



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Response to Report by the Head of the
OSCE Mission in Kosovo,
Ambassador Jean-Claude Schlumberger**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 5, 2013

The United States joins in welcoming Ambassador Schlumberger to the Permanent Council and we thank him for his comprehensive report.

A tremendous amount of progress has occurred since Ambassador Schlumberger's last report to the Permanent Council in February. The agreement on normalization of relations reached in April between Serbia and Kosovo with EU facilitation has set the stage for a profound and lasting evolution in the relationship between the two sides.

More importantly perhaps, the agreement can lead to a fundamental change in the relationships between the people themselves, especially in northern Kosovo. In our response to Ambassador Schlumberger's last report to the PC, the United States highlighted the need for the citizens themselves to commit fully to the process of reconciliation and ethnic harmony. Since then, the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia have demonstrated great courage and foresight in reaching agreements within the EU-led Dialogue. The details of Dialogue implementation have dominated the headlines in both countries ever since, and continue to be the subject of much debate and negotiation within and between Kosovo and Serbia. These details are not unimportant, and we fully recognize the right and interest of parties on all sides to pursue what they view as the best outcome for their countries. We challenge the leaders and citizens of Kosovo and Serbia, however, to keep their eyes on the larger goal, a normalization of relations that will improve the lives of the people and advance both countries toward their European aspirations. Maximal effort to ensure a fair and transparent voting process on November 3rd is a key step in establishing democratic institutions that can recognize and address the needs of all of the people in Kosovo.

We recognize the hard work and progress made to date toward implementation of other very important elements of the April agreement, including on telecommunications and energy, and integration of the police and judiciary. We look forward to the next round of talks on September 8th and encourage both sides to redouble their efforts to complete agreements on these issues as well.

We also commend the recent progress made on increasing the number of recruits from minority populations graduating from the Kosovo Security Force training programs. Diversity within core rule of law and security structures in Kosovo will help build trust and promote integration between communities, strengthening the protection of human rights for all.

We note the extensive work that OMiK has done over the years to support the Central Election Commission. We now are seeing the critical role this body plays as it is called upon to resolve some of the more challenging details of implementing the upcoming municipal election. We welcome and are deeply grateful for the role the OSCE will play, at the parties' request, in facilitating these elections in northern Kosovo. We encourage the CEC to continue taking an even hand in its decisions, to ensure a fair, transparent, and inclusive process for all voters throughout Kosovo on November 3.

The intense period of negotiations and implementation that has occurred since April, and the immediacy of the coming elections, have placed great demands on the leadership and staff of OMiK. They have answered this call with skill, expertise, and hard work. While assistance to implementation of the Dialogue will continue to be a significant part of OMiK's work over the next several months, the challenge will be to continue the longer-term planning necessary to chart the future course of OMiK itself. We fully recognize the demands that have been placed on OMiK and its staff this year, and commend the financial support pledged by those participating States who are contributing to the Extra-Budgetary Projects funding the municipal elections implementation. Beyond this year, however, we must look for ways to continue defining the scope of OMiK's work. The developments of this year are providing a tremendous amount of experience for Kosovo's governing institutions, and OMiK must find areas where that experience can be translated into greater independence from outside support.

The United States continues to stand ready to work with all participating States to pursue and make progress on all these issues, for the benefit of all the people of Kosovo and the surrounding region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.