Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
MISSION IN KOSOVO

Remarks of Ambassador Werner Wnendt, Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo,

to the General Committee of Political Affairs and Security of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Vienna, 23 February 2006

Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to appear before the General Committee of Political Affairs and Security of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly today. I welcome the timely opportunity to share my views with you on the situation in Kosovo at this critical juncture and the role of the OSCE in Kosovo.

We have entered a decisive period in Kosovo. The decision by the UN Security Council to initiate Future Status negotiations, and the subsequent appointment of Martti Ahtisaari as the Special Envoy to lead those talks, has created a new political momentum. There are distinct signs that Kosovo's politicians are developing a new maturity and clarity of purpose. They are aware of the immense challenge posed by the negotiations, but also of the opportunity it presents.

The passing of President Rugova has not been followed, as many had expected, by a protracted period of divisive political in-fighting. Instead we witnessed a smooth transition and the swift election of a new President, Fatmir Sejdiu. President Sejdiu also faces the challenging task of leading the Kosovo Negotiation Team during the Future Status talks.

And it is deeply encouraging to see that those talks have finally begun, with this week's meeting in Vienna on the vital question of local government reform. We can not of course expect any major progress at this stage of the talks. However, the simple fact

that the Pristina and Belgrade delegations submitted concrete proposals on such a fundamental issue, and engaged in face to face discussions, is of great significance.

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2006 is the year when the status of Kosovo is likely to be decided through a political settlement. While the Contact Group has indicated that negotiations should finish before the end of the year, the precise outcome of those talks is yet to be determined.

The Status Envoy has repeatedly stated that the duration of talks will depend on the pace and degree of Standards implementation. The SRSG reminded us in his recent address to the Security Council, that while for Kosovo Albanians the status process inspires hope, for many Kosovo Serbs it inspires fear. Every possible effort must be made by every political actor to reconcile these hopes and fears.

The latest report by the Secretary-General showed a noticeable slowing in the pace of standards implementation, and more worryingly in the field of minority rights. It is here that political pressure can be brought to bear: Implementation of Standards is an imperative and it must continue to be. Some progress is already visible. The PISG has prepared its own action plans on Standards implementation.

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Therefore, throughout 2006, the Mission must support the development of democratic and representative institutions to ensure impartial, transparent and accountable governance working for all communities. The Mission will take great efforts, in particular at the municipal level. We have created municipal teams with democratization and human rights experts. The teams we promote intra- and inter-community tolerance and dialogue to further guarantee that Kosovo's society remains multi-ethnic.

We assist *all Kosovans* to have their say in government, to see that it provides to their needs fairly, efficiently and effectively. We support, through our field presence, the process of further devolution of powers to the local level as agreed in the context of status talks. We place a great emphasis on monitoring, assessing and reporting the situation on the ground in order to ensure that what happens is taken fully into account by the international community. And, needless to say, the continued implementation of the Standards for Kosovo and the European agenda remain priorities.

At the central level, the Mission is deploying experts in new Ministerial Human Rights Advisory Units. We aim to advance property rights at every level: regulation, implementation or adjudication. To ensure the rights of ethnic communities, we monitor the implementation of legislation and policies, as well as access to public services. We pro-actively monitor the judicial sector and help provide legal education to all members of the judiciary. And, of course, we continue to provide advice to the Ombudsperson Institution as it moves to full local ownership.

Our democratization objectives support the effective functioning and multi-ethnicity of the Assembly of Kosovo, as it increases executive oversight. We assist political parties in understanding and using democratic procedures. We advocate and support municipal public outreach as a means to increase transparency and accountability. And to enhance checks and balances, we assist the PISG to develop, implement and effectively apply media legislation, including improving the quality of the public broadcaster.

In 2006, approximately 7,500 Kosovo Police Officers will have been trained at our Police School in the basics of democratic policing. By June 2006 the plan to transfer police education and development functions to a national successor entity will be in full swing, while the Police Inspectorate – an independent oversight mechanism for the Kosovo Police Service – will be working.

We will continue to support the Central Election Commission in developing a sustainable, inclusive and cost effective election management system. We will advise and oversee preparations for the next elections and finalize the transition of election management to local authorities.

In all of its work, the OSCE Mission will support regional and European co-operation of Kosovo's institutions. This will particularly be the case with municipal governments, the Assembly of Kosovo and police training.

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The OSCE Mission is committed to supporting a smooth transition to a post-1244 Kosovo, while continuing to build a stable European foundation for Kosovo's society. From discussions on the ground and in international fora, we *already know* that there

will be an international civilian future presence and that OSCE will take on a critical role.

It is striking when one looks at the areas in where the OSCE works in Kosovo - minority issues, local government reform, and human rights - that these are also the areas likely to figure most prominently in Status talks. Yet it seems that the OSCE will not play a direct role in the negotiation process. Our efforts now revolve around Standards implementation. But our efforts will also be crucial in the period that follows the talks.

It must *also* be recognized that the OSCE may soon become the only international organization in Kosovo with an extensive field presence. As an important step in retaining this presence, on February 15, the OSCE Mission and our UN colleagues agreed to a modified and enhanced working arrangement in the municipalities. This strengthens our co-operation as we transition to future arrangements and as the United Nations significantly reduces their presence in Kosovo, with European organizations stepping in to carry the burden.

The European Union and the OSCE will play leading roles. In the post-1244 Kosovo, there may be an international institution responsible for maintaining executive functions and the European Union will most probably take a lead role in institutional capacity building. But it will most likely be the OSCE, with a field presence that is already monitoring every municipality, which will be the eyes and ears of the International Community.

Stability in Kosovo can only be guaranteed if there is a system in place that upholds the rights of minorities and ensures a wide ranging reform of local government. The maturity of the legislative branch in ensuring effective oversight of the executive is imperative. It is in this area that Kosovo's parliamentarians have the most to gain from partnership with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, in particular through participation in some of its activities.

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Co-operation between the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Mission in Kosovo *has been* and continues to be strong. The Mission was privileged to have worked with the "Democracy Team on Kosovo" at the start of the Mission, while over

the years maintaining a long-standing co-operation on dialogue and the involvement of women within the Assembly, as well as underscoring the rights of minorities.

Since then, the Mission has benefited from the presence of OSCE PA observers in Kosovo's elections. Whatever the outcome of the Status process, another round of elections in Kosovo is likely within the next 12 months, and I have little doubt that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will once again be involved.

The OSCE PA also assisted the Mission in working to integrate the Assembly into inter-parliamentary co-operative structures. It was an Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Sarajevo that for the first time brought Kosovo Assembly members together with parliamentarians from SEE. And the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Meeting held last year in Sveti Stefan provided valuable insights into working with minorities. This will continue to be an important opportunity and not one that we can afford to let slide.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, at this juncture, *and* post status, there is still very much a role for the OSCE in Kosovo, for its Mission, for its institutions like ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and for the Parliamentary Assembly.

I trust that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly stands ready to assist us in ensuring that Kosovo enjoys a stable and prosperous future. A future enjoyed by all communities. I encourage you to join us in this commitment.

Thank you.