

Statement of the Delegation of Georgia  
At the 2007 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
September 26, 2007

Working Session 5: Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including:  
Migrant Workers, integration of legal migrants;  
Refugees and Displaced persons;  
Treatment of citizens of other participating States

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues

Today at this session, we would like to once again draw your attention to the situation of the Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia. I will try to outline major achievements that we have in regards to the resettlement of the IDPs and challenges, often insurmountable, that we face in this venture.

Situation with IDPs, whose number amounts half a million currently is still grave. Attempts of Georgian government to achieve the full return of the victims of ethnic cleansing to the whole territory of Abkhazia, Georgia are always met negatively by the Abkhazian side, who are failing to understand that the issue of returning of the IDPs is a non-negotiable one, as it directly affects the fates of hundreds of thousands of our citizens. Moreover, return of the IDPs has to happen in safe and dignified conditions, commitment which Abkhazian side is unwilling to implement. On the opposite, they are elaborating restrictive so-called “legislation” to artificially reduce the number of possible returnees, which is another matter of concern to us.

As you might already know the situation in Abkhazia is deteriorating daily. Murders of high officials, widespread corruption and economic stagnation are coupled with the outrageous human rights violations, especially in the parts of the region, which is populated by ethnic Georgians, such as Gali region. Heinous crimes against the persons of Georgian ethnicity and their property is taking place regularly; kidnapping, ransom-seeking and denial of such fundamental rights, as a right to receive education in your own language are taking place regularly.

We are appealing to the OSCE, to take these crimes into consideration and once again call upon all the stakeholders of the conflict to take concrete steps towards the full return to the whole territory of Abkhazia, Georgia, of refugees and internally displaced persons of all ethnicities in safety and dignity.. We believe this issue is held hostage due to the unwillingness of the Abkhazian side to continue the dialogue; meanwhile thousands of people are suffering on a daily basis.

Georgia has been undertaking concrete steps aimed at the improvement of the conditions for IDPs. We are in the process of finalizing the Strategy on the Internally Displaced Persons, which will be implemented from early 2008. The goal of the strategy is two-fold: one, to ensure the successful and effective integration of the IDPs in the Georgian society and, two, to prepare ourselves institutionally and financially for the safe and dignified return of the IDPs to Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Regarding the first issue, Georgian government has already undertaken substantial steps: legislative framework of Georgia, regulating rights and responsibilities towards IDPs and refugees has been arranged so that that their rights are protected solidly; economic and social conditions of the IDPs have been improved; material aid to the families of the victims of ethnic cleansing has been increased, including the support to pay communal taxes. Internally displaced persons are being offered places of

residence in different parts of Georgia, often with the help from the international donor organizations, what we are extremely grateful for.

Regarding the second objective, Georgian government has finished the implementation of the program “My Home”, which was aimed at registering the property and creating a database of the real estate owned by the victims of ethnic cleansing from Abkhazia, Georgia. This geo-informational database includes satellite photos and other documentation of the property, left behind by the victims of ethnic cleansing when they fled the atrocities committed against them in the beginning of the 1990s. Second step now, is to create a database of the state-owned property. Furthermore from 2008 Georgian government will allocate special finds for the return of the IDPs to assist them in resettlement process in Abkhazia, Georgia, if the Abkhazian side allows their return in safe and dignified conditions.

Sometimes, it is disappointing to see that the efforts, that we undertake to ease the conditions of the victims of ethnic cleansing are met with a counter steps from the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and government of Russian Federation. Recently we have been observing the sale of the property owned before by the Georgians who narrowly escaped the death by fleeing Abkhazia, Georgia during the war. Major investors in this property are unfortunately businessmen and government officials from Russian Federation that, as we all know, claims to be an almost exclusive mediator and peacekeeper in this conflict. Selling, as well purchasing of this property, is unjust and inappropriate and represents a legalization of and a final step towards the completion of the process of ethnic cleansing against Georgian citizens.

Deriving from the aforementioned I will conclude with three recommendations, one of which you have already heard yesterday:

- ❖ First, we once again call for an early opening of an independent and capable UN/OSCE Human Rights office in the Gali region, which would adequately address the human rights violations on the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia;
- ❖ Secondly, we would like to see international organizations, who are dealing with the human rights abuses, and mainly OSCE and ODIHR to take into account and not leave without attention grave violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the IDPs, and Georgian population living in the Gali region, Abkhazia, Georgia.
- ❖ And thirdly, we would like to call upon the OSCE member states, particularly Russian Federation, to call upon their businessmen and investors to refrain from carrying out any transaction with regard to immovable property in Abkhazia, Georgia, without the prior consent of Georgian government. In case of such investments, the investor, who has been preliminarily and adequately notified of impermissibility of transactions in question, should recognize that he/she may face a possibility of civil liability or even criminal responsibility.

Thank you for your attention