



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Response to Address by Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergi Kapanadze**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 20, 2012

The United States warmly welcomes you, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergi Kapanadze, to the Permanent Council. We thank you for your remarks.

On August 22, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) opened an election observation mission for the parliamentary elections to be held in Georgia on October 1. This mission is led by Nikolai Vulchanov and consists of 15 international experts based in Tbilisi and 28 long-term observers deployed throughout Georgia. Their task is to assess the elections in that country for consistency with Georgia's OSCE commitments, its international human rights obligations, and its own domestic law. We call on all participants to work to ensure that the Georgian people judge the October 1 elections as free and fair.

The United States also takes this opportunity to renew its call on Russia to reciprocate Georgia's unilateral pledge not to use force, and to authorize unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. The United States also calls for full respect of all individuals' human rights in the conflict areas, and for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons. In addition, the United States urges the Russian Federation to abide by its commitments under the August 2008 ceasefire agreement and its September 2008 implementing measures, including the commitment to withdraw forces to positions held prior to the start of hostilities. We also encourage the fullest transparency regarding the ongoing "KAVKAZ 2012" military exercise, which is taking place a short distance from Georgia's internationally recognized borders.

And let me also assure you, Mr. Deputy Foreign Minister, that the United States continue to stand for the restoration of a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia.

The United States remains committed to helping Georgia and Russia find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Georgia. The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are integral parts of Georgia, and we reiterate our strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.