



Integrated Country Strategy

KOSOVO

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Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities	1
2. Mission Strategic Framework	4
3. Mission Goals and Objectives	6
4. Management Objective	16

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Kosovo is at an inflection point in the United States' long-term effort to support the people of Kosovo to establish and sustain a democratic, multiethnic, effective, and sovereign state that fosters regional stability, contributes to Euro-Atlantic security, and enhances prosperity for its citizens and the region. Much progress has been achieved but much work remains. Embassy Pristina remains focused on three fundamental priorities:

- **Kosovo achieving improved relations with its neighbors, with particular focus on obtaining progress towards an agreement normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia that is centered on mutual recognition, as well as enhanced contributions by Kosovo to regional stability and Euro-Atlantic security:** Normalized Kosovo-Serbia relations are key to Kosovo claiming its place in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Regional stability and prosperity – a key U.S. interest – would be enhanced by Kosovo moving towards EU accession and NATO membership. Obtaining the consent of the five EU member states who have not recognized Kosovo requires a normalized Kosovo-Serbia relationship. Embassy Pristina will make extensive efforts to encourage Kosovo's government and citizens to establish a constructive relationship with Serbia, strengthen its integrity as a multiethnic democracy for all Kosovo citizens, and nurture a resilient and secure democracy and economy that can withstand various shocks, making Kosovo a solid partner for the region and the world. Likewise, we will continue and enhance efforts to help Kosovo transform from a security consumer to security provider, supporting the development of well trained and equipped multiethnic and NATO-interoperable security forces subject to civilian control.
- **Kosovo enhancing its governance, including in the rule of law, so that Kosovans enjoy accountable and effective governance that meets the needs of all citizens:** With support from the United States and our European partners, Kosovo adopted a new Rule of Law strategy in 2021, a significant step forward. Nonetheless, inconsistent implementation of legislation, regulations, and court decisions undermines economic resilience, social

Approved: March 17, 2022

cohesion, and the public's perception of rule of law and the effectiveness of governance, inhibiting Kosovo and its citizens from realizing their full potential. In partnership with the government, our assistance aims to increase access to reliable, credible, efficient, and accountable justice and good governance for all Kosovo citizens. Our programs will seek consistent and timely implementation of the law, while empowering citizens to expect and demand more accountable and effective government services.

- **Kosovo increasing the prosperity of its citizens through inclusive human development and sustainable and green economic growth that results in a more stable and capable partner:** Kosovo's economy remains heavily based on consumption, with remittances accounting for about 16 percent of its GDP. Firms are small and lack the expertise to identify and export to foreign markets. A weak investment climate, insufficient and unreliable supply of electricity, political favoritism, and an inadequately skilled workforce deter investment and impede the development of a competitive private sector. In response, our Mission will help support an economy that provides opportunities through increased private sector competitiveness, improved energy security, commitment to a climate smart agenda, and a capable workforce. Post will support Kosovo's human development not only through economic channels, but by strengthening connections across society, ensuring the inclusion of diverse groups, including those of women, youth, and marginalized populations in Kosovo's political and economic life.

More than 20 years ago, the United States and our allies took extraordinary action to help the people of Kosovo end the ethnic cleansing of the Milosevic regime and ultimately establish an independent, multiethnic, democratic country. Today, our relationship has reached a transformative milestone where we seek commitment from Kosovo's government and citizens to take even greater ownership of Kosovo's future and to consolidate Kosovo's sovereignty, securing stability and prosperity for Kosovo and its region.

While Kosovo has continuously advanced in terms of institution building, economic trends, civic participation, and international recognitions, progress has been uneven. Moving into its next phase, we seek to support Kosovo as it assumes the role of an increasingly mature partner that

Approved: March 17, 2022

positively influences regional stability, institutionalizes reforms, combats corruption and impunity, creates energy security as the basis for economic development, and listens to and responds to the needs of its citizens.

