



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to Prime Minister Noghaideli of Georgia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Connuck
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The United States warmly welcomes Prime Minister Noghaideli to the Permanent Council today and thanks him for making this opportunity to brief the Permanent Council on the Government of Georgia's plan for resolution of the South Ossetian conflict.

We commend Prime Minister Noghaideli for his commitment to reform in Georgia and for his work to foster a peaceful solution to the situation in South Ossetia.

The United States welcomes the Prime Minister's presentation of the plan for resolution of the South Ossetia conflict. The United States remains committed to a peaceful resolution, one that strengthens Georgia's territorial integrity, improves the lives of the people of the region, and contributes to greater stability and security in the South Caucasus. In the weeks and months ahead, we call on all sides to work toward this goal, which will be best for the people of Georgia and all the people in the region.

We note that the plan envisions internal, diplomatic, and operational strategies for moving forward. The naming of the Prime Minister to personally coordinate the plan underscores the importance Georgia attaches to its intention to resolve the conflict through a peaceful process. We welcome this and look forward to working with the Prime Minister and other officials he assigns to implement the plan.

We also welcome the numerous components of the plan that aims to build confidence between the sides and to improve the lives of the population. In particular, we note that Georgia intends to adopt a law on restitution for victims of the conflict, to intensify development of economic cooperation projects, to strengthen law and order through the Special Coordination Center, to create a free trade zone in the region, and to implement many others measures that will improve relations between the sides.

A number of these measures will require the cooperation and support of the existing Joint Control Commission and the OSCE field mission. We urge all elements of the JCC to work closely together for the success of these measures. In this regard, we note that the U.S. will provide financial support for a needs assessment study for economic projects in the region, and we hope other countries will also support such projects.

We are further encouraged by Georgia's intention to develop and intensify direct contacts with South Ossetia at all levels. We encourage the sides to begin meetings at a high level immediately, in order to achieve full acceptance of, and begin practical work on, implementation of the plan. Dialogue at lower and non-official levels will increase peaceful contacts and foster an atmosphere of trust between the sides.

Mr. Chairman, over the past year in New York, Strasbourg, and Batumi, Georgia has clearly set forth its peaceful intentions and outlined concepts for providing South Ossetia a high degree of autonomy within a unified Georgia. We have welcomed these proposals, and we believe the time has come to move forward together with the real work of conflict settlement. To reach a negotiated agreement on South Ossetia's status within Georgia, Georgia requests our support for a new international diplomatic framework including the OSCE, the EU, the U.S., and Russia. While we believe that the existing JCC mechanism has untapped potential to manage the cease-fire and to foster cooperation between the sides on the ground, we believe broader international support will contribute to the larger questions that must be addressed in a settlement of the conflict. We believe a new and larger framework is necessary, and we are prepared to participate. We urge other OSCE members to lend their support to this process.

Mr. Chairman, the unresolved conflict in South Ossetia undermines Georgia's territorial integrity, impedes development of a strong and prosperous Georgia, and poses a continuing threat to the stability of the greater South Caucasus region. All members of the OSCE support Georgia's territorial integrity and seek greater security and stability in the region. All members of the OSCE should join in supporting Georgia's peace plan.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States supports the OSCE's Training and Assistance Program for the Georgia Border Guards. We have listened to colleagues around this room speak out in favor of extending its mandate through June 2006, and we agree. We hope this Council will pass a decision extending the mandate as soon as possible.

Thank you.