



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 27, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States welcomes Ambassador Moore back to the Permanent Council. Thank you for your excellent statement on the activities of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ambassador Moore, the ongoing involvement of your Mission in supporting the country's priorities remains a vital part of stability and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The OSCE Mission continues to assist the host government with implementation of reforms and strengthening the rule of law, democratic institutions, and mechanisms for the protection of human rights. As one of the main promoters of civil society, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina also supports political and educational reform, and promotes the protection of human rights. As envisioned by the Dayton Peace Accords, your Mission's work with the people and government of Bosnia and Herzegovina – including engagement in municipalities, cantons, and entities through its eleven thematic sections and nine field offices – delivers substantial benefits to the host country.

The hard work by Mission staff to provide significant assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina has been made more difficult by the lack of consensus over an OSCE Unified Budget for 2017. Ambassador Moore, the United States strongly supports your Mission's programmatic work, including in the areas of enhanced engagement such as anti-corruption, countering violent extremism, and youth. Thus, we call on all delegations to approve the Unified Budget and maintain robust funding levels for the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other OSCE field missions.

We recognize the leadership role the Mission has played in reconciliation and improved relations in the region, as highlighted by the support recently provided to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Sixty personnel from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina worked with the Mission in Kosovo to facilitate the collection of ballots during the April 2017 Serbian presidential elections. We commend this type of cooperation and encourage all OSCE field missions in the region to seek additional such opportunities, which contribute to regional stability.

The continuing efforts Bosnia and Herzegovina is making with the OSCE Mission's help in

democratic development and stability and reconciliation contribute to the country's progress on its chosen path toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration. There were several steps forward on this path in 2016. After reaching agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina on a Stabilization and Association Agreement and internal Coordination Mechanism, the EU in September 2016 accepted Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership application, formally initiating the country's comprehensive EU accession process. European integration offers enormous benefits and possibilities for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States continues to urge Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to build on this progress by completing the economic and political reforms necessary to advance.

The completion of the Defense Review in November 2016 marks another milestone in Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration with Euro-Atlantic structures, including NATO. We encourage all efforts to help Bosnia and Herzegovina implement plans to reduce excess ammunition stockpiles, eliminate landmines throughout the country, train and equip soldiers to assist in natural disasters, and ultimately become a modernized force capable of partnering with other nations. Following the Defense Review's completion, NATO foreign ministers responded with concrete support by committing to help with implementation of these key reforms, and paving the way for continued engagement with the Alliance. We urge leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain this momentum by reinvigorating the relationship with NATO and working to complete the conditions for activating its Membership Action Plan.

In closing, let me emphasize that the United States remains committed to the Dayton Peace Accords, which brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the democratic, multi-ethnic, sovereign, and independent state with full respect for its territorial integrity guaranteed by the Dayton Accords and the UN Charter. In the nearly 22 years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the hard work of recovering from war and promoting integration with Europe. As a member of the Peace Implementation Council, the United States encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to make the difficult decisions to keep the country moving in a positive direction toward a stable, secure state on the path toward EU and NATO membership. Bosnia and Herzegovina will prosper when leadership effectively addresses discrimination against members of minority groups, accountability for war crimes in domestic courts, and intimidation and threats against journalists and members of the LGBT community.

Thanks again to you and your team, Ambassador, for your tremendous work. Under your leadership, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has sharpened its focus, delivered impressive results, and made a tangible difference to the government and people of your host country. Your commitment has been deep, sustained, and effective. In your final months as Head of the Mission, we have no doubt that you will remain unflagging as you prepare for the transition to new leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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