



Remarks After the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
 NATO Headquarters
 Brussels, Belgium
 August 19, 2008

[View Video](#)

SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. I have just finished attending a meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers. That meeting has produced a declaration, which I am certain you now have copies of, which is a comprehensive response to the crisis in Georgia. This was an extraordinary meeting of the North Atlantic Council. And that, in itself, is a clear indication of NATO's interest in this crisis and NATO's concern that this crisis has a real impact on peace and stability in this region and therefore is crucial to the alliance.



There are several elements to the declaration. But perhaps most important, I think the declaration clearly shows that NATO intends to support the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Georgia, and to support its democratically elected government, its democracy, and to deny Russia the strategic objective of undermining that democracy, of making Georgia weaker or of threatening Georgia's territorial integrity. In that regard, a number of steps will be taken to support Georgia, including the creation, as the Secretary General has just said, of a NATO-Georgia Commission to oversee cooperation with Georgia on a wide range of matters and to oversee the program to achieve the goals of Bucharest. The Council reaffirmed the Bucharest Declaration of our heads of state, as well as developing this program of specific steps that we will take.

Secondly, there was very strong language in the declaration and very strong language around the table of the need for Russia to honor the ceasefire commitment that its president has undertaken. It is time for the Russian President to keep his word to withdraw Russian forces from Georgia, back to the August 6/7 status quo ante and to return, in fact, all forces that were not in South Ossetia at the time of that – of the outbreak of that conflict. That means that Russian peacekeepers "who were there" are one thing, but those who reinforced in some way into the zone of conflict should also return to the status quo ante.

Finally, this document is a very clear statement that this alliance, NATO, having come so far after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union in achieving a Europe that is whole, free and at peace, is not going to permit a new line to be drawn in Europe, a line between those who were fortunate enough to make it into the transatlantic structures and those who still aspire to those transatlantic structures. And thus, as I have said, there was the reaffirmation of Bucharest that the circumstances for Georgia and Ukraine to become members of MAP will be taken up by the ministers in December, as was envisioned in Bucharest, but that there will absolutely be no new line. NATO does not accept that there is a new line, and we are acting as if there is no new line. That is why both the establishment of the NATO-Georgia Commission and the meeting that will take place next week of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, as well as the visit of NATO permanent representatives to Georgia are important steps that demonstrate that principle.

I want to underscore that NATO has an open-door policy to all European democracies that qualify for its membership. This is not a matter of forcing countries into one alliance or another. It is simply a matter of giving them the choice that free peoples deserve. And NATO stays true to that principle and stays true to the Bucharest Declaration that declared that NATO – that Georgia and Ukraine, having declared that they wish to pursue a transatlantic future, will become members of NATO.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, is the NATO-Georgia Commission a substitute for what the Georgians have really been asking for most passionately, which is some kind of military resupply, reinforcement?

SECRETARY RICE: The NATO-Georgia Commission is a political body that will oversee the whole range of cooperative initiatives and possibilities with Georgia. I think you also heard the Secretary General say that there will be a team to assess Georgia's military situation and its needs. But the NATO-Georgia Commission is a new body that establishes on the same terms that we have a NATO-Ukraine Commission, a body to oversee the full range of cooperative initiatives and possible future cooperative initiatives with – with Georgia.



QUESTION: Madame Secretary, what is the significance today of the decision by OSCE to send 100 military monitors? How long – how long is that good for? And if the plan is to have an international peacekeeping operation in place at some point, what leads one to believe that the Russians would now be willing to do that when they opposed it previously? Do you have any indications of that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, on the OSCE monitors – we hope to get in very quickly because in conjunction also with Point Five of the ceasefire arrangement, there need to be international monitors so that these so-called special security arrangements do not need to be in place for very long. They're heavily prescribed already by the clarifications that President Sarkozy provided to President Saakashvili. But there is an expectation of an international monitoring force, that is the OSCE force. We are working very closely with Foreign Minister Stubb to make certain that those monitors will have all of the equipment that they need and the transport that they need to get in. And I'm very pleased that there appears to be agreement that those monitors should be deployed, and deployed quickly.

There will need an international peacekeeping force as a part of a broader resolution of the conflicts in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, because there will have to be a peacekeeping force that is neutral. I think it's quite clear that Russia has become a party to this conflict.

MODERATOR: We have the final question from Sylvie Lanteaume, AFP.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the Europeans seem obviously reluctant to isolate Russia as you would like. They don't want to treat the Russia of today as the Germany of (inaudible). Do you think – do you think these concerns are legitimate? Do you understand them?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, Sylvie, the United States doesn't want to isolate Russia. It's the United States that has a strategic framework for cooperation with Russia that has everything in it from economic cooperation to political cooperation, cultural cooperation, indeed even offers of defense cooperation. So the United States doesn't seek to isolate Russia. The behavior of Russia in this most recent crisis is isolating Russia from the principles of cooperation among nations of the communities of states when you start invading small neighbors, bombing civilian infrastructure, going into villages and wreaked havoc and wanton destruction of this infrastructure. That's what isolates Russia.

And so it is not an act of the United States or Europe or anybody else to isolate Russia; it's what Russia is doing. And I would just call your attention to the language that there can be no business as usual with Russia while this kind of activity goes on. And so I want to be very clear: the United States sought precisely what we got in this statement, which is, most importantly, support for Germany's – for Georgia's democracy; secondly, a very strong message that the Russian President ought to keep his word; and third, a very clear statement of principle from this alliance that a new line in Europe where Russia somehow asserts that there are those who cannot opt for a transatlantic future is unacceptable.

Thank you.
2008/T24-2

Released on August 19, 2008

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.