



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on South Ossetia and other issues relating to Georgia and the Russian Federation

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 12, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is concerned about continuing tensions in South Ossetia. We are encouraged by recent efforts of the OSCE Mission in Georgia and the flexibility of the Georgian side in carrying out inspections of the entire Georgian-controlled portion of the pipelines that supply water to inhabitants of the region. We hope that the South Ossetian de facto authorities will show similar flexibility now.

We believe that Dimitri Sanakoyev should not be viewed as a so-called "problem" as our Russian colleagues assert. The Georgian Government has delegated authority to him and we hope he will be able to use that authority to work effectively to change the unacceptable status quo on the ground in Georgia's South Ossetia region. As we stated here on May 17th, the United States welcomes the vision of peace and reconciliation that Mr. Sanakoyev espoused when he addressed the Georgian parliament in May.

The United States was encouraged that on July 2nd, the Steering Committee meeting for the OSCE economic rehabilitation projects agreed to move forward on a number of projects, such as the construction of schools, a clinic and water-related projects. We call on our fellow donors to make their contributions available as quickly as possible to ensure further progress. We continue to urge the Georgian Government to fulfill its pledge to match donors' pledges.

We note the Russian suggestion on increasing the number of peacekeepers. We question whether the introduction of 900 more armed men would reduce tensions. The United States continues to advocate strongly an increase in the number of OSCE monitors in South Ossetia and calls on the Russian Federation to give its approval as soon as possible.

Regarding an agreement on non-use of force, we note that the Georgian side has frequently stated its peaceful intentions on resolution of the conflict and has proposed a memorandum of understanding that specifically provides for this. We urge all sides to move forward with discussions on the basis of this Memorandum.

Mr. Chairman, on another matter which relates both to Georgia and the Russian Federation, we note that on June 27th, Russia officially handed over the Akhalkalaki military base to Georgia, several days ahead of schedule. We applaud this major step and

hope that it leads to further progress toward fulfillment of remaining commitments undertaken in Istanbul in 1999.

We understand that the Russian withdrawal from the Batumi military base also continues ahead of schedule and applaud this positive development as well. The target date for this base to be transferred to Georgian authorities is October 1st, 2008. We look forward to the completion of this step.

The Gudauta military base, in Georgia's Abkhazia region, remains an unresolved issue. We urge the Russian Federation and Georgia to begin a dialogue that would lead to an agreement that fulfills the requirements related to the Gudauta base of the Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and Georgia that was signed in Istanbul at the 1999 OSCE Summit and incorporated as Annex 14 of the CFE Final Act.

The OSCE could play a role in facilitating such an agreement. For example, the OSCE could provide its good offices to an international inspection of the Gudauta facility. A number of OSCE states have indicated their willingness to participate in such a visit, the results of which could serve as the basis for a dialogue between Russia and Georgia on the status of the base.

The United States attaches great importance to the CFE Treaty, and we look forward to the entry into force of the Adapted CFE treaty. We look forward to working with other delegations to promote agreement concerning the Gudauta military base and also on other creative ways to make progress on withdrawal of Russian ammunition and Russian military forces from Moldova, such as internationalization of the peacekeeping force there. Such steps will facilitate the earliest possible process of ratification by Allies of the Adapted CFE treaty.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.