



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

Delivered by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the OSCE,

Ambassador Paata Gaprindashvili

at the 903rd session of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, March 1, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to briefly make a comment regarding quite an absurd and cynical statement of my distinguished Russian colleague.

First of all, let me say few words on the monument in question. The Batumi City Council made a decision to move the monument of the victims of the World War II from the city center to another location within Batumi. Before making this decision the City Council consulted and agreed with the Veterans Union for the monument to be moved to the memorial park to the victims of the Second World War. The monument will now become an integral part of the park's architectural ensemble.

Those in Moscow, who "care" about the fallen Georgian sons and daughters in WWII, should know that close to 300 thousands of my compatriots out of 3,6 million of the population of Georgia at that time, and not 80 thousand, as it was claimed in the statement of the RF, lost their lives. This effectively means that the per capita casualties incurred by Georgia were one of the highest, if not the highest, in the world! Therefore, manipulating today with this tragedy and numbers is simply disgraceful.

I would like to advise Moscow to focus its attention on other issues which are of current relevance. Instead of having illusory worries about the fate of WWII memorials, it would be more prudent and moral to treat more responsibly the crimes which Russian military forces and intelligence services have been and are still committing in Georgia, as well as in the northern Caucasus, including Chechnya. Many of these heinous crimes, unfortunately, are quite similar to those that had been committed during the Second World

War. Among these crimes, as you all very well know, are killings, acts of ethnic cleansing, daily suppression and abuses of the fundamental human rights and freedoms, terrorist acts, abductions, kidnappings, tortures etc. Russian forces have also been engaged in demolishing and altering various sites of cultural heritage, with an aim of fully cleansing the occupied regions of any Georgian trace.

Let's hope that the Russian Federation will finally be able to abandon soviet style propaganda and will be seeking to solve outstanding issues through dialogue and only by peaceful means.

Thank you.