



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Geneva Discussions

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 4, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States was pleased to participate in the January 28 round of the Geneva discussions on security and stability arrangements in Georgia.

We welcome the co-chairs' efforts to identify interim steps that can improve the security, humanitarian, and human rights situation on the ground and lay the groundwork for more far-reaching arrangements. One such step, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM), provides an important forum for addressing issues of concern in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions on a regular and pragmatic basis. Unfortunately, the operation of the IPRM for the South Ossetia region has been suspended for three months. We call on all participants to agree to reconvene this important mechanism without delay.

Although the conflict region has stabilized to a great extent, violent incidents persist, and civilians continue to face a precarious humanitarian and human rights situation.

We continue to believe the OSCE and other international actors have a valuable role to play in addressing these problems. We remain convinced that an international presence throughout Georgia is critical and continue to urge the re-establishment of a robust OSCE presence there.

As we work to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia, we will continue to call for the parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law; to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas; to call for free and unhindered access to the whole of Georgia; and to seek the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

We welcome the Georgian Government's adoption of a new strategy of engagement with the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions—a potentially constructive step towards easing tensions and a way to reach out to all the regions' residents.

We also welcome the upcoming visit to Georgia of the Chairman-in-Office. We hope Foreign Minister Saudabayev will be successful in furthering discussions of key issues, including water and gas supplies in the South Ossetia region, the re-establishment of an OSCE presence in Georgia, and a follow-up to the November 2008 joint ODIHR/HCNM report on human rights in the war-affected areas of Georgia. We look forward to a report on the foreign minister's trip and to the Chairmanship's continued engagement on these issues.

As Secretary Clinton stated last week in her speech on European security, we have repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to honor the terms of its cease-fire agreement with Georgia. Russia committed not only to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities, but also to provide free access for humanitarian assistance to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. We remind the Russian Federation that its characterization of these regions as independent does not relieve it of these commitments.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate our firm commitment to Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you.