

2 June 2011

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Recent Protests in Georgia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 2, 2011

The United States deeply regrets the loss of life and the injuries to others on May 26, after demonstrators in Tbilisi chose not to end or relocate their protest after their permit expired at midnight on May 25. We are concerned about reports of excessive use of force against some protesters and journalists. At the same time, we are concerned by indications that elements within the protesting groups appeared more interested in a violent confrontation than in a peaceful demonstration.

We have noted our support for peaceful and lawful freedom of expression and assembly as key components of a vibrant democracy. It is important that all concerned respect the rule of law. We hope this principle will be the hallmark of how the Georgian authorities deal with those involved in the May 26 confrontation. We urge the full and transparent investigation of reports of excessive use of force and allegations of mistreatment of some protestors who were detained.

We also urge all sides to engage in meaningful dialogue and to work together constructively to advance and strengthen Georgia's ongoing democratic reforms, particularly on electoral code reform leading up to the 2012 and 2013 elections.

Thank you, Chair.