



## United States Mission to the OSCE **Statement on the Accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the Council of Europe**

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes to the  
Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 3, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We also join in welcoming Serbia and Montenegro's accession to the Council of Europe, and we commend Serbia and Montenegro for reaching this goal. While we are on the subject, please allow me to also extend my sincere thanks to the government of Serbia and Montenegro and to the OSCE staff and leadership in Belgrade, Podgorica, and Pristina for receiving me so warmly on my recent trip to the region.

The five days that I spent visiting the OSCE Missions in Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo allowed me to see first-hand the important role that the OSCE plays in the Balkans, and the terrific work that is being done by our field operations.

The demands of our work here in Vienna make traveling to the field obviously very difficult, but when I learned from Ambassador Fieschi that almost no Ambassadors from Vienna, with the notable exception of the Chairman, have visited the OSCE Mission in Kosovo recently, I thought that I should share how deeply I was affected by my own visit and hope that other colleagues will join and visit to see what is happening in Kosovo.

While I expected to find hard working, dedicated OSCE employees, I was struck by the extremely high quality of experts working in each of the OSCE presences that I visited. I was also very much encouraged by the high degree of cooperation and mutual respect between the OSCE Missions, the local authorities, and other international organizations.

The knowledge and experience that I gained during this trip is invaluable and again I encourage all of you – especially those who are interested in rethinking and reinvigorating the work of our field missions – to make an effort to visit the Field Missions, particularly the OSCE's largest mission in Kosovo.

For me, this experience has only reconfirmed the value of OSCE's field activities. The example of Serbia and Montenegro, a nation that, with the help of the OSCE Mission, has overcome years of isolation and conflict to join the Council of Europe, illustrates how successful the OSCE's field activities can be.

Thank you.