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United States Mission to the OSCE

Final Statement at the Helsinki Ministerial Council

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
December 5, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Minister,

We wish to express great appreciation to the government and people of Finland for the warm and wonderful welcome you have given us all. We extend our congratulations as you prepare for the celebration tomorrow of your 91 years of independence.

We thank and salute you, Mr. Foreign Minister Stubb for painstakingly constructive and patient leadership as Chairman-in-Office.

It was our sense that all participating states come to Helsinki in a spirit of optimism and a desire to cooperate and compromise. It is 33 years since launching the Helsinki process that led to the birth of the OSCE, and it seems fitting that Finland host this organization's most important Ministerial Conference in many years, and in a year when the OSCE has faced grave challenges.

It was a long and hot summer. There are certainly questions and appropriate observations that can be made about this organization's future. And while this Ministerial has not fully answered such questions, these two days have, however, caused the United States to remain confident that despite difficulties the spirit of Helsinki is alive and well and the founding principles of the original Helsinki Conference remain valid.

We commend Chairman Stubb's unwavering efforts to achieve a Political Declaration that would have reaffirmed those principles and commitments. It is actually adhering to these principles and commitments that has strengthened peace and security throughout Europe and Eurasia.

The United States strongly supports the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union. We wish to use this opportunity to reiterate our unwavering support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Given recent reports of ongoing human rights abuses taking place inside South Ossetia, it is our obligation to call yet again for OSCE monitors and institutions to be granted access to all of Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

We are of course pleased to support the Ministerial Declaration of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and decisions that enhance human rights and strengthen the rule of law across the OSCE area.

In our view, the best way to fertilize our regional field of security, is to fully implement the commitments we undertook collectively 33 years ago in this very capital.

Thank you again, Chairman Stubb, and thank you to the government of Finland for letting the OSCE have him!