



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jonathan Moore

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 28, 2015

We welcome Ambassador Moore to the Permanent Council for his first report on the activities of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ambassador, we are proud of the efforts you and your team have undertaken this past year, and look forward to additional progress. And I'd also like to say that I thought your report was exactly the kind of report that can help those of us around this table make sense of what you are doing in the field – it was honest, straightforward, and it showed your commitment to progress for the country in which you serve.

Under your leadership, the Mission has done an excellent job implementing the “Dayton+20” reforms and reductions making the Bosnia mission an efficient and effective organization that should be a model for other field operations across the OSCE.

We note the progress Bosnia and Herzegovina has made to strengthen regional relationships and advance towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We were encouraged by the February adoption of the Written Commitment on EU Integration, and look forward to the positive effects of the entering into force of the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreement on June 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina must translate these steps into concrete action on the ground, and continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to do its part to make progress towards these goals. Ambassador, your report notes that the root causes of the dissatisfaction that led to demonstrations and protests just over a year ago remain. Socio-economic and political reforms will be needed to ensure that BiH can achieve EU membership. Such reforms will help address those root causes of instability, and we urge continued attention to them.

The elections held in October 2014 were an important milestone for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We commend the voters who took part and express our appreciation for the work done by the Mission and by ODIHR in support of the elections and electoral reform. We urge authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the remaining electoral reforms with urgency, including the recommendations made by ODIHR.

Ambassador Moore, you noted in your report concerns about the operating environment for media in Bosnia and Herzegovina; we share those concerns. Attacks and intimidation targeting journalists and independent media outlets have no place in any OSCE participating State. The government must ensure there is no impunity for these attacks on media freedom by investigating and doing its utmost to put an end to such incidents. We are pleased to hear that Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović is likely to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina very soon, and we look forward to hearing the results of this visit.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is well placed, both in the region and the wider OSCE area, to share a broad range of experiences and know-how on issues confronting OSCE participating States. We encourage the OSCE Mission to continue to work with the government to counter violent extremism, particularly in the wake of the attack in Zvornik earlier this year. We encourage you to share the Mission's ideas and approaches with colleagues at other OSCE field missions and operations. The OSCE and its field operations can play an important role in coordinating efforts among participating States. We welcomed the OSCE's strong representation at the regional Countering Violent Extremism Summit meeting in Tirana last week and look forward to helping develop concrete initiatives to build on the results of that successful event.

Ambassador Moore, we thank you and the Mission for hosting delegates from the Second Preparatory Meeting of the Economic and Environmental Forum, who traveled from Belgrade to Bosnia and Herzegovina earlier in May to see firsthand the work of the OSCE in helping the government and local people respond to the devastating flooding that occurred in 2014. Getting into the field is essential for delegates here in Vienna, who appreciate the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the positive impact that the OSCE can have in participating States.

You have listed a number of important activities in which the Mission is deeply engaged. We strongly support these efforts, in particular the work being done on primary and secondary education, war crimes processing, sustainable return through the Regional Housing Program, and protecting the human rights of Roma and members of other minorities, including through support to the Ombudsman Institution.

We thank you, Ambassador Moore, for your work and the work of your team in Sarajevo and throughout the country. We offer our full support to you in advancing the objectives of the Mission, and to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it strives to meet the commitments it made through its participation in the OSCE. We look forward to additional progress and success throughout the next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.