Through this strategy, Embassy Pristina will directly support Administration priorities—notably, strengthening democracy within Europe and advancing our vision of a Europe whole, free, prosperous, and at peace; anti-corruption programming; increasing the viability and participation of the private sector promoting a more inclusive society; and promoting clean energy and addressing the climate crisis. Kosovo remains among the most pro-American countries in the world, despite being located at the center of a region increasingly crowded by malign influence and actors. The United States' assistance and engagement will reduce vulnerabilities and close space for malign actors to gain a foothold in Kosovo.

The U.S. mission will promote a nondiscriminatory, inclusive, and integrated development approach to ensure that all people, including those who face discrimination and may have limited access to a country's benefits, legal protections, or social participation are fully included and can actively participate in and benefit from development processes and activities.

These goals are interlinked, and Embassy Pristina's whole-of-government approach to the issues is well-positioned for success. Our ability to advance mission objectives and achieve our goals will be improved by an enhanced management platform poised to support all mission programs through an inclusive, efficient, and policy-driven team.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Kosovo fosters improved relations with its neighbors and contributes to regional stability and Euro-Atlantic security.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Kosovo engages constructively to advance normalized relations with Serbia that are centered on mutual recognition.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Kosovo's inter-community relations improved.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Kosovo's capabilities to counter malign actors, violent extremism, and terrorism enhanced; its security force strengthened; and its Euro-Atlantic and global integration deepened, including through unique contributions to Operation Allies Welcome.

Mission Goal 2: Improved rule of law and accountable and effective governance meets all citizens' needs. (Incorporates USAID CDCS DO1)

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Access to reliable, credible, efficient, and accountable justice increased for all Kosovo citizens.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Institutions' transparency and ability to respond to all citizens' needs; deliver quality services; implement laws, regulations, and court decisions; and reduce corruption is enhanced.

Mission Goal 3: Inclusive human development and sustainable economic growth supports Kosovo's stability; enhances its ability to be a strong, self-reliant partner to the United States; and advances Euro-Atlantic integration. (Incorporates USAID CDCS DO2)

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Enhanced engagement and policy enactment in trade, regional economic integration, and private sector competitiveness helps Kosovo take ownership of its own prosperity.

Approved: March 17, 2022

- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Kosovo's strengthened commitment to a diverse and secure energy supply and an ambitious climate change and environmental protection agenda contributes to a sustainable future.
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Kosovo's human capital enhanced through better integration of underserved communities and by equipping citizens with the skills needed for a modern economy and resilient democracy that attracts investment and reduces "brain drain."

Management Objective 1: An improved management platform supports Mission program goals with an inclusive, efficient, and policy-driven team.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Kosovo fosters improved relations with its neighbors and contributes to regional stability and Euro-Atlantic security.

Description | The Interim National Security Strategy Guidance emphasizes working alongside our partners to help Kosovo achieve a robust presence in Europe and elsewhere. Kosovo is a willing partner in U.S. efforts to advance security on issues like countering malign influence, terrorism, and violent extremism, but needs to continue developing its capacities to be a truly effective partner. U.S. support and advocacy can help ensure Kosovo continues to implement reforms that are transparent, credible, professional, and inclusive, while prioritizing the normalization of relations with Serbia, the absence of which remains a threat to regional stability.

Objective 1.1 | Kosovo engages constructively to advance normalized relations with Serbia that are centered on mutual recognition.

- **Objective 1.1 Justification** | Serbia's unwillingness to accept and recognize the historical facts that have led to Kosovo's sovereignty remains a threat to regional stability, creating an opening for malign external influence, blocking Kosovo's progress toward full membership in the Western community of nations, and sowing the seeds of potential future armed conflict. U.S. advocacy can help ensure Kosovo takes a responsible approach to negotiations, resulting in an implementable agreement.
- **Objective 1.1 Linkages** | Kosovo must advance in normalizing relations with Serbia that result in mutual recognition. An isolated, internally fragmented, and dysfunctional Kosovo would be a continuing source of inter-state, regional, and international instability. Failure to integrate Kosovo into Western organizations and institutions is detrimental to the West's interests and security. Consequently, this objective links to the National Security Strategy by leading and sustaining a stable and open international

system, underwritten by strong democratic alliances, partnerships, multilateral institutions, and rules.

