



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Address by EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 1, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We would like to welcome Ambassador Talvitie to the Permanent Council and to thank him for taking the time here to meet with us.

The challenges facing the countries of the southern Caucasus are indeed as you described quite daunting. In Georgia, a new government is taking the reins and trying to find solutions to the myriad of political, social and economic problems. And, as Ambassador Talvitie has noted, the region is plagued by conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The stability of this region is vital for all of us. The international community therefore has to remain engaged in helping negotiate resolutions to these conflicts, to strengthen the representative democracy and in promoting higher living standards.

The United States welcomes the EU's deeper engagement in the region through the appointment of the Ambassador and it was good to hear that the positions you mentioned - of the United States, the EU and the Russian Federation - were in line, and it is important that we try to keep it that way. I would add here that we are pleased to have the opportunity to coordinate frequently with the Special Representative both here and in the field.

As one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, we appreciate Ambassador Talvitie's support for the Minsk Group's efforts and his contributions toward confidence building in all three countries where he represents the EU and we commend his ongoing coordination with the OSCE on the wide range of challenges that face all of us in the region today.

We therefore wish you well Ambassador Talvitie and we congratulate you on your work and look forward to continuing our close cooperation with him.

Thank you.