



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement on “Bilateral Agreements”
between the Russian Federation and the
Abkhazia Region of Georgia**

As delivered by Political Counselor Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 25, 2010

The United States strongly regrets the February 17 signing of so-called “bilateral agreements” between the Russian Federation and the Abkhazia region of Georgia. We are particularly concerned by an apparent agreement to allow the Russian Federation to build a military base in Gudauta. Furthermore, there are media reports of plans for further bases for Russian airborne troops and the Russian navy.

These actions clearly violate Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and contravene Russia’s commitments under the August 12 cease-fire agreement. They also undermine principles and commitments agreed by OSCE participating States and enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security, and other OSCE documents.

The United States remains committed to a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict. We have repeatedly called on Russia to honor the terms of its cease-fire agreement with Georgia, and we once again urge Russia to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities and to provide free access for humanitarian assistance to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. Russia’s decision to characterize these regions as independent – an action undertaken by no other OSCE participating State – does not relieve it of these commitments.

We reiterate our full support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We also reiterate our firm belief that the OSCE and other international actors can play a valuable role in resolving ongoing problems and providing critical monitoring of human rights and humanitarian conditions, and we once more urge the re-establishment of an OSCE presence in Georgia, along with continued efforts to make concrete progress on issues of concern through the Geneva discussions and the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. In this regard, we are particularly concerned that the South Ossetia IPRM has not been functioning for several months because of a boycott by the South Ossetian participants.

As we have said before, Mr. Chair, progress on the conflicts in Georgia would help build confidence, protect civilians, and represent a tangible contribution to improving European security. We sincerely hope to see positive steps forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.