- **Objective 1.1 Risks** | If this objective is not achieved, the looming risks will weaken overall regional stability, allowing opportunities for interference by malign actors and extremist ideologies, and diminishing the role of the European Union as a stabilizing force and strategic partner for the United States in the region.

Objective 1.2 | Kosovo's inter-community relations improved.

- **Objective 1.2 Justification** | Ethnic and inter-community tensions harm good governance, rule of law, and citizens' safety and security. U.S. assistance can bolster minority inclusion, while our advocacy can encourage greater efforts to heal wartime traumas, preventing grievances from undermining progress. Encouraging engagement with and accession to international institutions gives Kosovo - and the United States - new fora for protecting our shared interests.
- **Objective 1.2 Linkages** | Objective links to Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) goal 3 by strengthening democratic institutions, upholding universal values, and promoting human dignity. More specifically, the objective links to JSP objective 3.2 by advancing equity, accessibility, and rights for all. The objective also links to Joint Strategic Plan objective 2.1 by advocating and reinforcing democratic values, norms, and principles. Also links to Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) Functional Bureau Strategy objectives 2 and 3, specifically to promote international religious freedom, increase protection of religious minorities, and to increase respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- **Objective 1.2 Risks** | If inter-community relations in Kosovo are not improved, the disconnect among various social groups will only deepen, further corroding the integrity of Kosovo's sovereignty. Continued failure to consolidate Kosovo's sovereignty internally threatens to undermine progress that has been made.

Objective 1.3 | Kosovo's capabilities to counter malign actors, violent extremism, and terrorism enhanced; its security force strengthened; and its Euro-Atlantic and global integration deepened, including through unique contributions to Operation Allies Welcome.

- **Objective 1.3 Justification** | The Government of Kosovo is taking on increased responsibility in providing for its own defense and security. The government is seeking to establish the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) as an armed force with a territorial defense mandate. At the same time, GoK public safety agencies continue to develop their capabilities to handle other aspects of national security. The United States can help Kosovo in this endeavor while ensuring that security-sector reforms are transparent, credible, professional, and inclusive of all minority communities. Kosovo stepped up early to agree to temporarily host at-risk Afghans in the Operation Allies Welcome rubric; Kosovo's unique allowance of 365 days caused Kosovo, by default if not design, to become the location where the U.S. government vets Afghan evacuees requiring further processing. The Kosovo government has been helpful at every step of the way, proving itself to be a dependable partner that is willing to contribute to U.S. goals beyond Kosovo and its immediate neighborhood. The government is also an active player in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. It has arrested and prosecuted individuals on terrorism-related charges, developed CVE and CT strategies and action plans, and is actively involved in regional and international CVE and CT initiatives. Kosovo is also beginning to research strategies to counter malign external influence, including disinformation, particularly from Serbia, China, and Russia. The United States will support Kosovo's efforts to combat malign actors attempting to infiltrate Kosovo's market, media space, technology, and infrastructure. Disinformation weakens public trust in media, and the growing threats of cyber-attacks necessitate strengthening cybersecurity hygiene in critical infrastructure entities as well as media enterprises. Specifically, the United States can help Kosovo successfully implement its CVE and CT action plans and increase media resistance to divisive disinformation efforts, while engaging in counter-messaging and capacity building to subvert malign external influence.

- **Objective 1.3 Linkages** | The objective links to Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) goal 4 by leveraging the partnership between the U.S. and Kosovo to help the country and the region address global and regional threats and challenges. More specifically, the objective links to JRS objective 4.3 by countering malign actors that impact disinformation, conventional and hybrid threats, and emerging disruptive technologies that threaten the U.S. and European security.
- **Objective 1.3 Risks** | If this objective is not achieved, Kosovo will be more vulnerable to various threats, weakening overall regional stability, allowing opportunities for interference by malign actors and extremist ideologies, and diminishing the role of the European Union as a stabilizing force and strategic partner for the United States in the region.

