



United States Mission to the OSCE

Looking Ahead to the OSCE Ministerial

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 14, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In our view, the OSCE is an essential component of European security architecture. The United States particularly values its role in promoting democratic institutions, conflict resolution, promotion and protection of human rights, and crisis intervention. The OSCE foundational documents, including the Helsinki Final Act, lay out a comprehensive set of political, security and human rights commitments. The commitments at the heart of the OSCE played an important part in the advance of freedom, security and prosperity across the European continent in recent decades.

This year's Ministerial occurs during a critical time for the OSCE, and we congratulate the Finnish chairmanship on the path-breaking efforts it has made to deal with crisis after crisis in the region.

Some participating States are questioning the commitments at the core of the Helsinki Final Act. One participating State has invaded another, and has unilaterally recognized two breakaway regions in an attempt to change the internationally-accepted borders of an OSCE participating state through use of force. How this is handled will be a major test for the OSCE as a crisis management organization. Let us be clear: the United States will not make any compromises on the principle of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity. With respect to the OSCE Mission to Georgia, we call on the Chairmanship to consider carefully options for action when consensus is blocked by a single participating State.

At the Helsinki Ministerial we will need to address a range of priorities. The Ministerial merits focus on the importance of the OSCE's role in promoting human rights and the frequent failure by many to live up to these commitments. We could rightly focus on steps to address regional conflicts and the need for a return to full implementation of the CFE Treaty by all thirty States Parties, including Russia. And we ought to reaffirm our support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We would welcome a political declaration that forcefully addresses these core issues. If that cannot be agreed, then a serious, candid discussion of these issues among senior officials could be our goal for the Ministerial. We cannot simply paper over issues of such high significance. Real progress needs to be recorded. But real differences cannot be ignored.

We strongly support the decision celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and note the importance of the "Helsinki to Helsinki" theme as a reaffirmation of the key role of the OSCE's Human Dimension, including the OSCE's role as the leading standard in election monitoring, and with respect to the protection of human rights and development of democracy. Thus, we support the draft decisions on Roma and Sinti, Tolerance, combating trafficking in human beings and Rule of Law.

In the first dimension, the United States supports the full agenda with CFE, the Vienna Document, and Open Skies as significant examples of our common work. The OSCE also has

engaged in useful work on military cooperation outside the realm of traditional arms control. But work in this dimension is seriously undermined by the current status of the CFE treaty, a cornerstone of European security. Moving to the adapted Treaty, which is our goal, is dependent upon all parties fulfilling their existing commitments. Russia's military action in Georgia and its intention to station military forces in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have further complicated fulfillment of commitments made at Istanbul in 1999. We urge Russia to resume implementation of CFE and work toward entry into force of the adapted Treaty on the basis of the generous proposals already put forth by the NATO allies.

At last year's Madrid Ministerial, participating States adopted a major decision to enhance OSCE engagement with Afghanistan. While we are pleased that some projects related to border security and the fight against drug trafficking will be underway before the end of the year, we are deeply disappointed that two projects that meet Afghanistan's own request for in-country border technical assistance and training were not adopted. It remains our hope that we can work to provide this assistance to Afghanistan in the near future.

The firm support of the United States for the adoption of the legal convention so ably negotiated by the Netherlands' Ambassador should by now be well known. It is unwavering.

The United States believes the OSCE must better concentrate its economic and environmental dimension efforts on those areas where the OSCE has value added.

Security is fundamentally based on shared values and principles, including respect for human rights, territorial integrity, and the right of sovereign states to determine their own security arrangements. These are the values that are enshrined in the remarkable documents applied to the Eurasian region and at the heart of the OSCE—the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security and the CFE Treaty. The strength of the OSCE derives from respect for these values and fulfillment of commitments by each and every participating state.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.