



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on October 23 Assembly Elections in Kosovo

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 28, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would also like to comment on the Assembly election held on Saturday, October 23, in Kosovo.

First, we would like to congratulate authorities in Kosovo for organizing a generally free and fair election. We are also grateful for the efforts of the NATO-led Kosovo Force, the UN police force, and the Kosovo Police Service for safeguarding the conduct of the vote.

But we would like to focus special attention on the role of the Kosovar-run Central Election Committee. OMIK's role in these elections, as you know, was mainly advisory. For the first time since 1999, the Central Election Committee was responsible for organizing and conducting most aspects related to this election. We are pleased to note that the elections were run smoothly, with only minor technical glitches. This is an important victory for the Central Election Committee and a positive sign of Kosovo's evolving political maturity. We look for Kosovo to show similar progress on other Standards as well.

The OSCE's field mission in Kosovo should also take pride in the conduct of these elections. Our colleagues in OMIK have worked very hard over the past several years to build institutions and a culture that will, we all hope, provide for the continuation of free and fair elections. The institution and capacity-building work OMIK has done with local institutions in the field of elections is a clear example of where the OSCE is making a positive and meaningful difference in the world.

While the elections were a procedural success, we regret to note that their outcome was marred by the decision of most Kosovar Serbs not to vote. We are disappointed that some politicians discouraged them from voting, and view such efforts as self-defeating. We remain convinced that taking part in Kosovo's institutions is the best way for all communities to advance their legitimate interests. In conjunction with the UN and OMIK, we will continue to work with Kosovo's elected leaders on issues important to Kosovo's future, including progress on building a multi-ethnic future for Kosovo.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.