



## United States Mission to the OSCE

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### Statement on

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes to the  
Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 3, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to again welcome you, Ambassador Beecroft, to Vienna, and congratulate you on your numerous accomplishments as head of our mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There has been significant progress in the areas of education, democratization, regional stabilization, institution building and returns. Much of this is a result of the mission's hard work and tremendous efforts.

I would also like to welcome the Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Michael Humphreys.

We are pleased with the EU and OSCE cooperation in Bosnia, and support the EU representatives accompanying our Heads of Mission to the Permanent Council, especially where the two organizations are working so well together.

To start, I would note our pleasure with the accomplishments in the education field and salute the mission's continued efforts to help positively shape the new generation of Bosnian youth. An inclusive and fair education system is the cornerstone of every society's obligation to safeguard the human rights of its peoples. The recent advances in legislation, coupled with the development of a common core curriculum, are welcome advances. As we anticipated last year, the OSCE's vast field monitoring activities have ensured the necessary involvement and participation in this process of local authorities.

In the field of Democratization, we have been impressed with the success of the mission's Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation (MIFI) project, and the Cantonal Administration Project. Realistic budgeting and cost effective administration will surely improve the overall economic situation. We encourage these projects' efforts to further strengthen citizens' ownership of governance and economic policy development. This participation must continue to be stressed at every level throughout the country.

Under the mission's Institution Building mandate, we fully support auditing assistance for state-owned and other public institutions. These efforts, in coordination with the reform of the legal system, will allow the necessary forward movement to eventually restore the Rule of Law.

We are heartened to see the continued development of the Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM), to include a strengthened secretariat and Secretary

General. State-level command and control of all Bosnia and Herzegovina's armed forces is essential to fulfilling the constitutional requirement of defending BH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such reforms will also enhance regional security and eventually permit Bosnia and Herzegovina to join Euro-Atlantic structures.

Finally, the progress on property law implementation has been outstanding. While we understand that the most challenging cases remain, the mission's efforts have nonetheless been significant. We continue to support the Joint Action Plan, which must respect the host governments' positions.

As we have made consistently clear, our top priority issue for the mission is the work accomplished with returns and integration. We strongly support the OSCE's continued work in this area and look forward to further development of regional return issues with the neighboring countries.

In closing, I would like to again thank Ambassador Beecroft for both his and his staff's dedication and fine work. We continue to see commendable progress, and look forward to working together on future challenges.

Thank you.