United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Peter Semneby, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 8, 2010

It is a pleasure to welcome Ambassador Semneby to today's meeting. We appreciate his valuable work in the South Caucasus and thank him for his informative report.

Mr. Ambassador, the United States supports your continued efforts in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to advance political and economic reforms, in particular in the fields of democratization, rule of law, human rights, and good governance. We especially appreciate your efforts to promote a culture of dialogue. We hope the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative will contribute to democratization, stability, and prosperity in the region, whose continued integration into European institutions will yield long-term benefits.

We also particularly appreciate your work in support of EU efforts to resolve the conflict in Georgia. The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia has been invaluable in monitoring the implementation of the August 2008 cease-fire agreement and continues to contribute to efforts to stabilize the situation.

The EU has also played a valuable role, with the OSCE and the UN, in facilitating the Geneva Discussions, which have the potential to serve as an important forum for improving the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia.

As we work to resolve the conflict in Georgia, we will continue to urge the re-establishment of an appropriate OSCE presence throughout the country. We remain convinced that the OSCE and other international actors can help resolve problems and provide critical monitoring of human rights and humanitarian conditions. Our support for Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders is unyielding and we appreciate your support for the OSCE to be involved as well.

We also greatly appreciate your role in supporting EU efforts to advance the democratic reform agenda in the region. We share a common view that democracy and the rule of law need to be furthered and consolidated in the countries of the region. We agree that freedom of the media and freedom of expression remain important concerns in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Like our European partners, we will be watching closely the preparations for parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan in November, while in Georgia, we will continue to urge the government to apply lessons learned from the May 2010 municipal elections.

The United States also appreciates your continued support of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs' efforts to mediate a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We believe strongly that resolution of this issue is essential for long-term stability and prosperity in the Caucasus region, and we will continue to urge both Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a way forward in these negotiations.

We thank you again, Ambassador Semneby, for your valuable contributions to peace and security in the Caucasus and for your comprehensive report today. We wish you all the best in your future work.

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