



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Chairman-in-Office's Recent Visit to Moldova

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 8, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States has seen reports on the Chairman-in-Office's recent visit to Moldova.

Foreign Minister De Gucht's visit sends a strong message about the importance of Moldova to the OSCE, and about the need to make progress on the unresolved conflicts, too often referred to as "frozen."

We commend Foreign Minister De Gucht for his commitment to resolve the conflicts, and particularly now for his efforts to get the Transnistria conflict negotiations restarted. We join the Chair in calling on the Transnistrian representatives to resume without preconditions their participation in the Five-Plus-Two talks.

The Chairman-in-Office has also put forward some important initiatives aimed at building confidence in the region that we hope can pave the way to progress in the peace talks. We concur with the Chairman-in-Office's call for discussions on transforming the peacekeeping force into an internationally mandated operation.

While we acknowledge the important role the current peacekeeping arrangements have played in the past, we believe the current arrangement, put in place to end and stabilize the armed conflict, has, over the years, become more a means of perpetuating the current division than an instrument of resolving it. In this context, a transformed peacekeeping operation, with broader participation, an international mandate, and, just as importantly, Moldova's consent, could go far to improve the security situation and advance a resolution of the conflict.

We also agree with Foreign Minister De Gucht's statement that an independence referendum in Transnistria would have no legal basis. We would not recognize such a referendum.

We again commend Ukraine for maintaining implementation of the Customs Agreement with Moldova, and the EU for assisting in this effort through its Border Assistance Mission.

Mr. Chairman, we just completed the CFE review conference, which was dominated by questions of failure to live up to commitments made in Istanbul regarding the requirement for permission from the host government for the stationing of foreign troops.

We reiterate our view that a resumption in Russia's withdrawal of its military forces from Moldovan territory, in fulfillment of its Istanbul commitments, would be the most positive step toward resolution of the Transnistrian conflict.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.