



United States Mission to the OSCE

25th Anniversary of NATO Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Kosovo

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 21, 2024

Twenty-five years ago, NATO launched Operation Allied Force to end the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. After exhausting all diplomatic avenues to put an end to the Milosevic regime's brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing, military action was the option of last resort.

NATO's use of force was necessary and legitimate. The UN Security Council had expressed concerns about the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo, the mounting number of refugees, and the threat posed to international peace and security.

We will never forget what happened a quarter century ago. We remember the thousands of innocent people who were killed or who remained missing, and the hundreds of thousands driven from their homes due to the violence of Milosevic's ethno-nationalist regime and its forces.

Recognizing this dark past and determined to ensure it is not repeated, the United States is focused on the Western Balkans' future and the region's European integration.

We urge all partners in the region to focus on finishing the task of building a stable, prosperous, multi-ethnic, and secure Western Balkans. The United States celebrates your progress towards EU membership. We will continue to partner with you to strengthen democratic governance and respect for human rights, implement electoral reform, advance media freedom, improve economic integration, and enshrine multi-ethnic cooperation and respect.

A brighter future for the Western Balkans requires normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, including eventual mutual recognition. We fully endorse the EU-facilitated Dialogue, which is the only path to the future that all Kosovans and Serbians deserve.

As always, we thank the OSCE Missions in Kosovo and Serbia for their active work to help both countries realize their goals of greater European integration, including EU membership. We exhort all parties to honor the memory of those who were lost by working together to build a peaceful and prosperous future in the Western Balkans.

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