



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

of the delegation of Georgia

at the Workshop on Economic and Environmental Activities as

Confidence Building Measures

Vienna, May 30, 2011

Your Excellences, Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are delighted to participate in the Workshop on Economic and Environmental Activities as Confidence Building Measures. I would like to thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator for their efforts in organizing a workshop devoted to Confidence Building Measures and their application. We highly appreciate your endeavours aimed to upgrade this issue in our agenda. We are particularly encouraged by the perspective that this workshop serves as a platform where our further plans will be discussed and developed.

We fully agree with the Chairmanship that economic and environmental problems may become a source of tension or conflicts, and here EED activities as CBMs may play an important early warning and conflict prevention role. To the same degree, encouragement of confidence building process among the relevant affected communities is often decisive in effectively addressing the intra-state unresolved conflicts and preventing them from escalation. Confidence building measures are crucial in linking the war-torn communities and creating a favorable ground for reconciliation and reintegration. The CBMs bear

vital importance for the war affected populations, or populations in the conflict zones, their relief, community reconciliation, reintegration and return to the normal way of life throughout the entire conflict cycle – conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. The EED activities as CBMs have a vital role to play especially in those States where the OSCE presence could not have been maintained.

An exchange of views among the participating States on best practices, successful experiences or new initiatives on how the OSCE economic and environmental activities contribute to the restoration of trust and the enhancement of confidence is a useful practical exercise. In line with the spirit of our exchange, let me provide you with the updated information on the specific confidence-building measures the Government of Georgia has undertaken within the State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation and the consequent Action Plan, which supports the implementation of joint projects and activities between resident and exiled populations of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and fosters interaction among populations separated by occupation lines. Strategy development entailed consultation with many stakeholders: international partners, experts, NGOs, affected populations, opinion makers, etc. The Strategy, which was adopted by the Government of Georgia in January 2010, covers a broad array of avenues for engagement. These include: Economic relations, Infrastructure and transportation, Education, Healthcare, People-to-people interactions, Cultural heritage, Legal and administrative measures, Human right. The Action Plan for Engagement has been approved by the Government of Georgia on July 3, 2010. The Action Plan introduces detailed mechanisms for implementation of the goals articulated in the Strategy. The Action Plan describes four dimensions of engagement – humanitarian, human, social, and economic. More specifically, the Action Plan includes seven instruments that enable communication and cooperation between all communities of Georgia and with the international community, and a menu of programs to advance the above-mentioned goals. Today, the process of the implementation of instruments is underway. A Liaison Mechanism, which serves as an effective channel of communication between the divided communities, is already in operation. A Status-Neutral Identification Card and Travel Document, that enables people habitually residing in Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to fully receive medical, education and social benefits in the rest of Georgia, is already in development. The Liaison Mechanism and Status-Neutral Documents facilitate the future implementation of other instruments called for in the Action Plan.

With concrete projects, unilateral actions, as well as the joint undertakings, the Government of Georgia plans to build confidence between the war-affected communities. The Strategy invites international organizations to support above-mentioned aims. The OSCE's active involvement in the confidence-building processes has fundamental importance as it will further create a more favourable context for political dialogue and will facilitate inter-community activities. We have elaborated the framework of projects that include confidence building measures and which could be successfully carried forward by the OSCE on both sides of the occupation lines for the benefits of the local populations.

To return to the experience of the OSCE in confidence building, we believe that the OSCE should pay a particular attention to the bottom-up approach, aimed at bridging the sentiments of the divided societies, bringing them closer and engaging them in common endeavours. We consider that based on its expertise and experience, the potential of the OSCE to link the divided communities, and build the atmosphere of confidence and trust must be further reinforced. Moreover, when other relevant international or nongovernmental organizations are present on the ground, the OSCE can play a significant coordinating or capacity building role.

Let me present the position of the Government of Georgia on future actions that would place the OSCE at the forefront of pursuing the policy of building trust in the conflict affected areas and strengthen local ownership of confidence building measures:

First of all, let me express our full support to the EU's position presented at the informal consultations on future orientation of the EED, that the contribution of the OSCE in confidence building through strengthening the second dimension should be accordingly reflected in the Vilnius Ministerial Decision. In recent years, in the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE, a number of important guideline documents have been adopted which put forward concrete recommendations on, from one side, how to further revitalize the OSCE role in the EED and from another, how to better integrate the EED into the comprehensive security concept. In line and as a follow up to all these guideline documents, the OSCE should adopt the Ministerial Decision, which will serve as a key framework systematizing already existing commitments. In fact, the OSCE needs to strengthen its normative basis for dealing effectively and successfully with confidence building in entire conflict cycle.

Second, the OSCE should dedicate more structured institutional attention to the link between economic and environmental issues and the entire conflict cycle. In line with the OSCE's comprehensive security concept, encouragement of confidence building measures in war-affected societies is critical not only from human rights and humanitarian, but also from security perspective. In this end, I would like to draw your attention to the proposal which has already been voiced by the Delegation of Georgia previously. Georgia has proposed an establishment of a special autonomous agency within the organization – the OSCE Foundation for the Confidence Building Measures. The role of such Foundation can be instrumental in facilitating the conflict resolution, particularly through the building of confidence among the communities affected by the conflicts. The autonomous character of the Foundation, its inclusiveness, ability to reach out to the non-state actors, independence in the decision-making process and, most importantly, its political neutrality will serve as a guarantee that the activities it undertakes are free from politicization. Allow me to communicate further modalities of the Foundation for the Confidence Building Measures to you later on.

Third, we deem important to prepare report, which will pay due attention and depict concrete and efficient proposals put forward during our dialogue, starting from the Corfu Process, aimed at strengthening the OSCE's capacity to provide an efficient response to emerging crises and existing conflicts through building confidence and trust.

Thank you.