



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Situation in Georgia**

August 11, 2006

The United States is concerned about renewed tensions in the conflict regions of Georgia. We call on all parties to continue showing restraint while refraining from words or actions that could worsen the situation on the ground.

The Government of Georgia recently conducted a police action in the Kodori Valley, in Georgia's Abkhazia region. The stated aim of the operation was to reestablish civilian control in order to restore the rule of law and provide humanitarian support and social services to the local population. The Georgian police action helped to eliminate a source of criminality and instability in Georgia's Abkhazia region. Enforcing rule of law is critical to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and is both a sovereign right and an obligation of the Georgian Government.

We welcome the confidence building measures undertaken by the Government of Georgia during the police action in the Kodori Valley, which included maintaining close contact with the Abkhaz de facto authorities, renouncing the further use of force, and beginning an orderly withdrawal of forces. We call on the Government of Georgia and the Abkhaz de facto authorities to abide by the 1994 ceasefire agreement and all relevant agreements pertaining to Georgia's Abkhazia region. The United States supports demilitarizing the Kodori Valley. While we commend the Abkhaz de facto authorities for their initial restraint during the police action, their recent threats to use force, the cut off of the Kavkazioni power line to Enguri, and the verbal encouragement of so-called volunteers from outside Georgia's Abkhazia region are heightening tensions. We urge the two parties to return promptly to the Coordination Council to resume discussions of a peaceful end to the conflict.

Press reports indicate that Russian officers as well as private volunteers from the North Caucasus have entered Georgia's Abkhazia region. The 1994 cease-fire agreement also requires that all volunteer formations from beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia be disbanded and withdrawn. These reports combined with continued lawlessness throughout the conflict zone underscore the immediate need for an international civilian police force in Georgia's Abkhazia region. The United States has advocated this measure for some time.

The United States condemns the shooting and wounding of three Georgian policemen, two of them seriously, at a checkpoint near Avnevi on August 7th by bandits operating in Georgia's South Ossetia region. Moreover, the United States is very concerned by reports that OSCE monitors have discovered South Ossetian trenches dug near the village of Tbeti. These incidents underscore the need for international monitoring of the Roki Tunnel, a permanent checkpoint at Didi Gupta, and an increase in the number of OSCE monitors in Georgia's South Ossetia region, with adequate protections for these monitors. As a neutral party, OSCE monitors can help reduce tensions on all sides by reporting on violations throughout South Ossetia and verifying developments on the ground.

The United States renews its call for meaningful progress on the Peace Plan endorsed by the OSCE Ministerial Council for Georgia's South Ossetia region, and the Georgian roadmap for peace in Georgia's Abkhazia region. The United States reaffirms its support for Georgia's territorial integrity and the peaceful resolution of both conflicts within Georgia's internationally recognized borders.