



## United States Mission to the OSCE

# Response to Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 23, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We are honored to welcome Foreign Minister Lavrov to the Permanent Council. Your visit here today, which comes just a week before Secretary Rice addresses the Council, underscores the importance of the OSCE as a forum for discussion.

Allow us to clarify the United States' position on certain pertinent issues, most of which you have referred to. As Secretary Rice commented regarding her recent visit to Moscow, the relationship of the Russian Federation and the United States is a complicated one. We have a lot that is going right in the relationship. There are some specific differences and sometimes there are misunderstandings. We should avoid harsh rhetoric, which sometimes makes it sound as if the relationship itself is in question, rather than particular areas of disagreement. We know that cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation is critical not only to our bilateral relationship, but has global implications.

The United States will continue to seek cooperation with the Russian Federation wherever possible, and the OSCE provides abundant opportunities for this partnership to flourish. Our two countries have developed a close working relationship, as Minsk Group Co-Chairs, along with France, in mediating the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

We hope we can cooperate in an equally constructive manner through the OSCE to help resolve other unresolved conflicts in the region, especially those in South Ossetia and Transnistria. In South Ossetia, we believe we can work together within the OSCE by increasing confidence and security building measures, such as more international monitors on the ground across all of South Ossetia, a monitoring post at Didi Gupta, and international monitoring of the Roki Tunnel. In Moldova, cooperation with the Russian Federation could lead to internationalizing the peacekeeping force, albeit at lower levels than currently exist, and augmenting it with civilian police. Both efforts would contribute to reanimate peace talks aimed at a political solution to these conflicts.

We welcome the NATO statement made here today regarding the CFE Treaty. The U.S. would like the Adapted CFE Treaty to enter into force as soon as possible. For this to happen, remaining Istanbul commitments relating to Georgia and Moldova must be fulfilled. Important progress has already been made in Georgia thanks to hard work by the Russian Federation. We hope we can cooperate here and in other fora to help move forward on remaining issues. We would welcome opportunities—here at the OSCE, bilaterally and in other fora, like the NATO-

Russia Council, as President Putin suggested—to discuss Russian concerns, and to seek collective solutions that will help us achieve entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty, thereby enabling other states to accede to the CFE Treaty regime.

We also listened attentively to your remarks regarding missile defense. The United States remains committed to exploring missile defense cooperation with the Russian Federation. We will continue to discuss our plans with the Russian Federation and seek ways to cooperate. In full briefings in the NATO-Russia Council, and in recent visits to Moscow by Defense Minister Gates and Secretary of State Rice, the United States sought to make clear that the facilities now being discussed with Poland and the Czech Republic are entirely defensive in purpose. The radar and the ten interceptors planned would protect Europe, and the U.S., from the threat of missiles launched from the Middle East—Iran in particular. The U.S. seeks to intensify our strategic dialogue with the Russian Federation, including on missile defense. The “two-plus-two” format suggested by the Russian Federation, which Secretaries Rice and Gates have agreed to, should help us pursue that dialogue.

On Kosovo, the United States and the Russian Federation have a long history of positive cooperation within the Contact Group. Together the Contact Group countries determined in 2005 that the status quo was unsustainable and that a UN-facilitated process to determine status should be launched. After over a year and a half of that process, led ably by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, the time has come to find a lasting solution. The United States supports strongly President Ahtisaari’s proposals, including his recommendation that Kosovo become independent subject to a period of international supervision. While the United States and the Russian Federation have had principled differences on Kosovo, we share a strong desire that Kosovo’s minority communities be able to live in Kosovo with their rights, culture and security protected. Ahtisaari’s proposal contains extremely broad and far-reaching protections for Kosovo’s minorities. When fully implemented, the Ahtisaari Settlement will provide for a better future for all of Kosovo’s citizens.

We now want to work with the Russian Federation and other members of the UN Security Council to find a way forward. The time to act is now: if left unresolved, the Kosovo issue could threaten European stability and ultimately make it more difficult to find a lasting solution. For these reasons, we believe Mr. Ahtisaari’s proposal is the only way forward.

We note your government’s call to reform the OSCE and ODIHR. We believe that there are potential areas for cooperation in this area as well. We have sought ways to address the Russian Federation’s concerns, such as by expanding the geographic scope of election observers and through the ongoing negotiations on a draft convention that would provide the OSCE legal personality. Of course, such initiatives must be in keeping with OSCE commitments and should enhance the OSCE’s effectiveness. They must not in any way undermine either this Organization—which we have all labored so hard over the years to develop—or its work. In this regard, we continue to disagree with calls for a new “Charter” for the OSCE. The Helsinki Document and the OSCE’s acquis of agreements and decisions speak for themselves. Recalling the 2006 Ministerial Decision, we do not believe that a “Charter” should be negotiated, nor is it necessary, to give the OSCE the same legal status as other international organizations.

We consult closely with Moscow on counter-terrorism and, as you mentioned yourself, it is worthwhile to note that next week in this room, the OSCE will hold its first conference on Public-Private Partnerships to combat terrorism, a project on which the U.S. and the Russian Federation have worked together for the past year as co-initiators. We view such partnerships as a promising concept that we hope will be replicated in other participating States.

In closing, we would like to stress that we are always prepared to approach Moscow as a friend and partner everywhere in the world, on any issue, and at any time. And as in any viable, long-term relationship, both sides must be willing to cooperate constructively in order to achieve the greatest benefits for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again, Mr. Minister, for your very thoughtful message.