



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Foreign Minister of Moldova, Andrei Stratan

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 30, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome Foreign Minister Stratan to the Permanent Council and thank him for conveying the views of the Republic of Moldova on so many very important issues.

The U.S. regrets the persistent provocations by the Transnistrian authorities which have impeded progress over the past months toward a negotiated settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

Among these unacceptable actions were the shutting down of Moldovan-language, Latin-script schools and the forced takeover of the Bender railroad station. While considerable progress has since been made on the schools matter, neither of these issues has been completely resolved.

We praise the continuing efforts of the OSCE Mission to Moldova to reduce tensions and to resolve the crises brought about by these provocations. We also commend the Chairman-in-Office for hosting consultations between the parties and the mediators in Varna, Bulgaria earlier this month.

Progress on a settlement depends on the willingness of the Transnistrian leadership to cease actions that undermine the negotiation process, and equally on the determination of the Russian Federation and Ukraine to encourage constructive behavior from the Transnistrian authorities. The United States will continue to do its part in encouraging all of the parties to reach a stable and equitable negotiated solution.

At the same time, the United States could support additional international efforts that could provide impetus for the negotiation process.

In this context, we call on the mediators and other countries to support the efforts of Moldova to develop a strong statement of international support for Moldova's territorial integrity, security, stability and democratic development. We view Moldova's draft Stability and Security Declaration as a positive step through which the international community can establish guiding principles for settlement negotiations.

The United States also reiterates its support for an international border and customs monitoring operation along the Ukraine-Moldova border and we hope that the government of Ukraine will accept this proposal and allow monitors on its territory as a way to address continuing allegations of illegal smuggling of goods flowing into Ukrainian territory from Transnistria.

Mr. Chairman, five years have now passed since the OSCE Istanbul Summit at which the Russian Federation committed to withdraw its forces from Moldovan territory and we share Minister Stratan's disappointment over the lack of progress this year in fulfillment of these commitments.

Russia's Istanbul commitments never were conditioned on the conclusion of a political settlement, or on Moldova's signing some sort of gas debt relief agreement.

The time for excuses is long past. Once again we call on the Russian Federation to immediately resume and to quickly complete the withdrawal of its military forces from Moldovan territory.

Mr. Minister, thank you again for your visit to the Permanent Council. I can assure you that the United States remains fully committed to a free, democratic, and united Moldova. I wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you in Sofia.

Thank you very much.