Mission Goal 2 | Improved rule of law and accountable and effective governance meets all citizens' needs. (Incorporates USAID CDCS DO1)

Description | The United States prioritizes strengthening accountable governance by supporting civil society, citizens, and the private sector to voice their needs and participate in decision making. Through this goal, we will engage with the GoK to strengthen systems and processes and encourage government institutions to implement laws, regulations, and court decisions so that they are more effective and accountable to Kosovo's citizens. USG agencies work together to achieve this goal by building the capacities of Kosovo institutions to ensure better implementation of laws and policies, including sound fiscal policy and management of public funds. This effort includes increasing judicial, executive, and legislative branches' capacity to enforce the law; and supporting the implementation of reforms for improved integrity, accountability, and professionalism of law enforcement and justice sector professionals. Through these efforts, we promote increased public engagement, protection of human rights, and access to justice for all citizens.

Objective 2.1 | Access to reliable, credible, efficient, and accountable justice increased for all Kosovo citizens.

Approved: March 17, 2022

- **Objective 2.1 Justification** | This objective focuses on the citizen-side of governance and rule of law, with an emphasis on improved institutional transparency, accountability, integrity, and citizen access. The work under this objective aims to achieve to more responsiveness across Kosovo institutions to meet public demands for accountability and integrity, as well as improved public perception of the Kosovo justice system. This objective also focuses on assisting Kosovo's justice system in developing the mechanisms and capacity to investigate and prosecute complex cases, including high-level corruption, while promoting protection for the rights of victims and all justice sector participants.
- **Objective 2.1 Linkages** | This objective links to the third pillar of the National Security Strategic Guidance and the first, third, and fifth pillars of the United States Strategy on Countering Corruption by promoting democratic values and increased government accountability. It also links to Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) Objective 2.1 by advocating for and reinforcing democratic values, norms, and principles. It links to Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) Objective 3.2 by advancing equity and accessibility and rights for all, and Objective 3.3 by combating corruption.
- **Objective 2.1 Risks** | Not achieving the objective risks democratic backsliding in Kosovo as well as increased vulnerabilities to external malign influence and transnational criminal networks. The lack of reliable, credible, efficient, and accountable justice for all Kosovo citizens diminishes the sovereignty and integrity of Kosovo's statehood.

Objective 2.2 | Institutions' transparency and ability to respond to all citizens' needs; deliver quality services; implement laws, regulations, and court decisions; and reduce corruption is enhanced.

- **Objective 2.2 Justification** | This objective focuses on the capability of actors and institutions to deliver fair and effective governance, increase oversight, develop and implement necessary reforms, and improve the implementation and enforcement of laws, policies, and court decisions. Targeted transparency and efficiency measures, sharpened public integrity tools, improved disciplinary practices, as well as citizen

participation in anti-corruption efforts can improve public trust in institutions and create consistent practices that hold public officials accountable. Increasing the proficiency of the Assembly, electoral institutions, justice sector institutions, and governance bodies at the municipal and national level are key elements of this objective. Improved efficiency and functionality of ethnically integrated institutions are critical means to improve Kosovo's resilience and resistance to malign external influence.

- **Objective 2.2 Linkages** | This objective links to JRS Objective 2.4 by preventing, exposing, and reducing corruption through increased transparency and accountability of governing institutions, civic oversight, and societal inclusion; and the first, third, and fifth pillars of the United States Strategy on Countering Corruption by promoting democratic values and increased government accountability. It links to JSP Objective 3.1 by promoting good governance and defending strong, accountable, and resilient democracies that deliver to their citizens. The objective also strives to remove systemic barriers that underserved communities face and support interventions related to transparency and accountability.
- **Objective 2.2 Risks** | Unhindered corruption and lack of institutional transparency and accountability erodes the trust of citizens in their government, creating a vacuum for malign actors to enter the space. Not achieving this objective also stymies foreign direct investment and private sector growth.

