



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 6, 2014

The United States welcomes Ambassador Schlumberger to the Permanent Council, and we thank you for another detailed report. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been extraordinarily active since your last report, and we applaud and are grateful for all that you and your staff have accomplished.

The OSCE's role in facilitating municipal elections in Northern Kosovo in November and December of 2013 demonstrated yet again the skill of the Mission's personnel and the often untapped potential for collaboration among the OSCE's field missions across the Balkans. We commend the OSCE's work with the Government of Kosovo and other international personnel to ensure these important elections were conducted in a transparent, orderly, and professional manner. We express our appreciation to all those involved and our support for the Mission's involvement with upcoming elections in the region.

We appreciate the Mission's efforts to assist Kosovo authorities as they establish and develop strong independent institutions. These bodies are vital to effective and transparent governance in a number of different areas, including media freedom and plurality. In particular, we express our support for the Mission's work to strengthen and improve the operations of the Independent Media Commission.

We look forward to more details on the role Special Representative Ambassador Stoudmann will play on issues related to Kosovo following the agreement made in Vilnius. We all should recall the terms under which the Swiss and Serbian chairmanships were endorsed. As a separate matter, we, like others, support the progress being made by Kosovo and Serbia to implement the April 2013 Agreement to normalize relations under the auspices of the EU-led Dialogue, which will improve the lives of all citizens in the region. We anticipate that Ambassador Stoudmann will monitor these discussions as he works with the Swiss Chairmanship and with OMiK's senior leadership to ensure that the most productive and supportive relationship possible continues to exist on the ground.

In our response to the opening address by the Chair-in-Office last month, we called for Ambassador Stoudmann to begin developing a plan to ensure a formal place for Kosovo here at our meetings in Vienna. We reiterate that call today. We should start by exploring ways in which representatives of Kosovo's duly elected authorities have a seat at the table when reports on OMiK's activities, or other matters directly related to Kosovo, are delivered.

Finally we call on Ambassador Schlumberger and his team to develop a strong, multi-year strategic plan for the Mission that includes staff and activity reductions. As I said when I met with Ambassador Schlumberger recently, we want these plans to be directed by the Mission itself rather than by things that happen to the Mission. Recent budgets and proposals have included some reductions, and we appreciate that OMIK needs a rigorous, longer-term approach, similar to that conducted by the missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Albania.

We again thank you, Ambassador Schlumberger, for the tremendous hard work and dedication of you and your team.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.