



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to CiO Special Representative Charalampos Christopoulos

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 30, 2009

It is a pleasure to welcome you to today's meeting, Ambassador Christopoulos. We appreciate your ongoing efforts to facilitate long-term, peaceful resolutions to the protracted conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, and thank you for your informative report today.

The United States particularly appreciates your efforts – and those of EU Special Representative Morel and UN Special Representative Verbeke – to coordinate the Geneva discussions on security and stability arrangements in the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions of Georgia. We welcome the information you gave us today about the upcoming visit on the 4th and 5th of May and also on the decision to hold the next round of Geneva discussions on May 18 and 19, and hope they will contribute positively to reducing tensions in the region and to furthering implementation of the August 12 and September 8 agreements. In particular, we look forward to concrete progress being made on the urgent problem of achieving the free and unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance to the South Ossetian region of Georgia.

We look forward to the good-faith implementation of the incident prevention and response mechanisms agreed in Geneva. In this light, we welcome the incremental progress made at the April 23 meeting of the mechanism for the South Ossetian region, and expect to see discussion of concrete incidents, including the repeated killings of Georgian police officers and the detentions by South Ossetian de facto authorities of OSCE monitoring officers.

We strongly urge all parties to meet regularly with international monitors to address continuing security incidents and prevent them from escalating into wider conflicts. We also call on all parties to allow for joint visits, together with international monitors, to the sites of incidents. We urge all parties to make these mechanisms fully operational as soon as possible.

Access for international monitors to the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions of Georgia remains critical. Together with international monitors, the incident prevention and response mechanisms can help deter violence, ensure the safety and protection of civilians, promote human rights, and further the implementation of the August 12 and September 8 agreements. We repeat our call for Russia to ensure respect for human rights is upheld and international humanitarian law is observed in those areas of Georgia controlled by Russian military forces.

Like other delegations, the United States continues to believe a robust OSCE presence can play a critical role in restoring stability in Georgia. We believe the Chairmanship's April 8 draft decision on an Office in Tbilisi and an OSCE monitoring operation provides a good basis for agreement, precisely because it skillfully avoids the divisive issues of status and focuses on practical arrangements that will allow the OSCE to support the Geneva process

and contribute positively to conflict resolution efforts. We urge all delegations to work with the Chairmanship in a spirit of good will and collaboration to reach swift agreement on the basis of this proposal, and to refrain from reinserting contentious issues that prejudge status disputes.

The United States remains committed to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Georgia, and will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The United States likewise remains committed to the long-term, peaceful resolution of the Transnistria conflict in Moldova. We commend your efforts, Ambassador Christopoulos, to work with the OSCE Mission to Moldova to encourage direct contacts between the sides and to facilitate working groups' efforts to identify confidence-building measures.

We continue to urge the quick resumption of formal negotiations in the 5+2 format, which remains the only internationally accepted mechanism for reaching a negotiated settlement to the conflict. We hope these talks will focus on substantive issues, including the determination of Transnistria's status within Moldova's internationally recognized borders and the presence of foreign forces in Moldova without host nation consent.

Madam Chairwoman, there is much discussion these days about taking a renewed look at European security architecture. As Ambassador Christopoulos' excellent report amply demonstrates, if we cannot address and resolve these persistent and outstanding conflicts, we will be unlikely to make any genuine headway on a Europe that is more secure and at peace. Progress on these conflicts, including on the issues I have just outlined, would help restore trust and confidence and facilitate any discussion of European security.

Ambassador Christopoulos, thank you again for speaking to us today. We wish you all the best in your work.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.