



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Representative on Freedom of the Media's Final Report

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 11, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States joins the European Union and, we are sure, others in welcoming Mr. Duve today in this, his final appearance before the Permanent Council. In his six years as the sole occupant of this important office, Mr. Duve has engaged in many worthwhile project activities. These include printing and donating books for the children of Kosovo, dispatching mobile cultural containers throughout Southeast Europe, and fostering understanding among the young in defense of our future. He has also done some important work in pursuit of his core mandate: promoting freedom of the press in the OSCE region.

Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are two indispensable elements of any true democracy. It is important to all of our countries that these elements be preserved and protected. While we ourselves have of late disagreed with the factuality of Mr. Duve's frequent criticisms of the United States, we nonetheless support and defend his right to voice such criticisms, as the ability to discuss and debate differing views openly and freely is the essence of what his office has been set up to foster.

We therefore share Mr. Duve's concern about the health of the media in the OSCE region. His office has thoroughly document the many problems we face, just as has he himself done today in person, and therefore I shall not, in the interest of time, revisit these issues here this morning. But I will say that it is clear that Mr. Duve's successor will confront growing challenges both as a result of changes in the way information is disseminated and because of still common attitudes among some participating States that tolerate a disregard for media freedoms.

Mr. Chairman, in our view these challenges make it all the more critical that we identify a capable and independent new Representative as soon as possible. Several impressive candidates have honored the OSCE by seeking Mr. Duve's office and it is our understanding from you that we are near consensus. We believe it is now time for

this organization to unite around a single candidate so that the work of this important institution can continue without impediment.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we wish to wish Mr. Duve all the best in his future endeavors, which we understand include a stint in Washington. We also wish to assure him that unless he becomes the object of a national security investigation, and therefore the subject of a court order, the records of his book purchases will remain between him and his bookseller.

Finally Mr. Chairman, as we bid him farewell, we can say that while his work is not done, he has laid a sound foundation for the continued success of his important office. I thank you.