Mission Goal 3 | Inclusive human development and sustainable economic growth supports Kosovo's stability; enhances its ability to be a strong, self-reliant partner to the United States; and advances Euro-Atlantic integration. (Incorporates USAID CDCS DO2)

Description | A weak investment climate, insufficient and unreliable supply of electricity, high economic informality, political favoritism, and an inadequately skilled workforce deter investment and impede the development of a competitive private sector. A growing

exasperation among youth is manifesting itself by youth leaving the country for perceived better opportunities.

In response, our Mission will help support an economy that provides opportunities through increased private sector competitiveness, improved energy security, climate smart agenda, and a capable workforce to meet the needs of a growing private sector. Efforts to promote sound macroeconomic policies and a diversified, private sector-driven economy are at the forefront of our economic agenda for Kosovo. As we encourage the GoK to take greater ownership for its prosperity and tackle challenges through market-oriented solutions, our role must shift from donor to catalytic partner.

Economically, human capital development is critical to achieve job creation and long-term growth by ensuring young people are equipped with the skill sets that the market demands. This will increase competitiveness and sophistication in Kosovo's export-oriented manufacturing and services sector.

Human capital development is also essential for increasing citizen's contribution to Kosovo's democratic processes by fostering more active engagement between the citizens and the municipality, and citizen organization around issues that concern their communities. Our programming will expand opportunities for active, results-oriented engagement by less heard, but important, voices, specifically youth, women, and minorities, in order to build the confidence for civic responsiveness and influence toward Kosovo's progress.

Objective 3.1 | Enhanced engagement and policy enactment in trade, regional economic integration, and private sector competitiveness helps Kosovo take ownership of its own prosperity.

- **Objective 3.1 Justification** | Despite a recent uptick in exports, a reduction in poverty, and a relatively strong fiscal performance by the government, Kosovo's economy remains fragile. Unemployment is the highest in the region, with weak rule of law and energy shortages being the largest constraints to economic growth. Heavy reliance on remittances from Kosovo diaspora also distorts Kosovo's labor market by

creating an artificially high reservation wage. Thanks to assistance from international partners, Kosovo has a strong legal and regulatory framework on paper, but implementation remains inefficient and uncoordinated, increasing the space for corruption and informality while stifling needed investment. Political instability and the government's inability to retain qualified civil servants leaves Kosovo open to regulatory and fiscal backsliding. Kosovo's private sector shows glimmers of hope in certain sectors, but the trade deficit remains massive. Kosovo's firms need investment, technology transfer, a predictable enabling environment, a stable energy supply, and access to qualified workers in order to take advantage of domestic and regional market opportunities.

- **Objective 3.1 Linkages** | This objective links to the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) objective 2.1 and objective 2.2 by promoting a global, market economy that creates opportunities for all Americans, and by supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and opportunity for communities around the globe. The objective also links to Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) objective 3.1 by deepening Kosovo's economic cooperation with Europe to attract investment; build stronger and more resilient supply chains and trade ties; and build back better from the global pandemic.
- **Objective 3.1 Risks** | If this objective is not achieved, Kosovo could face an increased unemployment and underemployment, increased inequality, risking foreign direct investment, macroeconomic instability, and a deepened skills mismatch. To address such threats, our programming will ensure economic governance and macroeconomic stability, enhanced private sector competitiveness and business linkages within the region and the West, including trade.

Objective 3.2 | Kosovo's strengthened commitment to a diverse and secure energy supply and an ambitious climate change and environmental protection agenda contributes to a sustainable future.

