



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the OSCE Facilitation of Participation of Serbian Citizens in Kosovo in Serbian Presidential Run-Off Elections

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 24, 2012

The United States congratulates the leadership and staff of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo for its success in the facilitation of Kosovo Serbs' participation during the second round of the Serbian Presidential elections. OMiK Head of Mission Werner Almhofer, Deputy Head of Mission Edward Joseph, and Senior Elections Advisor Hugh Fulton provided tireless, wise leadership throughout this process. We would also like to thank the other OSCE Missions in the region for lending assistance, especially Ambassador Fletcher Burton and the OSCE Mission in Sarajevo for sending 75 volunteers.

We commend OSCE for accepting a challenging mission and for its contribution to democracy and stability in the Balkans. This operation has proved what we have always known: this organization's strength lies with its field missions. The OSCE's field missions play a vital role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and strengthening democracy throughout the OSCE region. We depend on OSCE personnel on the ground for their perspective and for their leadership.

We also express our gratitude to Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and to the Chairmanship-in-Office for their unwavering support for an OSCE role in facilitating the participation of Kosovo Serbs in these elections. We thank the governments of Kosovo and Serbia for putting the needs of people before politics.

The United States notes the press release by ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly on their elections observations missions, which assessed that contestants enjoyed equal opportunities for campaigning but found that more efforts are required to enhance the integrity of the electoral process.

We welcome the objective, comprehensive review by the international observation missions, and as we welcome the newly-elected Government of Serbia to office, we applaud their efforts to provide the people of Serbia with a free, fair, and transparent elections process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.