



## United States Mission to the OSCE Regarding the Visit of OSCE Ambassadors to Georgia

Delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes to the  
Permanent Council, Vienna  
April 10, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to join the Greek Ambassador, speaking on behalf of our European Union colleagues, in thanking the Georgian government for its gracious hospitality during the visit to Georgia in which many of us participated two weeks ago. I am equally grateful for the efforts made by Ambassador Burduli and his staff here in Vienna, by the OSCE Mission in Georgia under the leadership of Ambassador Lacombe, including the Border Monitoring Operation led by General Rietfeld, and by Ambassador Tagliavini and her UN staff in Georgia.

As I have shared with many of you around this table before, I believe that a first-hand visit is the best and only way to fully understand the situation and circumstance that the OSCE faces in the various participating States where we maintain our field presences and once again, hope our colleagues will visit the OSCE missions elsewhere, such as in Serbia and Montenegro, and Kosovo, and I will do with Moldova next week.

Our discussion with President Shevardnadze was indeed remarkable, and I believe I speak for all of the participants when I thank him in return for devoting so much of his own time to meet with us.

Mr. Chairman, the United States fully supports the efforts of the OSCE and other mediators to find a resolution to the conflict in South Ossetia. I agree with my colleagues that there may be room for optimism in the Baden process, renewed and revitalized most recently during the meetings in Castelo Branco. The United States urges the parties and mediators involved to capitalize on this momentum and continue their search for a mutually acceptable, comprehensive political settlement that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

With reference to Abkhazia, the United States, as a member of the Friends of the Secretary General, maintains its commitment to the Geneva process, including the recommendations put forward in Geneva on February 19-20, 2003. We stand fully behind the efforts of Ambassador, Tagliavini and her predecessors, including our colleagues here, Ambassadors Boden and Bota; to mediate between the parties on

the basis of the document "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi."

We are pleased that the constructive dialogue between Presidents Putin and Shevardnadze continues, most recently during their meeting in Sochi. We urge both governments to do everything in their power to reflect and reinforce the goodwill shown by their leaders.

Mr. Chairman, as we have made clear on numerous occasions, the United States supports strongly the ongoing activities of the Border Monitoring Operation in Georgia, including the current expansion to include the Dagestan sector and the upcoming enhancement program. During our visit to the BMO Patrol Bases, I was very pleased to meet with American and other monitors and hear their personal views on the situation along the border and on the operation as a whole. These hardy, committed people in the field, from some 30 participating States, represent the best that the OSCE has to offer, and they all deserve our praise and thanks.

Finally, I join my Greek colleague in urging the Georgian authorities to take all possible measures to ensure that the October 2003 parliamentary elections meet OSCE electoral standards. The United States views democracy as integral to national security. The parliamentary elections present an opportunity to move forward on democratization and enhance stability. Among the immediate needs, we believe it essential that the Government of Georgia promptly establish fair, independent and transparent election administration procedures and prepare accurate voter registers.

In closing, I would like to thank once again all those who played a part in organizing our trip to Georgia, and thank my colleagues for their camaraderie and fellowship during the visit.

Thank you.