



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to Netherlands Foreign Minister Bot

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 14, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Foreign Minister Bot for taking the time to address us here today.

The United States appreciates the Netherlands' active engagement with the OSCE, both as an individual participating State and now as the EU presidency, to say nothing of its important contribution to the organization last year as Chairman in Office.

As Foreign Minister Bot noted, there are numerous areas where the OSCE and the EU can cooperate productively to enhance security and stability in the OSCE region. We very much share the view that terrorism, trafficking and tolerance are closely related and that they require a multi-dimensional, multi-lateral solution.

The OSCE is actively involved on all three issues and is becoming known as an effective player in the complicated effort to promote understanding between countries and cultures, to mitigate the conditions that can draw people into trafficking, and to enhance implementation of the international legal framework.

The United States is as concerned as any country about minimizing duplication, avoiding overlap, making the most of limited resources and finding a niche for OSCE activities. Still, in fighting the three Ts, to borrow FM Bot's term, we should be less concerned about a little overlap and more concerned about a gap.

This spring's flare up in Kosovo, and current mounting tensions in South Ossetia underscore the importance of intensifying cooperation to find solutions to outstanding regional problems.

Not only are these and other ongoing disputes real security and stability concerns, they are also standing in the way of economic development, itself an important contributor to stability. The longer states and regions are held back economically, the longer and more difficult it will be for them to make up the difference and to maximize the benefits of the integrated global economy. As economic disparities can underpin and exacerbate tension, it is doubly important to remove obstacles to business and economic development.

The United States shares the EU's willingness to engage in a constructive debate with all participating States on the functioning of the OSCE, and especially on the activities of its field presences, about which several of the CIS states have expressed their concern.

Still, we cannot accept the charge, as made in the CIS Declaration, that there is, "failure to observe such fundamental Helsinki principles as non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the sovereignty of States."

The Charter for European Security, adopted at the Istanbul Summit, states -- and here I quote -- "Participating States are accountable to their citizens and responsible to each other for their implementation of their OSCE commitments. We regard these commitments as our common achievement and therefore consider them to be matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States." End quote.

This language built upon the 1991 Moscow Document, which states, -- and here I quote again -- "The participating States emphasize that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order. They categorically and irrevocably declare that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned." End quote.

Concern expressed about states' practices that violate OSCE commitments is not, therefore, an example of meddling in internal affairs; it demonstrates, rather, the Charter for European Security, the Moscow Document, and the OSCE itself in action.

Mr. Chairman, a number of important elections will soon take place in OSCE participating States, some of which are also members of the CIS. The United States believes it is crucial that these elections be free and fair and that they fully meet OSCE standards. We are concerned that accusations that the OSCE is "meddling in internal affairs" are meant to weaken the OSCE's authority and, thus, to lessen its ability to perform its vital role in helping to ensure the integrity of these and other, future elections. The United States opposes such attempts to weaken the OSCE's authority and is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the Charter for European Security.

Finally, in closing, let me just say what an outstanding team the Netherlands has here in Vienna. Ambassador Everts, and before him Ambassador De Visser, along with all of their colleagues in the mission, and on the special task forces in the Hague, have been wonderful to work with, both last year during the Chairmanship and now with the Netherlands in the EU Presidency.

Thank you very much.