



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Foreign Minister of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
August 18, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States once again welcomes Foreign Minister Zourabichvili to the Permanent Council and thanks the Chair for convening another special meeting of the Permanent Council during the August recess. We have followed the most recent developments in South Ossetia, like many other countries, with great concern.

The United States has made very clear its support for a peaceful resolution of the South Ossetian conflict that respects the territorial integrity of Georgia. We remain convinced that the best possibility for a permanent resolution of the conflict lies in an immediate demilitarization in the region and active political engagement by all sides. In this regard, we are encouraged by the progress made in the August 17 meeting of the Joint Control Commission, and we commend the OSCE Mission and its staff for their unceasing efforts to bring calm to South Ossetia. We call on all sides to respect all existing agreements and to refrain from carrying out any further military activities in or near the zone of conflict.

However, we also believe that there remains a real need for broader discussions involving the Government of Georgia and all other interested parties, including the OSCE, directed toward building consensus on basic principles to be met on the road to a political settlement. For this reason, we welcome and strongly support Foreign Minister Zourabichvili's proposal today for an international conference directed toward reinvigorating the political process in South Ossetia.

We hope that, if this conference goes forward, all parties will seek to participate constructively and with the goal of identifying and agreeing on concrete actions that will de-escalate the crisis and help to build a basis for a political settlement. The United States believes that the Chairman-in-Office could play a valuable role in promoting this approach.

We very much hope that the next time the Permanent Council meets, it will hear that there has been significant progress in resolving the crisis in South Ossetia and in identifying a path to peaceful resolution. We call on all parties in the meantime to exert maximum effort to bring to an end a conflict that is hindering the economic development that would benefit all sides to this conflict.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman