



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions on Security and Stability in the South Caucasus

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 1, 2010

It is a pleasure to welcome Ambassadors Morel, Turunen, and Nurgaliyev to today's meeting. The United States greatly appreciates their leadership in coordinating the Geneva Discussions and commends their tireless efforts to ensure productive talks.

We continue to believe that the Geneva Discussions have the potential to serve as an important forum for improving the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia. With active, constructive engagement from all participants, discussions can lead to positive and practical developments on the ground, including regular meetings of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) and unfettered access for humanitarian assistance to the conflict areas. However, the Geneva Discussions have not lived up to their potential. We are disappointed that the Abkhaz representatives recently indicated their intention not to participate in the next round of the Geneva Discussions. We strongly urge them to reconsider their position. We are also disappointed that the South Ossetian representatives have refused since October 2009 to participate in regular IPRM meetings. We again urge them to make full use of this mechanism and to focus on achieving practical results on the ground.

The failure to fully utilize the Geneva Discussions and the IPRMs makes it difficult to address ongoing problems. Detentions and violent incidents persist, and allegations of human rights abuses remain unaddressed. It is essential that we find solutions. The human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas must be respected, civilians must be able to live in peace and security, and internally displaced persons and refugees must be able to voluntarily return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner. In all of this, free and unhindered access to the whole of Georgia is critical.

Like others in the international community, we remain concerned that the Russian Federation has yet to fulfill its commitments under the August 12, 2008, cease-fire agreement between President Saakashvili of Georgia and President Medvedev of the Russian Federation, mediated by President Sarkozy of France. The Russian Federation at that time committed not only to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities, but also to provide humanitarian access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia. We note that the vast majority of nations do not accept the Russian Federation's characterization of these regions as independent and reiterate our position that this characterization does not relieve the Russian Federation of its obligations under the cease-fire agreement.

Russian proposals at the Geneva Discussions on a possible non-use of force agreement and associated international security arrangements have hindered progress at the talks. The cease-fire agreement already in place establishes the sides' commitment to the non-use of force. Full implementation of that agreement – which we still await from the Russian Federation – would render additional commitments on the non-use of force unnecessary. We hope that the

future rounds of the Geneva Discussions will focus on completing the implementation of the August 12 commitments and help us reach our common goals of strengthening security and stability in the region, addressing humanitarian needs, and improving human rights conditions on the ground.

As we work to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Georgia, we will continue to urge the re-establishment of an appropriate OSCE presence throughout Georgia. We remain convinced that the OSCE and other international actors can play a valuable role in resolving problems and providing critical monitoring of human rights and humanitarian conditions.

Like the EU, we hope the Corfu Process can contribute to tangible progress towards re-establishing an OSCE presence throughout Georgia.

In closing, we again thank the ambassadors here today and commend their extraordinary work. We remain committed to finding a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia, and we will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Secretary Clinton will reiterate our unceasing support in her July 5 visit to Tbilisi.