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**Bryza:** I'm so honored to be here just shortly after Vice President Cheney's visit, which is a sign of the deepening and the energizing of our cooperation with our friend Azerbaijan.

As Vice President Cheney said during his visit, the United States has a deep and continuing interest in the security, the stability, the freedom, the prosperity of Azerbaijan.

For 17 years the United States has stood with Azerbaijan as you all have worked to strengthen your independence, your sovereignty and your membership within the international community. Azerbaijan is a respected member of the international community. It fulfills its obligations. If it signs an agreement, it sticks by the agreements. We hope that in Russia's case with regard to Georgia, Russia will follow Azerbaijan's lead and fulfill Russia's obligations with regard to the ceasefire that President Medvedev concluded with president Sarkozy and Saakashvili.

Azerbaijan, of course, can count on the United States to be with it in times of trouble, in times of peace, as we deepen an important partnership that is central to all we're trying to do in this part of the world following Russia's invasion of Georgia.

Nothing we do will be more important than resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I'd like to be clear, absolutely clear on one point, and that is that the United States fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. And we are fully committed to helping Azerbaijan and Armenia reach a negotiated settlement – or a deal – that they both accept. That solution must begin with our support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and then include other principles of international law and diplomatic practice, but in a way that both sides agree. Just like in business, you have to reach a deal eventually.

Finally, I'd like to note that my and Terry's superiors in Washington at the highest levels are focused on this part of the world and on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict like never before in my experience. We feel how here in Azerbaijan and in Armenia the leaders are ready to move forward to reach an agreement which is more urgent than ever, given what has just happened and is happening in neighboring Georgia. The deal has to be fair and acceptable to both sides.

I'm honored to have been able to work for many of the last few years in trying to bring about such a deal in my capacity as a Minsk Group co-chair, and I'm honored to have worked for all of these last 12 years or so on our full range of interests with Azerbaijan, including energy, where we're doing some great things, on security cooperation, and finally on the development of Azerbaijan's electoral processes and democratic political institutions.

We have a lot of work to do still in all of these areas, in every single one, and I'm here to say today that at the highest levels of our government we are committed as your longstanding friend to achieve these goals in a way that makes your lives better and makes our world more safe and more secure.

Thank you.

**Question:** Thank you very much for all these comments, Mr. Bryza. However, we know that right after your visit there is another expected visit by the French co-chair that is coming to Azerbaijan. Basically again, bearing in mind [inaudible] all the events that have taken place in the region, do you think that there is necessity now for the Minsk Group to continue its activities in the new format?

**Bryza:** Of course there is a necessity for all the members of the Minsk Group to continue their actions and their cooperation. Every time I come here as a Minsk Group co-chair, Azerbaijan's leaders say we want to see even more U.S. engagement. We want to see even higher level people getting involved. That is happening. I welcome a chance to see Ambassador Fassier tonight. We'll spend some time together. We are always in close contact. I look forward to working more with my friend Yuri Nikolayevich Merzylakov, who is a wonderful professional diplomat. Once Russia fulfills its obligations to President Sarkozy and Saakashvilli, I hope we will see the Minsk Group operating in its usual format.

**Question:** [inaudible]

**Bryza:** I will speak in English so it's easier for our transcript, and then you will translate.

First of all, I don't know what citation you're reading of Under Secretary Burns. I haven't seen it. But he is my boss. Our views, by definition, are the same, and I stand by every single word I've ever said about the Russian attack on Georgia, because it's a fact that Russia invaded Georgia. Russia showed how strong it is. It invaded a country with only 1/30<sup>th</sup> of its population with an army that is almost 100 times bigger than Georgia's. It issued passports to people and called them citizens and then claimed a right to protect them with military force.

We all know history. This is the behavior of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We hope Russia will return to all of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as soon as possible.

With regard to the conflicts in Karabakh and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, again, I don't know what very respectable Minister Lavrov has in mind when he makes those comments. He may mean that territorial integrity is a universal principle if it applies to Russia and Chechnya, and if it applies to Karabakh and Azerbaijan, but as a universal principle that is no longer universal when it applies to Georgia and its separatist conflicts. That makes no sense.

All I can say is our government fully supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as we supported Georgia's, and that will never change.

