



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Chairman's Statement

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the 11th OSCE Ministerial Council, Maastricht

December 2, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, As Secretary Powell noted in his statement earlier this morning to the Ministerial Council, the United States regrets that it has not been possible to reach agreement on a Ministerial Political Declaration, or on regional statements on Moldova and Georgia.

The United States shares the view of the Chair, of the EU and many other delegations that it would have been highly appropriate in the Ministerial Declaration and regional statements to:

- Welcome progress made in 2003 towards fulfillment of Russia's Istanbul commitment to complete withdrawal of military forces from Moldova.
- Express concern that the withdrawal of Russian forces will not be completed by the extended deadline of December 31, 2003, and
- Stress the need for fulfillment of Russia's Istanbul commitments relating to Georgia and Moldova without further delay.

The failure to reach agreement on regional statements on Georgia and Moldova is particularly disappointing in view of the very important developments relating to these two countries in recent weeks.

Concerning Georgia:

Pledges by OSCE participating States at this Ministerial to support the conduct of free and fair elections in Georgia are a concrete expression of our support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

It would have been highly appropriate for the Ministerial Council to have:

- Noted with satisfaction that the recent crisis was solved without violence, and called on all parties to show restraint and to settle all problems within the framework of the

Constitution;

- Noted the importance of efforts by the OSCE and the United Nations with regard to the peace processes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and our efforts to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms including by monitoring a further agreement on the return of refugees and IDPs which have been forced to move from places of their permanent residence as a result of mass destruction and forcible expulsion.

Concerning Moldova:

In light of development this year in regard to efforts to resolve the Transnistrian problem in Moldova, it would have been appropriate for the Ministerial Council to have:

- Reiterated our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova;

- Stressed the indispensable role of close cooperation and coordination among the mediators in the five-sided format in achieving progress towards a comprehensive political settlement; and

- Reiterated OSCE willingness to support a political settlement acceptable to all the people of Moldova, including by providing the mandate for a multinational force and unarmed observers to oversee the implementation of such a settlement.