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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Regarding South Ossetia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Samuel Laeuchli
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 16, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States reiterates its rejection of the referendum and so-called presidential elections held in Georgia's South Ossetia region on November 12th. We consider these elections to be destructive to the efforts of the OSCE to promote a peaceful negotiated settlement of the South Ossetian conflict that determines the status of the region within Georgia's internationally recognized borders.

The facts do not support claims that these elections resulted in overwhelming support for either the re-election of the de facto leader of the separatist regime or the independence of the region. A large proportion of the population of the region was disenfranchised, and this cannot be considered a legitimate democratic process. We note also that parallel voting resulted in a large percentage of the population expressing entirely different views.

The United States joins the European Union in repeating its unequivocal support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and the resolution of the conflict within Georgia on that basis.

Thank you.