



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Report of OSCE Head of Mission in Moldova Ambassador William Hill

Delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 16, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too should like to join others in welcoming Ambassadors Hill and Jacobovits once again to the Permanent Council today, and to thank them both for their thoughtful, and troubling, review of events in Moldova over the past seven months.

Mr. Chairman, I regret to say that the United States shares fully Ambassador Hill's deep concern over the recent stalemates, in both the ammunition withdrawal process and the political settlement negotiations. The situation is all the more disappointing after what was indeed a period of, as someone aptly put it, "unprecedented progress" and "promising success."

The United States is far from an indifferent observer of this process. We have made clear many times that we stand ready to do our utmost to assist the Russian Federation in fulfilling the commitments it undertook at the Istanbul Summit in November 1999. But let us not forget that the Russian Federation alone is responsible for completing, as promised, the full withdrawal of all of its military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova, by the agreed deadline.

Although that deadline was extended at the Porto Ministerial, the Istanbul commitments themselves did not change. Nor have the conditions in place in Moldova changed substantially since November 1999. If anything, they have improved, despite the continued, and consistent, intransigence of the local authorities in Tiraspol.

The Russian Federation, as Ambassador Hill has pointed out, withdrew a great deal of ammunition from Moldova in a relatively short time earlier this year. Unfortunately, no trains have rolled since then. Yet as Ambassador Hill also pointed out, there is still enough time remaining for this issue to be a success and not a failure, at the Maastricht Ministerial. We therefore call upon the Russian Federation to redouble its efforts to withdraw from Moldova with all possible speed, and using all possible means at its disposal, so that the December 31, 2003 deadline can be met.

As the largest donor to the Moldova Voluntary Fund, the United States has stated and demonstrated repeatedly its willingness to use its funds to assist the Russian

Federation to defray the cost of the removal of this ammunition from Transnistria, or of its destruction on site.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is similarly disappointed with regard to the political settlement negotiations. After a number of significant watersheds between July of 2002 and May of 2003, the talks between the Government of Moldova and the local authorities in Tiraspol, as we have just heard, have seen no further movement.

The Kiev Document presented by the mediators more than a year ago formed an excellent basis for development of a new constitution for the Republic of Moldova. Similarly, the bold proposal by President Voronin for a Joint Constitutional Commission held out serious promise. Unfortunately, the two sides to the negotiations have not been able to achieve any further progress in either the five-sided talks or the JCC format, despite the admirable efforts of the OSCE and its fellow mediators.

Mr. Chairman, in large part thanks to the efforts of President Voronin, and of your government as our Chairmanship in Office, Moldova has the attention of the world this year. Washington, Brussels, and the major capitals of Europe are focused on the Transnistrian problem, and all genuinely want to contribute to a solution. However, such attention can be fleeting, as we all know and it will fade if those directly involved do not show an equal interest and commitment to jointly achieving a settlement.

The United States, therefore, calls upon all sides to the political settlement negotiations to recommit themselves to the process, to throw aside old prejudices and rigid demands, and to move forward now toward a comprehensive solution that will benefit all of the people of Moldova. In the end, after all, the OSCE can only help those who would help themselves.

In closing, I should like to thank Ambassadors Hill and Jacobovits and the staff of the OSCE Mission in Moldova for all of their hard work during the year 2003, which has turned out to be an extremely eventful, if not entirely satisfying, year in Moldova.

Thank you.