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United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Special Envoy of the Chairman-in-Office, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 20, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes you, Ambassador Talvitie, and commends your efforts – and those of EU Special Representative Morel and UN Special Representative Verbeke – to coordinate international discussions on security and stability arrangements in the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions of Georgia, in keeping with the August 12th and September 8th agreements.

The United States welcomes the constructive attitude adopted by all the participants at the November 19th Geneva talks, and hopes this process will foster practical cooperation to stabilize the situation in Georgia and reduce tensions.

We further hope these discussions will provide a means of peacefully resolving the separatist conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in a manner that respects and protects Georgia's territorial integrity. In the OSCE, we should focus our efforts in the immediate term on securing unfettered access to the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions for OSCE monitors; establishing and participating in an incident response mechanism to deal with prior and ongoing violence and abuses; and participating in a process to ensure the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons. We believe the OSCE continues to play a critical role in Georgia, and believe the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia should be renewed as quickly as possible. We hope these issues will be a focus of our discussions at the Helsinki Ministerial.

The United States will help in all ways to further peaceful conflict resolution. The United States will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We again call on Russia to implement in their entirety the commitments made in the six-point cease-fire agreement and its clarifying documents.

Ambassador Talvitie, thank you again for your report, for being here today and for all your hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.