

**Press Conference of Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried,
OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, Helsinki, Finland**

December 5, 2008, 11:00 AM, OSCE Media Center

Mr. Fried: Thank you for the opportunity. I am at a disadvantage because I'm giving these remarks not knowing what the fate will be of the political declaration, which is now being negotiated. So that puts you at an advantage and me at a considerable disadvantage but I will do my best.

First of all I'd like to give full thanks and appreciation -- and I do mean it -- to Alexander Stubb, the Finnish Foreign Minister who has done, and is doing, a superb job attempting to achieve a political declaration and attempting to revive and invigorate a Spirit of Helsinki. He has done a magnificent job. We have never been closer to a political declaration since 2002, and so, full credit to him. I don't know whether we will get a political declaration.

There is substantial agreement, most delegations; all delegations have, well, most delegations, have given a great deal to achieve a good compromise text. There are a few delegations, one in particular, which have not yet joined us in this spirit. Now Minister Stubb as the CIO is doing his best. So, I don't know what will happen. The current draft text is an imperfect document, as everyone recognizes. It is not a perfect document from an American point of view. But we have worked with our key European colleagues in a spirit of compromise. That compromise cannot go on forever; there are some basic issues that we will insist on.

But, as I said, the Chairman in Office has done and is doing a magnificent job. There are some themes that have been prominent at this meeting which I want to touch on. One of them is the proposal that originated with President Medvedev for securing a new security treaty in Europe. This proposal was discussed at the lunch by ministers yesterday and it was one of the most interesting and focused discussions at a Ministerial in some time. It's hard to believe that such a focused and interesting discussion could be held with so many people in the room, but it was an interesting discussion and there is, I think, a general sense that there is need for a discussion of some of the problems in European security. But, a strong sense in the room was that the current institutions--- NATO, the EU, the OSCE itself---have worked well, and there is hardly a need to replace them or supplement them with some new over-arching structure. But, there is a need for countries to respect their own commitments and do what they need to do. There was a strong sense in the room that there needs to be discussion, that there was very little support for rapid or ill-prepared meeting at the summit level. There was good support for continued discussions, open-ended discussions starting at a lower level but working their way up as the substance justifies it.

There was also a sense that security is not simply military and political security but security must be comprehensive. And it is a hallmark of the OSCE founded on the basis of the

Helsinki Accords, the Final Act, that security between states ultimately rests on respect for values within states. And there is no such thing as internal affairs of states without regard to basic principles. And that is not a new concept. That is a concept from the Helsinki Final Act in the mid-1970s---a remarkable document, which is cited more often than it is read, but actually makes for very good reading if you pick it up. So there was a consensus yesterday that we need to talk about these issues and I think that the direction of further work will follow some of the principles that Ministers laid out. That said, it's not for the United States to judge, it's simply our position, and the position of many other countries, that the institutions work well, that our common principles need to be respected and we need to remember that security involves values as well as traditional measures of security. So this conference is going on. It has been a fascinating experience; it has been well chaired by Minister Stubb. There is a high degree of trans-Atlantic solidarity and cooperation which will continue and we hope to be able to work with the Russian Federation in a cooperative spirit on many of the problems that are, that are outstanding, particularly after the armed conflict in Georgia last August. But with that I'll be happy to take some questions.

Q. I am Tatul Hakobyan of Armenian Reporter. The Azerbaijani delegation yesterday issued a return contribution which says the conflict, the Karabakh conflict, can only be solved on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and viability for the Azerbaijani border. So Mr. Under Secretary, as a high official American diplomat who deals with the Karabakh peace process, do you agree that solid Azerbaijani territorial integrity is the main Madrid principle, or are there any other main principles in that document? Thank you.

DF: Yesterday, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs--France, Russia and the US--met with the Foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The three ministers--well, the two foreign ministers and a deputy minister, myself--issued a statement supporting the efforts to achieve settlement on the NK conflict. This is an area of consistent cooperation among the Minsk Group co-chairs. You could see that cooperation yesterday. Our cooperation will continue. There is the need for settlement. It can only be a peaceful settlement. Territorial integrity is a major principle, and in fact it is a principle from which we start. There are other principles. And it is the job of the Minsk Group to bring together these principles in a way that avoids a debate, a theological, sterile and circular one, but actually achieves what we all want, which is a settlement. The Minsk Group proposed some specific ideas, particularly for example the withdrawal from the line of contact of snipers. We need to avoid more spilling of blood, we need to avoid all kinds of rhetorical threats, but instead of debating theoretical issues, the co-chairs urged both governments--Azerbaijan and Armenia--to get to work to achieve a settlement which has never been closer. Thank you

Q. Mr. Under Secretary, Alexander Gabuev, from Russian media (Kommersant). It is a strong idea in Russia that behind this idea of President Medvedev is Russia's quest for guarantees for security because Russia is not a part of NATO or EU which you mentioned as key elements of European security. So if not this summit and not this proposal of Medvedev's, how might the US and other members of the OSCE going to tackle (security)

because latest war in Georgia showed that it can behave as a child which wants attention but can break things because of lack of attention.

