



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Ambassador Peter Semneby

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 10, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to today's meeting, Ambassador Semneby. As you conclude your five years of service, the United States thanks you for your hard work and dedication in addressing a broad range of humanitarian, democracy, and security issues in the Caucasus.

The United States continues to support your efforts in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to advance political and economic reforms, in particular in the fields of democratization, rule of law, human rights, and good governance. We support the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative as it seeks to promote democracy, stability, and prosperity in the region, where continued integration into European institutions will yield long-term benefits. Full implementation of human dimension commitments is important, both for addressing the democratic aspirations of the people in the region and for strengthening regional security.

With regard to regional security, we appreciate your work in support of EU efforts to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia. Despite lacking access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions, the EU Monitoring Mission has been invaluable in monitoring the implementation of the August 2008 cease-fire agreement. We strongly support a continued EUMM presence in Georgia, as it contributes to international efforts to advance security and stability in the region.

The EU has also played a valuable role, with the OSCE and the UN, in facilitating the Geneva Discussions, aimed at facilitating concrete improvements in the security and humanitarian situations in Georgia. We continue to urge participants to engage constructively and regularly in talks and to fully utilize the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms for the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. The IPRMs provide a forum for direct communication to address issues that affect the day-to-day lives of communities on the ground.

We take this opportunity to once again call for the resumption of meaningful international monitoring presences in the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Transparency is critical. Without it, the international community cannot assess reports of weapons deployments and militarization of the regions. Neither can it effectively address humanitarian and human rights concerns on the ground.

We also call once again for the full implementation of the August 2008 cease-fire agreement and its implementation measures, agreed by Presidents Medvedev and Saakashvili. The United States welcomed Georgia's November 23, 2010, unilateral declaration of non-use of force.

To best ensure security and stability in Georgia and the region, we call on other parties to the conflict, including Russia, to reciprocate.

Like the EU, we remain fully committed to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we will continue working to find a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The United States also values your work, Ambassador Semneby, in support of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' efforts to mediate a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We believe strongly that resolution of this issue is essential for long-term stability and prosperity in the Caucasus region, and we will continue to work with Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Minsk Group framework to continue making progress in the negotiations.

Peacefully resolving these outstanding conflicts remains one of the most critical challenges facing the OSCE. Disagreements among participating States over the treatment of the conflicts prevented adoption of the draft Astana Action Plan. In order to strengthen our common security, we must redouble our efforts to resolve these disagreements and find a lasting solution to the conflicts.

Ambassador Semneby, we wish you all the best in your future work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.