**Question:** In fact, the latest information said that the government authorities of Azerbaijan really sounded pretty much critical when raising their voices and speaking [inaudible] attitudes by the Western community as well as the United States of America. And [inaudible] to them as saying that the West and the United States of America do not meet the obligations that they should regarding to Nabucco and the Nagorno-Karabakh resolution. So what would you say about that and how would you comment on that?

The other question that follows; that question is that in the capacity of the Minsk Group co-chair you're traveling a lot, so how would you comment?

**Bryza:** On the first question, I just had a series of meetings with President Aliyev, with Chief of Staff Mehdiyev, with Minister (of Defense) Abiyev, and with Mr. Nasirov, our friend at SOCAR, and Minister of Energy Natiq Aliyev. These were meetings that reflected a deep sense of partnership between Azerbaijan and the United States. We were able to advance our mutual understanding of the challenges that face us on both sets of issues in a very significant way, and I feel we have a joint outline, an outline of a joint action plan that we will now implement which reflects our urgency in wanting to move forward, but doesn't seem to feel like there's any criticism involved.

But we welcome being reminded that we need to move even faster by our Azerbaijani friends. That's also valuable. I think I already answered the question as to why I'm here. I'm here to explore our energy interests, our interests in security, in democracy, and in resolving Nagorno-Karabakh, and as I said, we hope we will have a normal format of the Minsk Group once Russia fulfills its obligations with regard to the ceasefire in Georgia.

**Question:** Mr. Bryza, you visit Azerbaijan on the eve of the presidential elections. Basically [inaudible] classify the situation as being extremely bad because as you know the opposition parties have already [inaudible] elections and will not participate in the elections as well as the freedom of assembly for the people. Some people are not free to get together and express those views.

So, in this regard, what do you think would be the United States of America assessment for the presidential elections in Azerbaijan?

We're talking about the normal format that the Minsk Group will be able to [inaudible]. After the events that have taken place in Georgia, the public opinion in Azerbaijan is the following. Since Russian Federation so much supported separatist movements in Georgia: so the public opinion of Azerbaijan [inaudible] as if Russia is going to withdraw from the formal Minsk Group, because how possible it is for the state that supported separatist movements to be involved in the activities of the Minsk Group?

**Bryza:** Thank you.

The government of Azerbaijan has said it is committed to this presidential election as being free and fair. It has recently received the designation from the World Bank as the world's fastest reforming economy. That's a remarkable achievement that has to reflect a deepening of the rule

of law, and we hope that in a few months we will be saying that that deepening of the rule of law and of reform was also reflected in the elections.

For years we have talked about and worked on the issues you raise. We have to keep on working on them. We'll talk about our assessment of the election once the process is finished, but we hope it will be a significant improvement over anything we've seen to this day.

Regarding Russia and the Minsk Group, I have no idea what's in the mind of Russian leaders. One of you asked a question about Minister Lavrov's own statement that Karabakh is different than South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Perhaps that reflects a desire to restore the Minsk Group to its normal function. The best way for Russia to show that it's serious and believable again is to fulfill its commitments already made to Georgia and to the French-EU Presidency regarding the ceasefire.

**Question:** Mr. Bryza, I'd also like to ask your opinion about Turkey's proposed peace platform [inaudible] initiated by Turkey. How would you comment on that?

**Bryza:** I would say that everybody should be in favor of peace and stability regardless of what platform it's built upon. For both of our countries, Azerbaijan and the United States, Turkey is a friend and an ally. So if Turkey is able to advance peace and stability here in cooperation with its friends and allies, that's a good thing. Some of the participants or representatives of the countries that would participate, I should say, in that platform raise questions about why the United States and Europe are not part of it but Russia and Turkey are. In Georgia, the government and the people say we prefer not to participate in any such platform as long as Russia occupies our country militarily. We understand that point of view. We also trust our Turkish ally to do the right thing.

**Question:** You mentioned that there will be more U.S. involvement in the process. What specifically do you mean by saying that? What does it really mean?

And you had very interesting route this time. You were in Yerevan and Ankara and then came to Baku. So why such a way? And did you discuss energy issues in Yerevan? What are the visions about the security for BTC after the Georgia conflict?

Sorry for the wide range.