DF: That is your colorful characterization, not mine. It is colorful. Russia deserves, of course, security, as well as every other European state. It is, I believe, an achievement of the last 50 years, that Europe to Russia's west has never been more secure, more stable, and more benign in all of Russia's history. This is an achievement and it is partly the result of the strengthening and growth of the European Union and frankly, of NATO. Now I know that Russia disagrees with this, but I think NATO enlargement and NATO's opening to new countries has tended to stabilize central and eastern Europe so that the problems of competing nationalism did not return after 1999. This is a good thing for Russia. I understand Russia's objection to this, so this is not an attempt to argue with Russia. But I think that Russian security can be strengthened by cooperative work, with NATO, with the EU, and for a search for solutions to problems like the conflict in Georgia, which has, I think, diminished Russia's security. I don't know how it is more secure for Russia to have recognized two breakaway regions, joined by nobody else but Nicaragua and Hamas. That doesn't increase Russia's security. But if Russia is interested in working with its partners in NATO and the EU on greater security, I think there will be willingness and an eagerness to do so. I sense that Europe is quite willing to work with Russia, as is the US. We want Russia to be able to work with us. Threats and language of intimidation have no place in a search for security. I'm not making an accusation, but I think that no one is threatening Russia. The US wants a partnership with Russia, and I regret the difficulties that have crept up, and I hope that they can be resolved, but on a basis of shared principles, including territorial integrity of countries, non-use of force, no intimidation, and the like. I look forward to working with Russia to restore and rebuild and strengthen partnership.

Q: (garbled) from Reuters News Agency. Based on how events have gone here in the last couple of days, are you any more or less optimistic on getting military observers into South Ossetia? How do you see that panning out in the next couple of days, before the end of the year, and before the end of the Mandate.

DF: A very good question, I hope that we can agree that the more confidence, the more observers, the more international presence in Georgia including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the better it is for stability. Russia has argued that the situation before August was dangerous and indeed I agree with Russia it was. The solution is hardly to keep monitors out of South Ossetia. And there is unfortunately a silence and darkness with respect to international monitors that has descended on South Ossetia. Very few international observers have been allowed in. No one knows what is happening. Serious NGOs such as Human Rights Watch have reported ongoing attacks on Georgian villages. We don't know what's going on and it is Russia that has an obligation since it controls these territories to let in international observers. The purpose is to restore confidence and stability. We don't need more violence. We don't need a cycle of retaliations, tension, threats that can end in a new catastrophe. Rather, we need to use the Geneva process that has started, to build confidence on both sides

to set up mechanisms to get more international observers in, ah, both, on both sides of the administrative line, and hopefully on that basis start dealing with the longer term issues.

DF: Yes Ma'am

Q: Yrsa Gruene, Hufvudstadsbladet (Finland). My question---actually there are two questions---they link to the previous ones. One about the, the OSCE observers, could you, could this conference, consider a different mission, I mean like two missions, one for Georgia and one for South Ossetia? That's the first question and the second one is with reference to the EU and the NATO who have a political and a diplomatic but also a military dimension, whereas the OSCE doesn't have any response forces or battle groups or whatever. Was it ever discussed or was it proposed by Russia that OSCE also should have something like a concrete military muscle? Thank you.

DF: I have not heard discussion of giving the OSCE a concrete military muscle. It is important to get the OSCE observers into South Ossetia. There is no legitimate reason to keep them out, but at the same time if the EU monitoring mission in Georgia which is larger, which has proven its effectiveness south of the administrative line, also needs to be able to operate north of the administrative line, there is no reason to keep them out either. There needs to be security and confidence on both sides of the administrative line. Now the situation there is unstable with gangs especially from South Ossetia crossing the border and raiding Georgian farms and villages. I've been up there. I know that these raids have taken place and so we need to get as many monitors as possible in---and in on both sides of the line. There are huge disagreements about Georgia's territorial integrity and Russia has of course recognized South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence, which the European Union, the Foreign Ministers of the G7 and NATO have all condemned. Nevertheless, despite these disagreements, we want to work with Russia in a constructive and practical spirit to increase security and that can happen really only if there are more monitors of both OSCE and EU allowed in under rules and conditions that everyone understands. So, this is a direction of our work and we hope to be able to use the Geneva process and I look forward to working with Deputy Minister Karasin, my counterpart, and with the EU's Pierre Morel, UN Ambassador Verbeke, to try to make progress in a constructive spirit despite our disagreements over the causes of the conflict and status issues.

