



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by the OSCE Secretary General on the Wallnerstrasse Premises

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna, June 21, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Secretary General for your report.

We very much commend the Department of Management and Finance for their very hard work in making the arrangements for the move of the Secretariat and the Representative of the Freedom of the Media. Given a difficult task, we certainly believe they have performed admirably.

We continue to have concerns about the proposed move, and how the issue has developed since the decision was made in Porto in 2002. The Porto decision gives the Permanent Council the right to approve the conditions under which the OSCE accepts occupancy of the building. We should take advantage of that right to make sure the organization gets good value for its money. We understood previously that the move would be cost-neutral for the OSCE, not that it would entail significant additional funding requirements.

We have heard the argument that the Wallnerstrasse property is a "nice" building, with the inference that we should be willing to pay more because it is nice. However, the OSCE should not be penalized for the fact that the host country is giving us a building more luxurious than our Organization requires.

Specifically, we refer to the requirements the draft user agreement would impose upon the organization as a result of the building being under historical preservation provisions. We believe that any costs associated with special treatment of the building due to historical preservation should be borne by the host country.

We also believe that, in accordance with the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the host country is responsible for "the necessary security arrangements, including those for meetings held at the seat of the institution." Access control is a sad but unavoidable element of security in the 21st century -- meetings cannot be held anywhere without it. The fact that the United Nations in Vienna has its own security force, and therefore does not need to avail itself of the host country's security services, does not release the host country from its security responsibilities to the OSCE.

We encourage the Secretariat to continue its negotiations with the host country, keeping the above points in mind. And we encourage the host country to give serious consideration to mirroring the arrangements provided by other host countries to OSCE institutions. If it becomes financially impossible for the organization to accept Austria's offer of a supposedly "free of charge" headquarters building, the organization should consider other options.

The United States cannot agree to the signing of the document as requested by the Secretary General by June 30th.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.