



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Situation in Georgia

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 25, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is encouraged by the agreement reached last Thursday between Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Ajaran leader Aslan Abashidze.

The agreement ended the tense situation that had arisen, and will allow Georgia to hold parliamentary elections throughout the country, including Ajara, this Sunday.

In addition to allowing democratic elections, Mr. Abashidze also agreed to the disarming of police auxiliary units, to the opening of a representative office of the central government in Batumi, and to the placement of central government customs authorities at the port of Batumi.

I would note, specifically, that Mr. Abashidze has agreed to meet international standards for Sunday's election.

We thus call on both the Georgian government and the Ajaran provincial authorities to ensure that this election is indeed fully free and fair, and to allow OSCE and domestic observers safe and unhindered access to polling places and tallying centers.

We look forward to seeing democracy in action this Sunday, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you.