DF: Yes sir.

Dragan Stavljanin, Radio Free Europe. May I move just to the Balkans? The EU is about to launch its mission in Kosovo and you were directly involved in trying to placate a fear. Albania was strongly, adamantly opposed (garbled). What do you comment as some fears in Pristina that (garbled) is kind of tacit introduction and acceptance of partition of Kosovo and, second, what do you comment of a recent article that Bosnia is on the verge of collapse unless the West intervenes like it was in 90s. Thank you.

DF: It is certainly not true that the EULEX mission means the partition of Kosovo; in fact, quite the opposite. The EULEX mission will deploy to all of Kosovo and it will have the effect of maintaining the territorial integrity of an undivided Kosovo. This is quite clear. The

EULEX knows what its mission is. I understand that Kosovars have these concerns but these concerns, I'm happy to say, thank God, are unfounded. They are unfounded. EULEX will deploy throughout the territory of Kosovo. Kosovo will remain undivided. EULEX knows what its mission is and its mission is in fact not status neutral at all. Its mission will greatly strengthen Kosovo's territorial integrity, its operations within, and I suppose under the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. But the effect of the EULEX mission will be far from status neutral. The Kosovar government has shown wisdom in embracing the EULEX mission. I think this is a wise choice and it is good for an undivided sovereign Kosovo.

DF: Yes sir.

(garbled) A basic question. How thinking goes in Washington today. What is the OSCE's role in European and in world security? What is main role, main task?

DF: The OSCE's great value added, beyond its flexibility and the effectiveness of its field missions, is that it defines security explicitly in terms of values and that it links security, it links it with human rights and the human dimension. As well as economic security. The other advantage of the OSCE as I've said is the effectiveness of its somewhat decentralized structure and its field missions and its specific sub-organizations like ODIHR. ODIHR has become the basic standard for judging elections. We all look at ODIHR's statement after an election to see, to give us a baseline assessment of an election. And by the way ODIHR was present in the United States during our electoral campaign. This is not something that is simply in one part of Europe. I met the ODIHR head of mission, had the pleasure of welcoming him to the United States for a historic presidential campaign, and I think ODIHR monitors were rather satisfied with the treatment they had. So the OSCE is an organization and an instrument which has great value. We respect it and it is a universal organization which is an additional element of value.

By the way, I neglected to mention Bosnia, and should do so. Ambassador Holbrooke has to his great credit his leadership in helping end the wars in Bosnia, and his warnings about political problems in Bosnia Herzegovina are well taken. He is a wise man and it is useful to pay attention to what he says. The US government is indeed concerned about the political direction in Bosnia. We were pleased and heartened by the recent political agreement between the three political parties (names garbled). That is a good sign, that is a piece of good news where good news has been lacking, but we urge Bosnia's leaders to look to their country and their future in Europe, and avoid the kind of paralysis that can constitute a grave danger for the peoples of Bosnia in the future.

DF: Yes.

(name garbled) from Armenia. Mr. Fried, do you think that the Azerbaijani statement means that Azerbaijan is not willing to accept them, the principles, and ... and which was the reason for yesterday's move. And the second question is about Armenian-Turkish relations. Do you think the Armenian dialogue will bring the opening of the border in nearest future? Thank you.

DF: With respect to the last question, we've always supported a normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, we do so now. With respect to Nagorno-Karabakh and various principles, as I said earlier, it is---one can debate the various theologies of various principles forever. But that won't get us anywhere, that won't get us where we want to go---which is a peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh. You're not changing, Armenia is not changing, its geography anytime soon. Neither is Azerbaijan. The two countries are going to have to live together as neighbors forever. The question is under what conditions. And it seems to me the conditions of instability, tension, are not the conditions. Armenia has to do its part, Azerbaijan has to do its part, and the Minsk group co-chairs, the US, France, Russia, will do our part. Now I've got time for one more brief question. OK, well in that case, thank you very much and thank you for the opportunity.

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