**Bryza:** Regarding the level of our engagement, the Vice President was here just last week. I hope we'll see more activity at a very high level next week in New York at the United Nations General Assembly. Beyond that I will only say that Secretary of State Rice asked me to come here now on her behalf to accelerate our efforts to find a just and lasting settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Regarding the route that I took, there's nothing magical in visiting one city before another one. I wanted to visit all of these places and had to go when the leaders were available.

On energy, we didn't really focus hardly at all on energy in Yerevan. Just a little bit. Electricity issues primarily.

**Question:** A question of three parts.

First of all you were speaking about Turkey becoming increasingly active in [inaudible] trying to find a resolution for the Nagorno-Karabakh. In fact I would like to note that much of the activities by the Turkish side, and whenever the Turkish president has paid a visit to Armenia followed by visits to Azerbaijan. In fact I would ask you, I'd like to ask a question, how much do you see Turkish involvement in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh [inaudible] would contribute to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict? So how much can it affect positive resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

Second question, again I would like to get back to the point, speaking about the Minsk Group format. It's a very simple, very [inaudible] question. Is this group, the Minsk Group, now in existence or not? Because it hasn't really been visible lately. We haven't really been seeing much of activities on behalf of the Minsk Group. So does it exist or it does not?

Also we heard the news about the forthcoming presidential meetings between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan for the ministerial level, the levels of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. So these kinds of activities and these kinds of meetings. Setting up all these meetings requires a lot of effort. So who will be coordinating all of these meetings and bringing the sides closer?

**Bryza:** Very good questions. Thank you.

The first one, Turkey is a member of the Minsk Group. It's just not a Minsk Group co-chair. Turkey knows both Azerbaijan and Armenia in profound ways that differ from the way we know this region. For centuries Armenians and all the nationalities that are part of what is today Turkey lived together in one common Anatolian home. So Turkey knows something about its own region. Both President Gul and President Sarkisian have taken significant political steps that required courage to come together in Yerevan to meet and discuss the future of this region. If they can do this in a way that is reassuring to Azerbaijan, then Turkey will play a very positive role.

Yes, this is a new direction. What happened in Georgia requires new directions, which have created new opportunities.

Of course the Minsk Group exists. As I just said, Turkey is a part of the Minsk Group. Let's look at what happened in the last few months. Presidents Sarkisian and Aliyev had a positive meeting I should say in St. Petersburg in June. The co-chairs came to the region a little while afterward, I think it was in July. We planned to take a break, like the rest of the world, in August. While many people were on vacation, unfortunately the events in Georgia happened, and that has taken up so much of our focus for these past weeks that it has been unrealistic while Russia has occupied Georgia militarily to imagine the Minsk Group functioning as usual. But we're getting back to that I hope, as Russia realizes the costs it has inflicted upon itself and to its reputation and to its economy with its unacceptable actions against Georgia.

Regarding your third question, I don't particularly see why the Presidents of sovereign states elected by their people have to have somebody above them coordinating their actions all the time. They make their own decisions, and as diplomats and co-chairs of the Minsk Group all we can do is offer our advice, our best intentions, and our energy.

**Question:** The first question, I haven't seen much of the response from GUAM after what happened in Georgia. I wonder if GUAM organization that has been so much supported by the United States of America. So in light of what happened in Georgia, what would be the official policies of the United States of America towards GUAM?

The second part of the question, what would be the changes, if there are any, in the foreign policy of the United States of America in this particular region of the world?

**Bryza:** The members of GUAM did respond with significant support to Georgia. Some of that support was quite public as when President Yushchenko in Ukraine said he refused to allow Russia's Black Sea Fleet to return to Sevastopol. Some of that support was quiet, but very significant. But this was a very serious matter that requires the world's leading countries, rather than regional organizations, to respond. Russia violated its own commitment to territorial integrity which it said was the most important concept with regard to Chechnya. Russia attacked Chechnyan separatists. Russia says it was attacking the separatists in response to the separatists' attacks on Russia. How is that different from what happened in Georgia? It was we, the countries of the world, that responded then to Chechnya, and we must respond now to what has happened in Georgia.

The second question?

**Question:** The second question is whether or not there are changes in the foreign policies --

**Bryza:** There's no change at all in the U.S. foreign policy. Everything I've said today reflects longstanding U.S. foreign policy that dates back to the start of President Bush's administration and long before. We're simply being more active. We are here with our friends in Azerbaijan now and in the future. That's not a change, that's simply a more active continuation.

Thank you.

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