



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Russian Troops in Georgia

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman.

We note our deep dismay at Russia's unilateral decision over the last weekend to send railroad construction troops into the Georgian region of Abkhazia outside the peacekeeping zone without consultation with or the consent of the Georgian Government. These troops have no peacekeeping mandate.

This additional deployment does not appear to have any plausible legal basis. It is not taking place in the context of the CIS peacekeeping mission, and it is against the expressed wishes of the Georgian government. It contributes to instability in what is already a volatile area. This deployment is clearly in contravention of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, which all OSCE participating States strongly support, including in ministerial-level declarations such as at Ljubljana. These forces, as well as the additional airborne troops and artillery, should be withdrawn, and both Russia and Georgia should engage quickly in a high-level and open dialogue to de-escalate tensions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.