- **Objective 3.2 Justification** | A more predictable and reliable electricity supply, coupled with improved efficiency measures, will lead to increased private sector productivity and realized investment, which will create conditions for realizing

Approved: March 17, 2022

sustainable economic growth, employment opportunities, and political engagement for Kosovo citizens. Climate change and environmental protection are traditionally low priorities in Kosovo. Kosovo is prone to a wide variety of natural hazards like floods, landslides, droughts, earthquakes, and wildfires, which could pose serious damage to the economy and citizen wellbeing. As a consequence, we believe that climate smart initiatives driven through the lens of the private sector and policy implementation would address some of these challenges.

- **Objective 3.2 Linkages** | This objective aligns with the National Security Strategy. Central to our agenda is building an equitable, clean, and resilient energy future, which is urgently required to head off the existential risk posed by the climate crisis. More specifically, the objective is linked to JRS Objective 3.4 by expanding partnerships with Europe to increase energy security and prevent Russia from using energy as a weapon by promoting diversified supply and green technologies.
- **Objective 3.2 Risks** | The climate crisis is an existential threat that will affect economic output and citizen well-being. If Kosovo fails to act now, the country will miss its last opportunity to avert and adapt to the direst consequences of climate change for the health of its people, economy, and security. Failing to act on energy security will only mean further degradation of Kosovo's economic opportunities, erosion of the business environment, and greater risk for foreign investors. Moreover, inadequate climate commitments may pose risks to Kosovo's future EU accession.

Objective 3.3 | Kosovo's human capital enhanced through better integration of underserved communities and by equipping youth with the skills needed for a modern economy and resilient democracy that attracts investment and reduces "brain drain."

- **Objective 3.3 Justification** | Kosovo is Europe's youngest country with an average age of 26. If democratic and economic opportunities are increased, youth represent a resource for Kosovo's prosperity. A young, well-trained labor force could be a comparative advantage for strengthening democratic systems and boosting productivity. Despite years of strong economic growth, unemployment in Kosovo still

hovers around 30 percent, with youth unemployment over 50 percent. More worryingly, long term youth unemployment is the highest in the region and a sense of hopelessness and frustration continues to grow in this demographic. If Kosovo's large youth cohort is not properly engaged in Kosovo's economy and democracy, they will continue to migrate in search of better opportunity or stagnate at home, with increasing susceptibility to religious and political extremism. This objective intends to challenge these entrenched status quo situations by bringing independent and less heard voices into the forefront—women, youth, minorities, marginalized groups, and the private sector. Kosovo citizens should contribute to their own future by organizing around common interests and taking action to engage in decision-making that affects their lives, but that goes beyond government oversight and public policy implementation.

- **Objective 3.3 Linkages** | By partnering with youth, women, and minority groups to help them steer their own future, the objective links to JRS Goals 2 and 3, by strengthening democracy and rule of law, as well as advancing Kosovo's economic prosperity. In alignment with the NSS, the approach will help Kosovo engage its citizenry defend and protect human rights and address discrimination, inequity, and marginalization in all its forms.
- **Objective 3.3 Risks** | If this objective is not achieved, disillusionment of youth will become even a greater challenge in Kosovo. Youth are weighed down by resignation, unemployment, and widespread perceived government corruption. Kosovo already has one of the lowest female labor participation rates in the region oscillating between 20 and 30 percent. Risks of not engaging more women through this objective will only worsen Kosovo's chances toward prosperity. If not addressed, the incoming youth bulge will exacerbate pressure on the current infrastructure, education, the economy, public services, and political stability.

4. Management Objective

Management Objective 1 | An improved management platform that supports Mission program goals with an inclusive, efficient, and policy-driven team.

- **Management Objective 1 Justification** | For Post to meet the tests of the 21st century, Post will nurture a stronger, more agile, and more diverse institution that can lead America's engagement in Kosovo.
- **Management Objective 1 Linkages** | This management objective links to JSP goal 4 by revitalizing the diplomatic and development workforce and institutions. The objective also aligns with JRS management objective 1 by advancing diversity and inclusion - more specifically, the objective will align with the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce.
- **Management Objective 1 Risks** | Not achieving this objective risks a limited workforce that deprives creativity in Post's policies, as well as implementation of Mission Goals.