



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Georgia

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 2, 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

First, with regards to the Geneva Discussions, the United States would like to commend the OSCE, EU, and UN coordination of the July 1 Geneva discussions on security and stability arrangements in Georgia.

In the immediate aftermath of these discussions, we would again urge the good-faith implementation of the incident prevention and response mechanisms agreed in February. We note with some encouragement the agreement by the Abkhaz delegation to the July 14 meeting of the mechanism in Gali. We nevertheless were disappointed in the South Ossetian delegation's decision not to participate in the meeting scheduled for June 23, and are disappointed that the delegation continues to place conditions on the implementation of the mechanism. We hope the delegation will put aside differences over procedural matters and engage constructively in discussions of pressing security concerns.

We note also the persistence of violent incidents along the administrative boundary lines, and once more urge all parties to allow for joint visits, together with international monitors, to the sites of these incidents. Recent explosions – one which targeted an EU Monitoring Mission patrol and killed a Georgian ambulance driver, and a second which damaged a high-voltage electricity line running between Georgia and Russia – demonstrate the need for enhanced security measures, and underscore the critical importance of uninhibited access for international monitors to the whole of Georgia, including its South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions, to help prevent violence and promote respect for human rights.

Mr. Chairman, the United States remains convinced that the international community should jointly lead efforts to restore security and stability in Georgia. We deeply regret Russia's refusal to renew the mandates of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and the UN Observer Mission in Georgia, and hold Russia solely responsible for the forced closure of these valuable missions.

We note that Russia recently submitted a proposal for the deployment of OSCE observers in the region. We have carefully reviewed this proposal, but like the overwhelming majority of OSCE participating States, we have concluded that the proposal is yet another attempt by Russia to insert status issues into our discussions. We had hoped our Russian partners would present new ideas and refrain from promoting a view of the region that no other participating State shares, but Russia's position remains unchanged; and we just heard that again today. The proposal offers no meaningful compromise, and is still far from neutral on the status of

the South Ossetia region of Georgia. We reiterate our support for the Chairmanship's status-neutral proposal which remains on the table.

The United States will continue to advocate an international presence throughout Georgia, including its Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We just heard a statement that Russia believes it is the only one that wishes to maintain a field presence of the OSCE in Georgia. George Orwell would be proud of this attempt to rewrite history, but I am afraid that I have to raise a few concerns with that statement, because, I remember very well who it was who objected to rolling over the mandate of the OSCE Mission last December. It was Russia; it was not the other members of the Permanent Council. I remember very well that it was Russia which has insisted that the new mandate for any OSCE presence in Georgia would have to specifically exclude regions of Georgia which all of the rest of the OSCE membership recognize as the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. I remember very well that it was Russia which demanded that any future mandate for a OSCE Mission in Georgia must exclude the idea of conflict prevention, and we heard today again the claim that somehow there is no conflict in Georgia, but it is clear and obvious that is not the case.

The United States will also continue to call for free and unhindered humanitarian access to the separatist regions, as provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 1866 last February and in the August 12 cease-fire agreement. We will also continue to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas, and to call for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is deeply concerned by the fact that Russia is moving even further away from honoring the provisions of the August 12 and September 8 agreements, under which Russia committed not only to provide free and unhindered humanitarian access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, but also to withdraw its troops to the positions and numbers held prior to the start of hostilities. Russia's decision to unilaterally characterize the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions as independent does not relieve Russia of these commitments. We also just heard, strangely, the statement with regard to non-use of force, that Russia does not threaten Georgia. I think our view would be that Russia occupies Georgia. We also would further remind Russia of its responsibility to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in those areas of Georgia under Russian occupation.

The message from almost all OSCE foreign ministers at last weekend's informal ministerial at Corfu was quite clear: we need a strengthened international role on the ground in Georgia, rather than no role at all. I believe it was one minister who colorfully stated that we hoped to push the reset button, not the delete button. As we begin to follow up, we will look for progress on efforts to effectively address and resolve the issues that continue to undermine security in the OSCE region. The United States remains committed to peaceful conflict resolution, and will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.