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**United States Mission to the OSCE****Response to Head of Mission in Serbia,
Dimitrios Kypreos**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 4, 2010

Ambassador Kypreos, the United States joins other delegations in welcoming you to the Permanent Council for your first appearance. We strongly support the work of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, and we thank you and your mission for this comprehensive report. Serbia continues to make progress on reforms, and in recent months it has achieved a number of tangible results, including visa liberalization with the Schengen zone, the Interim Trade Agreement with the EU, and formal submission of its EU membership application.

At the same time, Serbia's democratic transition continues, and there remains a role for the OSCE to assist with implementing reforms and with turning laws into improved and sustainable policies and practices. With the effects of the economic crisis likely to linger into 2010, increased focus will be needed to keep reforms moving forward.

The United States continues to place a high priority on strengthening Serbia's police and rule of law institutions. We welcome the news that the Mission's cooperation with the Ministries of Interior and Justice further expanded and deepened in 2009. We strongly support continued efforts on police reform and strategic planning capacities in the Ministry of the Interior, including on issues of organized crime. We also support Serbia's efforts to reform its judicial and legal system. This is an essential part of strengthening rule of law institutions and increasing citizen confidence in them.

Serbia's Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) has only recently become operational, and faces challenges such as establishing its enforcement power and in obtaining necessary resources. We welcome the Mission's plans to provide support to the ACA, and we encourage the government of Serbia to fully support it as a robust anti-corruption body. We believe this is an excellent example of where OSCE's proven expertise can be usefully applied.

The Mission continues to do important work on rights of individuals belonging to minorities and human rights issues. We commend the support provided for the National Minority Council process, and we praise its advocacy and cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in this regard. Recognition is also due for the Mission's work and presence in south and southwestern Serbia. We fully support these efforts to enhance minority participation and achieve multi-ethnic local governments in these areas and believe this is an important contributor to security, stability and development.

Increased regional dialogue in recent months on unresolved issues of refugees and IDPs has been welcome. Resolving these problems is crucial for long-term stability. Involved parties should stay focused on identifying remaining issues of dispute, agreeing on target groups, and finding practical ways to finalize long-standing claims.

The report also highlights Serbia's stance on Kosovo. The United States and Serbia disagree on Kosovo's status as an independent state, but this disagreement has not hindered U.S. desire to strengthen our bilateral relationship and seek cooperation on practical matters that

will improve the lives of all of Kosovo's citizens, including issues such as those the OSCE Mission is working on.

Ambassador Kypreos, you and your mission are doing important work that is speeding Serbia on its reform path and toward its goal of European integration. The United States supports this work not only in words but also with seconded staff and contributions to selected projects. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with you, your mission, the government of Serbia, and other participating states on these important tasks.