



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Foreign Minister of Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 26, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

We are greatly honored that Foreign Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk has been able to address the Permanent Council, especially at such an important time in Ukraine's history.

There has been considerable attention focused these past few weeks on President Yushchenko's decision ordering the dissolution of the Ukraine parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, and the ongoing dispute between the President and Prime Minister Yanukovich. I would like to especially thank the Foreign Minister for his update on the situation today. There is clearly a lot at stake here for a country of 47 million people. It is a difficult issue in which the Constitutional Court last week began its deliberations. But also, we understand that all of the major political parties and players continue to discuss the possibility of a political resolution to this issue.

Our position is that we do not express a preference among any of these options. This is a matter for Ukrainian officials to work out in accordance with the Ukrainian constitution. However, we do look to the Ukrainian people and Ukrainian government - all parts of the government - to act responsibly. So far, this has clearly been the case. The crowds in the street - from both sides of the political spectrum - have been well-organized and well-behaved. People have been expressing their points of view very clearly, but there has been no violence. This is important to remember - as contentious as the debate is today in the Ukraine, the Ukrainian people have had the opportunity to express their rights of free assembly and free speech and democratic processes have continued to work.

How each of the parties to the dispute acts, and the way this dispute is brought to an end, carry profound implications for the future of a democratic Ukraine. We hope that the current differences will be resolved in a transparent and democratic manner that further strengthens the democratic principles and institutions and lays a groundwork that helps avoid the recurrence of future crises.

In this context, we would like to applaud the government for its high level of support for the OSCE's work in Ukraine. In this regard, I pass to you, Mr. Minister, our thanks for the excellent leadership of the Ukrainian delegation here in Vienna and for all of the contributions that they are making to our work here.

The Project Coordinator's Office in Kiev has greatly expanded the number of projects over the past few years and is doing extensive work in all three of the OSCE's dimensions. This includes the important work on voter registration and empowering grassroots participation in the

destruction of deadly military ordnance at Novobogdanivka. On this, the twenty-first anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, I would also like to express my own government's sympathies to the victims but also our admiration for the courage of the Ukrainian people and their neighbors who all intervened as immediate responders during the crisis, but also who have persevered over two decades to deal with the consequences of this terrible disaster. Chernobyl will be remembered as a huge and horrifying lesson for all of us of the cross-border consequences of natural or environmental disasters and the security aspects of these issues. That is one of the key focuses we believe we should retain here in the OSCE.

While the OSCE's work in Ukraine has been exemplary in so many ways, we do remain a bit concerned by the rather limited nature of the Memorandum of Understanding that exists between our organization and Ukraine and the mandate that our mission has, which among other things, must be renewed every six months, rather than once a year like most others. We understand that the situation in the Rada the last two years has been in flux; nevertheless, we would still encourage the government to work with the Rada to amend the MOU as soon as possible.

We also appreciate Ukraine's active involvement in the ongoing Transnistria negotiations and its firm commitment to enforcing its bilateral customs protocol with Moldova. We welcome the recent decision by Ukraine's Rada to extend its agreement with the EU Border Assistance Mission for another two years. We also would encourage greater integration and collaboration among the GUAM states and hope Ukraine will be able to ratify the GUAM charter soon.

We are heartened by Ukraine's consistent efforts to further integration with other countries in Central and Western Europe, as that will greatly bolster the opportunities for economic growth. Mr. Minister, we know well that with your economic background, these issues will get the attention they deserve. We listened carefully also to what you had to say about energy security issues and the importance for your country. We hope Ukraine will also be able to take the necessary steps to complete its accession to the World Trade Organization as soon as possible.

These are no doubt trying times for the Ukrainian people but we are hopeful that with the courage and commitment to democracy that they have shown the past few years, Ukraine will pass this test and be even the stronger for it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.