



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to H. E. Vuk Jeremic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia in his capacity as Chair of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Central European Initiative, and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Special Permanent Council
July 4, 2011, Vienna, Austria

The United States is pleased to welcome Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic to the Permanent Council. We congratulate you as Serbia stands at the helm of three important sub-regional organizations. We view your presence today as a positive sign that the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE is meeting its stated goal to further promote close cooperation between the OSCE and other regional and sub-regional organizations. Regional issues require regional ownership. We trust that Serbia will exercise leadership of these organizations in an inclusive manner. It is important that all countries in the region have the opportunity to participate constructively in these fora.

Each of the three sub-regional organizations provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, enhance regional stability and security, and improve relations among respective member states. We welcome the close cooperation of Serbia with its predecessor chair of these organizations Montenegro, particularly on economic and environmental issues – the second dimension, in OSCE parlance. Your cooperation on this dimension sets an excellent example for other sub-regional organizations and we hope to see continued success under Serbia's leadership.

We note that Serbia's stated priorities in each organization include combating the transnational threat posed by organized crime. Our OSCE field missions in the Western Balkans continue to provide support in this effort. We hope that all these activities can be coordinated to ensure an efficient and effective approach to harmonizing regional initiatives to combat organized crime.

We also welcome your efforts to improve the protection of human rights and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, which was the theme of a May Conference of Ministers within the Central European Initiative. Over the years, the situation for minority populations has generally improved across much of the OSCE, including the Western Balkans, as democratic norms have taken hold. Unfortunately, the situation for some minorities – including Roma – has deteriorated, sometimes significantly. We hope that all three organizations will advocate projects to reverse the marginalization of the Roma minority.

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 current round of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue is one step in the right direction, and we hope to see soon the outcomes of a fruitful debate.

The three sub-regional organizations constitute important sub-regional fora for cooperation and we welcome Serbia's participation and leadership in these organizations. Thank you again for your presentation today, Mr. Foreign Minister and please be assured of our best wishes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.