



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by OMIK Head of Mission Ambassador Fieschi

Delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 29, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure for us too to warmly welcome Ambassador Fieschi once again to the Permanent Council. We wish to extend our thanks to Ambassador Fieschi for his report today and also for his continuing excellent leadership of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

To begin, allow me to reiterate our full support for United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and for the UN Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo. The United States stands firmly behind Special Representative Steiner and the policy of "standards before status" and "institutionalizing standards."

We also fully support the OSCE's unique and important role in Kosovo, as the international actor responsible for institution building. Indeed there is no role more crucial than developing and institutionalizing the standards of democratic life.

We appreciate Ambassador Fieschi's candid evaluation of the situation in Kosovo, including the difficulties surrounding the transfer of competencies from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Constitutional Framework support transferring non-reserved competencies to the provisional government, and we support UNMIK's efforts to complete this task by the end of this year.

We are pleased that OMIK has adjusted its priorities to fit the new needs and requirements of the Provisional Institutions to prepare for the handover of OSCE-created institutions to local control. OMIK's work in the area of democratization is an important component of preparing the Provisional Institutions for effective, democratic governance. We support OMIK's activities aimed at developing the capacity of elected members of the Kosovo Assembly and at improving the functioning and transparency of the political parties.

We also support OMIK's efforts to promote reconciliation, in order to create an environment favorable to sustainable returns. All those who wish to return to their homes should be given the opportunity to do so, as well as the support necessary to rebuild their lives in Kosovo.

OMIK should work with other OSCE Missions in the region, when appropriate, on issues such as reconciliation, minority rights, and the fight against organized crime. The OSCE is uniquely positioned to facilitate this type of regional cooperation and we would like to see further efforts to that end.

OSCE's role as a monitor and advisor on human rights and rule of law issues in Kosovo is more important than ever before. Ambassador Fieschi is right to point out the changing context of the OSCE's work in this area as more responsibilities shift to the Provisional Institutions. We agree that OMIK's focus must adapt to fit this new context, and that the aim of building tolerance and respect for diversity should guide OMIK's work in this area.

On the issue of elections, the United States supports the ongoing work of the OSCE-chaired Elections Working Group. We encourage the members of the working group to take full advantage of that forum to shape and develop a new electoral system for Kosovo. We support OMIK's efforts to hand over as much responsibility as possible to local control for the 2004 elections, but we also firmly believe that it is the job of OMIK to lead and guide this process, and not the Kosovo Assembly.

Another area in which the OSCE has made significant contributions is in the field of media development. Although much has been accomplished, the task is not complete. We support the efforts of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PSIG) to pass a balanced media law - one that will ensure sustainable independent and public broadcasting in Kosovo.

Mr. Chairman, please allow me to close by expressing our continued support for one of OSCE's most successful ventures – the Kosovo Police Service School. As the Police School completes its mandate for basic police training, we believe it must look for new ways to take advantage of this invaluable OSCE resource. There are numerous possibilities, including increasing the number of specialized training courses offered at the school or increasing the range and scope of the courses. We look forward to hearing more about Ambassador Fieschi's proposal to transform the school into a Public Safety Training Academy.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, please also allow me to convey, through you, our full support for the excellent work of the staff at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, under the able leadership of Ambassador Fieschi. We appreciate Ambassador Fieschi's report and we continue to believe that the OSCE is playing a vital role in building a multiethnic, democratic Kosovo.

Thank you.