



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Report by OSCE Head of Mission in Moldova, William Hill

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 29, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Ambassador Hill back to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive, albeit pessimistic, report of the situation in Moldova. Ambassador Hill is right to report things the way that they are.

The Mission in Moldova continues to carry out very significant work in all three OSCE dimensions. Under Ambassador Hill's superb leadership, the Mission has exemplified just how the OSCE should be promoting democracy, rule of law, conflict resolution and respect for human rights.

The United States shares Ambassador Hill's disappointment over the failure of Transnistrian negotiators to show up for last week's scheduled round of talks despite repeated attempts to have them attend. The Transnistrians have demonstrated no political will to seek a settlement.

We are disturbed also over the Transnistrian authorities' continued denial of access to Colbasna for OSCE munitions inspectors and we urge the Russian Federation to resume ammunition withdrawal and to use its influence to put an end to Transnistrian obstruction of the withdrawal and observation processes. It is appalling and not at all acceptable.

It is indeed a disappointment that five years have passed without fulfillment of the Russian Federation's commitment to remove its forces from Moldovan territory.

The Transnistrian authorities' continued flaunting of its agreements with Chisinau over the rights of Moldovan schools to teach using the Latin script is yet another example of the complete lack of political will in Tiraspol to act responsibly. We call on the Transnistrian authorities to cease harassing these schools and stop using schoolchildren as helpless pawns in their political game.

Mr. Chairman, we have taken note of Ambassador Hill's call on participating States with "experience and influence in the region" to urge political leaders on both sides to seek accommodation and compromise, and the United States is certainly willing to do so.

But no participating State has greater influence on the Transnistrian authorities than the Russian Federation. And thus we call on the Russian government to make some visible effort to resolve these impasses. The Russian Federation must make clear to Igor Smirnov that the time has come to start negotiating responsibly within the framework of the five-sided talks, and to cease obstruction of the military withdrawal process.

We also call on Ukraine and Moldova to work closely with each other and the OSCE to permit international monitors along the Ukraine-Moldova border, including the Transnistrian segment.

On another issue, Ambassador Hill has raised concerns about media freedom in the run-up to next year's elections in Moldova. During the visit by OSCE ambassadors to Moldova earlier this month, we underscored with President Voronin and other government authorities the need to ensure equal access to the media for all political parties and to allow for unbiased reporting.

And I would urge the Special Representative on Freedom of the Media to visit Moldova as early as possible, and to follow up with further visits as the political campaign gets underway.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the goal of stopping trafficking in persons remains a high priority for the United States. The efforts by the OSCE Mission in this area, including its assistance in the development of victim and witness protection procedures, are a positive step and of great significance to us, and we applaud the Mission's work in this area and pledge our continuing support in the effort to eradicate this scourge on Moldovan society.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Ambassador Hill once again for the unfortunately pessimistic but commendably realistic assessment of the situation in Moldova, and to commend him also for his tireless efforts to strengthen peace and democracy in that country. The United States is committed to a peaceful political settlement of the Transnistria conflict and we reiterate our strong support for your work, Mr. Ambassador.

Thank You.