



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Head of the EUMM, Ambassador Hansjörg Haber

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Joint FSC/PC Meeting
Vienna, February 11, 2009

Madam Chairwoman.

Ambassador Haber, Ambassador Salber, my delegation would like to thank you for coming to this joint session today and for your excellent reports.

The United States fully supports the EU monitoring mission in Georgia. These hardworking observers—together with our equally dedicated OSCE military monitoring officers—have played a key role in monitoring compliance with the August 12 and September 8 cease-fire agreements. The EU and the OSCE have closely coordinated their efforts on the ground, and we welcome their continued cooperation.

We also welcome the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding between the EU monitoring mission and the Georgian Ministry of Defense. The agreement is evidence of Georgia's continued commitment to reducing tensions in the region. We commend the Georgian government for its openness and transparency.

We remain convinced that the EU monitoring mission and the OSCE observers should play a more direct role in monitoring compliance with the August 12 and September 8 agreements through unfettered access to all of Georgia—including the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions of Georgia. In this respect, we would be interested to hear more about how, in your respective views, the OSCE and EUMM Observers could make an effective contribution to a possible Incident Monitoring Mechanism that has been discussed at the Geneva talks on Georgia. The frequent, serious security incidents along the lines of contact, such as the kidnapping earlier this week of a Georgian soccer referee in broad daylight on Georgia's main highway, clearly outside the administrative border of the South Ossetian region, underscore the critical importance of such a mechanism.

The United States also is deeply concerned by the detention for several hours of two OSCE monitors by South Ossetian militia on February 10. Our understanding is that they, too, were outside the administrative border of the South Ossetian region. The monitors are an integral part of international efforts to reduce tensions and promote conflict resolution. The United States reiterates its call on Russia fully to implement the terms of the cease fire August 8 and September 12 cease fire agreements and to facilitate the work of the OSCE and EU monitors. Russia remains responsible for the regions where its troops continue to be deployed, and it must assume responsibility for the actions of South Ossetian militia.

We note also that the OSCE monitors are military monitors, while the EU relies on civilian monitors. In that respect, we would be interested to hear from both Ambassador Haber and Ambassador Salber on the advantages and disadvantages of one approach over the other, and whether the Ambassadors think both approaches can be equally effective if the right type of recruitment takes place.

We remain convinced that now is the time for a more robust international presence, to help deter violence and humanitarian abuses and promote human rights, to ensure the safety and protection of civilians, to encourage dialogue and reconciliation, and to monitor the implementation of the August 12 and September 8 agreements. We believe Russia is not in compliance with its commitments under these agreements, and continue to urge Russia to implement those commitments fully, including the withdrawal of military forces to their pre-conflict positions and numbers, as well as to facilitate international monitors' access to the Abkhaz and South Ossetian regions of Georgia. The United States also regrets the Russian Federation's expressed intention to establish bases in the territory of Georgia as a clear violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and contrary to Moscow's cease fire commitments under the Saakashvili-Medvedev agreements.

Madam Chairwoman, we are convinced that the EU and the OSCE have a vital role to play in restoring stability and security in the region, and we trust that other delegations share this view. The United States will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and will help in all ways to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.