



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Georgia Border Monitoring Operation

As delivered by Acting Deputy Representative James Cox
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 8, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The delegation from the Russian Federation recently called for the closure of the OSCE's Border Monitoring Operation, or BMO, in Georgia when the BMO's current mandate expires on December 31, 2004.

It is not clear to the United States what benefit there would be to terminating the BMO, which has so successfully addressed an exceptionally difficult issue between Georgia and Russia. Indeed, the Georgian delegation has expressed its strong opposition to the closure of the BMO.

The United States is pleased with the progress that the Georgian government has made in trying to ensure the security of its borders. Georgia's cooperation with the Russian Federation on joint patrols, for example, is a positive step forward.

However, as demonstrated on July 3, when, for the first time ever, unknown gunmen fired on a BMO patrol near the Chechen-Ingush frontier, the border situation remains far from secure.

We believe it is in Russia's interest, as well as Georgia's, to have as much transparency as possible regarding what goes on in the border region. It is also important to ensure that, when a determination is made to draw down the BMO, the decision is implemented in a way that will continue to enhance stability and peace along the border.

Given the uncertainty of the current situation, the United States believes it is still too early to begin making plans to close the BMO. We would be willing to consider the possibility of a gradual drawdown of this very important force when the situation is substantially improved.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.