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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Foreign Minister of Albania

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 6, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Minister, the United States Warmly welcomes you to the Permanent Council.

Your visit comes at a significant juncture for Albania, which is deepening its integration into a free and democratic Europe. Albania's interest in the OSCE Chairmanship in 2012 is another demonstration of its active and constructive participation in the Euro-Atlantic community. I would note that the participating States decided in their ministerial decision of 2006 that the demonstration of willingness and capacity to exercise leadership in full implementation of OSCE commitments, norms and values is one of the key reasons for which OSCE participating States entrust the functional responsibilities of the Chairmanship in Office to one of their number.

We congratulate Albania for positive developments in a number of areas. Consensus among political parties is creating room for progress on important reform processes, and economic growth has been strong.

EU and NATO pre-accession activities are bringing more progress and solidifying existing gains. We recognize that with Albania's pending accession to the EU and NATO, a certain amount of attention will shift to these processes. The activities of the OSCE Presence should be complementary with pre-accession activities. We welcome improvements in relations between the Albanian Government and the OSCE Presence. We appreciate your recognition of the contributions the OSCE Presence has made in Albania.

The Albanian Government's initiatives against corruption, trafficking and organized crime also deserve recognition. As we all know, good governance pays its own dividends, creating sustained economic growth and investment.

Looking ahead to the 2009 parliamentary elections, implementing electoral reforms and ensuring that the electoral infrastructure is in place ahead of these elections will consolidate the gains already made in democratization. The OSCE Presence and ODIHR are resources for assistance in reaching this goal. We encourage you to work closely with them to maximize their impact.

Mr. Minister, thank you again for joining us today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.