



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Finnish Foreign Minister, Alexander Stubb

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Hugh Neighbour
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 10, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We join other delegations in welcoming Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb to the Permanent Council as our new Chairman-in-Office. The United States fully supports the objectives that Finland identified at the beginning of this year. We have the greatest respect and appreciation for the outstanding work of our Finnish colleagues here in Vienna. They have gotten off to a strong start, including conclusion of a difficult agreement on the OSCE budget for 2008.

We agree fully with Finland's emphasis on the need to implement existing OSCE commitments. We are particularly concerned that important human rights commitments at the heart of this Organization's identity and purpose are being ignored or, in many cases, actively challenged. The United States is unswerving in honoring its OSCE commitments, and has already issued an invitation to OSCE participating States, the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe the U.S. November 2008 Presidential and Congressional elections. We have invited ODIHR to conduct a Needs Assessment Mission at its convenience. It is imperative that the OSCE be able to observe before, during and after elections to assess that participating States' commitments that contribute to free and fair elections, including access to media and the right to peaceful assembly, are also upheld. In this regard, we hope that Finnish leadership of the special seminar and discussions on elections will focus first and foremost on fulfillment of existing commitments.

Mr. Minister, the protracted conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus are complex challenges that will benefit from your personal attention, especially now that there are some signs of movement. The United States welcomes the timely attention and fresh approaches that your government has brought this year to the conflicts. Recent events in Armenia and Georgia have reminded us that personal and high-level contacts can pay big dividends for the Chairman-in-Office in handling a crisis. We look forward to your visits to the regions as soon as possible.

We will also continue to look to you, Mr. Minister, to push ahead with one of the most important decisions taken at the Ministerial Council in Madrid, namely greater OSCE

engagement with Afghanistan. This is an issue that has a direct impact on security throughout the OSCE region. The United States believes that the OSCE is uniquely positioned to answer Afghanistan's call for assistance. The Secretary General and his team have prepared an excellent report on the current thinking by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community representatives who are on the ground in Afghanistan. We look forward to receiving specific proposals from the Secretariat on OSCE assistance. Several months have now passed since the Madrid decision. It is time we began to focus on concrete proposals for OSCE engagement; Finland's leadership on this issue will be essential.

The Organization's work in Central Asia, especially in the areas of policing, counter-narcotics, customs reform, and border security, is critical to improving the daily lives of Central Asians and the security of Europe. We look forward to your leadership in maintaining and strengthening the OSCE's work in this critical region across all three dimensions and will support your efforts to do so. We see your May trip to the region as an important component of this process.

The Russian "suspension" of the CFE Treaty is another area that must remain high on our Vienna agenda this year. The fate of the CFE Treaty concerns all the members of the OSCE. This landmark agreement transformed European security through its system of limits, information, and verification, replacing mutual suspicion with mutual confidence. In a NATO statement on March 28th and in Bucharest at the NATO Summit, NATO Allies reaffirmed our commitment to the CFE Treaty and our desire to work with Russia and other concerned CFE States on the basis of the parallel actions package to resolve issues that stand in the way of ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty by all 30 States Parties. We urge the Russian Federation to resume its implementation of CFE and to work cooperatively with us and other concerned CFE States Parties, so that together we can achieve our common objective of resolving the current impasse and preserving the long-term viability of the CFE regime.

Mr. Minister, these are ambitious and sometimes daunting issues that can only be addressed through the creative energy and dedication of all of us represented here at this table. I assure you that my country will do everything it can to support you as you move forward with your ambitious agenda. We wish you and your mission all the best.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.