

## **Excerpts from Press Briefing at the OSCE Informal Ministerial Meeting**

**James Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State, with Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyanni**

**CORFU, GREECE, June 28, 2009**

D/S STEINBERG: Thank you very much Dora. It's a pleasure to be here, and Secretary Clinton obviously regrets and I can understand why she's not here in this wonderful place, but her loss is my gain and I'm delighted to be back in Greece. This is my second visit since the beginning of the Obama Administration – and it's just a reflection of just one piece of what is an increasingly deepening relationship between our two countries. You were good enough to come visit us very early on, back in February and met with the Secretary. The President met with Prime Minister Karamanlis in Strasbourg back in April. Your Defense Minister met with Secretary Gates, and so it really reflects the deep and ongoing relationship that we have, and I know the Secretary will look forward to seeing you again soon. She sends her best wishes to all here. [...]

We are particularly grateful for your leadership as the Chairman in Office of the OSCE. This has been a challenging time but an important time for the OSCE, and you have done just a magnificent job of both showing creativity but commitment to the important principles of the OSCE to both sustain the core principles and maintain continuity with those commitments while trying to help us adapt to the new challenges of our time. The Corfu process is one that I think that we all see tremendous value in. We had some good exchanges. We don't agree on everything, but we've all agreed that that very fact is an important part of why we need a forum like the OSCE to address these questions where everyone can be present and the issues of the Euro Atlantic space can be discussed across all its dimensions with all of our parties. We're particularly grateful for your determined efforts to try to sustain the OSCE mission in Georgia. *We* regret that it has come to an end and that we could not find the basis to move this forward. We hope our Russian colleagues will see that this as an important opportunity for us to work together to deal with this and not allow this conflict to be continued indefinitely.

The discussions that we've already began with that lovely dinner last night at that wonderful Achileon Palace really show that we have a broad range of things that we need to work on together ranging from dealing with terrorism and extremism to non proliferation, piracy, counter narcotics, and practical issues that can allow us to build a stronger European security and prosperity for all our citizens. We've also had the chance to discuss our important bilateral cooperation and the ways that we can work together to bring peace and stability to the Balkans, and we appreciate your leadership there, how we can support the efforts to achieve an agreement on Cyprus, which we both, I think, attach a great deal of importance to and also to deal with challenges like bringing energy security to Europe, where we all have an interest in diversifying sources of supply. We've had a chance to discuss concerns about illegal immigration here in Greece. We understand the concerns that people here face, and we want to work with you because it's in our common interest to find an orderly way to address this problem that affects us all. Finally, these agreements that we've reached today are helping pave the way for a very important milestone in our relationship, which is the completion of the Visa Waiver Program. We have a little bit more work to do, but I am very encouraged by the progress that we've made and it's our expectation that before the year is out that we'll be able to complete that, which has a very tangible benefit for our citizens.

So thank you once again for your gracious hospitality. It's a pleasure to be here and I hope we'll have many more opportunities.

***Question: first of all on the international level, what does the Corfu process bring into the equation as opposed to the NATO-Russia Council. How important can it be, and if yes, how much so? And secondly,***

*you mentioned energy. Greece has a certain relationship on the energy level with Russia. Does this bother the U.S., or is it part of a free country going ahead with its economic, you know, investments?*

**Deputy Secretary:** First on the Corfu process, as I mentioned, one of the great strengths of OSCE is its inclusiveness. It involves all the countries of the Euro-Atlantic region and it really represents the opportunity to fulfill the vision of a Europe whole and free, which has animated us both during the cold war and now with the opportunities at the end of it. NATO plays a particularly important role in the security of its members. It has a very distinctive function and one that we think that remains very valuable, in the current context, not only in protecting the security of our member countries within the NATO territories but also dealing with the challenges outside NATO that affect us coming in. Our mission in Afghanistan, for which I am really grateful for Greece for its support and very active role there, is a reflection of the importance of that. We want to make sure that, as we've said from the early 1990s, that NATO's evolution is not adverse to Russia, and the NATO-Russia Council is a way for us to demonstrate that Russia is not our adversary and that we have a way in which we can discuss together the 29 common interests that involve both NATO and Russia.

But OSCE represents a very distinctive place that not only deals with security issues but the full three pillars of economics and the human dimension. I think our discussions have highlighted, both tonight and I am sure again today, the inter-relationship between these three dimensions, that we cannot have security without economic opportunity, or the chance for people to express themselves and have their full political rights and opportunities. And that, I think is a unique function of the OSCE. It has played a great role in bringing transparency and supporting democratic development within its space. And so we see quite an important role to go forward. And having this opportunity to have informal discussions about its future, I think, is a very valuable one to maintain its vitality and to make sure the instruments, the tool box that OSCE represents is fully utilized by its membership.

On energy, we welcome a very diverse source of relationships within the producing and consuming countries. Russia is an important element of that and we know it's important to their economy and we welcome Russia's deep integration. Indeed, one of the things we would like to see is to see Russia a more part of the integrated space, reflecting broad principles of how we interact, and predictability and transparency in energy. We also think it's important to have a diversity of supply and diversity of supply routes. One of the things we've been discussing here with our colleagues in Greece is how we can make sure that we are not overly depending on any one source. It's good for competition, it's good for security and I think it helps built a more stable region to know that there are multiple opportunities, and I think that's a sentiment that is shared here, and we look forward to continuing those discussions. [...]

*Question: [...] Mrs. Bakoyanni, Minister, about the OSCE mission in Georgia, I mean, this mandate expires in a couple of days. Is there any hope for a very last minute deal or do you have any hope for a deal maybe in the coming weeks for this mission to go back to Georgia?*

**Minister Bakoyanni:** Well, as you know the mission in Georgia is technically closed from the first of January. We, as the Greek chair, were quite active the first five months trying to get an agreement of all 56 participant countries of keeping the mission there with status neutral character. We didn't manage to get this agreement. There is a stop in the negotiations but the Greek proposal is on the table. In case we feel that we might be closer to some kind of an agreement, we will restart the discussions. For the moment there is nothing new to report.

**Spokesperson:** Thank you very much.

End Transcript.