

## United States Mission to the OSCE



### **Session 2: Enhancing the role and further strengthening capabilities of the OSCE executive structures, Part 2: Lessons learned from field activities**

As delivered by Carol Fuller, Deputy Chief of Mission  
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Thank you Mr. Moderator.

The deployment of the first OSCE field operations in 1992 represented a qualitative change in the CSCE process which we sometimes fail to fully appreciate. The field operations have made, and will continue to make, a unique contribution to strengthening our common security and long-term stability.

The United States highly values the work of the field operations and believes that these missions are one of the most important aspects of the OSCE's work. Field operations provide vital support to civil societies and governments alike in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in countering threats to long-term security and stability. They are there to help countries meet their OSCE commitments and to address specific challenging situations, and they have achieved significant improvements, including in troubled environments.

In order to function successfully, however, the field missions need adequate resources and strong political backing from OSCE leaders and participating States. Moreover, in selection of Heads of Mission and Deputy Heads of Mission, participating States need to recognize, and insist, on the importance of these OSCE representatives having strong management and leadership skills, not just political knowledge or diplomatic experience. Without good management, our field missions cannot function well and accomplish their mandates. When participating States fail to fully support field operations in one or more of these areas—resources, political backing, and good choices for our top leaders at the Field Missions--the organization and the host country's citizens suffer.

Nowhere is this impact on the citizenry clearer than in Georgia, where the OSCE field operation was closed despite the overwhelming support of the host country and the vast majority of other participating States. It is unacceptable that the OSCE, which has a mandate to promote security and long-term stability, does not have a fixed presence on the ground in Georgia.

Mr. Moderator,

The United States believes that there are two important lessons to be drawn from the experience of our field operations over the past eleven years.

First, field operations have a critical role to play in early warning and conflict prevention. As Pascal Hayman himself said, they are the eyes and ears of the OSCE on the ground, and are best placed not only to detect early signs of tension, but to take initial steps within their mandate to assist the host State avert conflict. The field operations must interpret their mandates in the light of the OSCE's core tasks and we, the participating States, must support them in this.

Mediation, not at the high political level, but at the grassroots level, would be one way to take advantage of the expertise and contacts of the field operations' staff to resolve localized problems before they develop into more intractable crises. Field operations may already be practicing mediation on an ad-hoc basis, but we would recommend that this become a recognized "task," to which resources are devoted.

Track II diplomacy, which we've discussed extensively in the Corfu Process, which promotes comprehensive dialogue and exchanges at the local, national and international level between and among civil societies, is a hitherto neglected topic within the OSCE, despite the fact that it fits in quite well with the OSCE's comprehensive security approach. Conflict resolution is a process, not an event. It therefore needs long-term support from a variety of sources to ensure that positive momentum is built up and maintained. Active promotion by the field operations of civil society dialogue, exchanges, and grassroots reconciliation across conflict divides would offer a means to enhance the OSCE's vital work in the field of conflict resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation, and democratic institution-building.

The second lesson to be drawn is that there is a whole range of threats and challenges, including border security and border management, environmental degradation, and minority issues, a whole range that requires a broad, regional approach to be fully successful. Many of the field operations have recognized this fact and are undertaking more regional projects and events. The regional

approach, however, is something to which the participating States have not devoted enough attention, resources, or political support.

In conclusion, the United States has several recommendations:

- First, that the participating States agree, by the time of the Astana Summit, to restore a meaningful, status-neutral OSCE presence in Georgia;
- Second, that we renew our support for international efforts to stabilize the security situation on the ground in Georgia and address humanitarian concerns, consistent with the cease-fire agreement and arrangements, including through the re-establishment of international access to the separatist regions of Georgia;
- Third, that field operations devote more explicit attention to grassroots mediation and promotion of track II activities; and
- Fourth, that participating States support regional engagement of field operations.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.