



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by HoM Moldova, Philip Remler

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Hugh Neighbour
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 10, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to welcome Ambassador Remler to the Permanent Council today. His report bears witness to the energy and purposefulness of the work of the Mission in Moldova under his direction.

The United States takes note of the important contribution that the Mission is making under the Finnish chairmanship to find a way to build confidence in the region and a foundation for progress on the Transnistria conflict. Last month, Finland's special envoy for unresolved conflicts, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie, convened a very useful informal meeting here in Vienna of the 3 plus 2 mediators and observers. The meeting produced an agreement on steps that would be taken to get dialogue started between the Government of Moldova and authorities in the Transnistrian region on specific issues of mutual interest and concern. Ambassador Remler and the Mission were tasked with promoting and organizing an encounter between the two sides under the umbrella of an informal 5 plus 2 gathering in Odessa later this month. It is our hope that as the two sides begin talking to one another again, they will take up concrete and practical confidence-building measures. The announcement earlier this week that President Voronin and Transnistrian leader Smirnov had spoken by telephone for the first time since 2003 could be an important step toward building confidence on both sides of the Nistru.

Mr. Chairman, a direct dialogue between the parties on issues of mutual concern is a positive development, but will not, by itself, lead to a political settlement. Fundamental issues, including the definition of Transnistria's status within Moldova, must be addressed. A settlement of this conflict within the context of Moldova's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity must be the goal of all these efforts.

To that end, we would welcome progress on withdrawal of Russian munitions from Moldova, which is, of course, an important practical aspect of the broader commitment Russia made at Istanbul on withdrawal of its forces. We would also welcome steps, endorsed by the Moldovan government, to reshape the Russian peacekeeping force to meet the needs of a

changed security situation. This issue is one my government and the Russian Federation have also addressed in their bilateral dialogue on CFE Treaty-related issues.

The OSCE Mission is well qualified to facilitate implementation of this commitment on munitions withdrawal. Progress on this issue will send a signal that the status quo needs to change, and that must be a common priority for us all in this situation where an unresolved conflict impedes the development of an entire region.

In conclusion, let me say my government looks forward to the informal 5 plus 2 session in Odessa later this month and again congratulates Ambassador Remler for his good work and wishes him success in promoting confidence building measures and trust as necessary pre-conditions for real progress.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.