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Working session II:

Early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation: lessons learned and way ahead

as delivered by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste Wallander
Vienna, 1 July 2011

Thank you very much, Mr. Moderator.

Developing early warning systems, preventing conflicts, managing crises and rehabilitating post-conflict zones are some of the most important tasks facing the international community, including the OSCE. Indeed, the remarks of the NATO Secretary General yesterday underscored that NATO and the OSCE not only share common values, but a common commitment to make Europe more stable and secure. While the OSCE specializes in long-term structural efforts, such as democratic institution-building, there is no denying that the ability to detect and respond to early warning signals would be of enormous benefit to the citizens of all the participating States and OSCE's partners. The U.S. has made a number of proposals in this regard over the past two years, and we continue to stand behind them. Agreement on a mechanism to enable the OSCE to provide the international community with impartial eyes on the ground in a situation of conflict would be a major step forward. But the OSCE can also engage to help prevent conflicts.

I would like to focus my remarks today on three areas, which we would like to see addressed at the Vilnius Ministerial: 1) detecting and preventing conflicts; 2) building confidence among parties to conflicts; and 3) enhancing the role of women in conflict resolution and crisis response.

First, our Heads of State and Government gave us a tremendously important task when they declared in Astana that "new crises must be prevented." This seems like an obvious job for the OSCE. But to do it, we need an effective early warning system. We would like to see recommendations from the OSCE field missions on how they might serve as early warning systems in their regions – it just makes sense that those on the ground will have the quickest reaction times, and the most immediate understanding of the situation as it unfolds. We will be following up on this idea after the ASRC and would welcome input from other participating States.

Early warning, however, is only useful if it is followed by a rapid response, and the U.S. urges other participating States to support a new capability to respond to conflicts in a quick and effective manner. The High Commissioner on National Minorities can serve as a model for the early identification of potential sources of conflict, as well as early intervention to defuse the situation.

Second, we need new confidence building measures. We all know that without reconciliation at the societal level, peace settlements tend to falter over time. We need to identify and

implement confidence-building measures in all three dimensions to assist in the long-term resolution of conflicts in our area. The recent workshop on CBMs in the second dimension that took place here in Vienna was a promising step in this direction.

The OSCE should further foster dialogue among communities and individual citizens across national, ethnic, religious or other divides and promote efforts at reconciliation at the grassroots level. This would complement existing processes at the governmental level.

Finally, we must put more emphasis on enhancing the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. UNSCR 1325 mandated women's full participation in peace building. Enhancing the participation of women in peace building has relevance not only for the success of how the OSCE's approaches conflict prevention and resolution, but how effective its efforts will be in building confidence between parties and in reaching out to civil society. The United States is in the process of drafting a national action plan in support of women as agents of peace and security that will build on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, details of which will be announced later this year. Our Mission to the OSCE will be charged with leading discussion here in Vienna about how the OSCE can support these initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.