of Katica Janeva as the Special Prosecutor, the appointment of technical ministers and additional deputy ministers, a revised electoral code, and the appointment of an enhanced and independent State Election Commission. We also welcome former Prime Minister Gruevski's resignation as a key milestone in the implementation of the Przino Agreement.

Many important commitments in the Przino Agreement, however, have not been implemented. For example, the work of parliamentary oversight committees that should recommend reforms to the country's intelligence services remains unfinished. Once completed, these reforms should establish political accountability for all those who are found to have acted unlawfully.

Statements from one political party, VMRO-DPMNE, and its leaders attacking the work of the Special Prosecutor are another source of concern. We call on all political parties, which unanimously agreed to Ms. Janeva's appointment, to support the Special Prosecutor publicly during all stages of her work. We also encourage all the parties to support, both publicly and privately, the work of the independent State Election Commission to ensure it has sufficient staffing, resources, and access to the information it needs to conduct its work as it undertakes the first thorough analysis of the country's voters list.

Finally, as we relayed to the government of Macedonia last Friday, the United States is concerned about the lack of progress on recommendations made by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in 2014. These include: updating the voters list; media reform that provides equitable access to alternative viewpoints; separation of state and party; and prevention of voter intimidation and pressure. As key facilitators of the Przino Agreement, the United States and EU will assess progress on these issues before parliament dissolves on February 24 to determine whether conditions are in place that would be conducive to holding credible elections on April 24, as envisioned in Przino.

Mr. Chair, let me be clear that we offer our assessment as a friend of Macedonia. Macedonia's citizens control its future. We urge Macedonia's political leaders to take urgent steps to implement both the remaining commitments under the Przino Agreement and recommendations from the ODIHR for credible elections.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.