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Delegation of the Holy See

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MIROSLAW WACHOWSKI,  
ACTING CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF  
THE HOLY SEE, AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 August 2008

**Regarding the statement by Her Excellency Ms. Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Georgia**

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of the Holy See joins the other speakers in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Georgia, and thanks her for her statement.

The Holy See is seriously concerned at the tragic events that have recently taken place in Georgia. Pope Benedict XVI has on more than one occasion voiced his profound distress regarding this matter, expressing his solidarity with the victims, calling for the cessation of military actions, the opening of humanitarian corridors and provisions for the safety and respect of the ethnic minorities involved, and inviting the parties to dialogue and negotiations.

His Holiness has insisted on the need to prevent, at the international level, a return to a head-on confrontation since this could have very grave consequences. This crisis must therefore be prevented from becoming a pretext for unleashing in this area far more extensive confrontations, of which it would become the first victim. In this sense, by heeding the call for dialogue as an instrument for resolving the conflict, one can avoid the choice of reacquiring and building up armaments, considering also the fact that the difficult economic situation in the region calls for altogether different priorities if genuine stability is to be guaranteed.

The Holy See expresses its gratification at the active role that has been played by the OSCE and the European Union in the efforts to bring about peace and it expresses the hope that this intervention can be continued and intensified. This will require a high sense of responsibility and of love for the common good so that legitimate differences will not constitute a barrier to action that is coherent, specific and of great value.

With regard to ethnic conflicts, these can be resolved through dialogue, mutual understanding and the promotion of the legal, social and economic conditions required to

allow peoples to live together in harmony. Recourse to measures of force for the purpose of displacing persons and groups can never be justified. Every human being has rights that are universal and that, for that reason, cannot be denied to anyone, regardless of his or her ethnic affiliation or any other condition. The Holy See firmly reaffirms that it is incumbent on the authorities of every State to respect those rights.

The Holy See urges that the refugees be allowed to return to their homes, that their property be respected and that those who have remained where they were be protected. Those who have not yet returned to their homes must be treated with dignity and accommodated in places where they will not be excluded from society.

The Holy See calls for everything to be done to promote a fair and shared interpretation of the truce agreements that have been signed. In addition, it requests that the dispatch be guaranteed as soon as possible of international observers and, possibly, where necessary, of peacekeeping forces and that the OSCE presence be organized in an increasingly active and effective manner.

Mr. Chairman,

On Sunday, 24 August of this year, the Pope recalled that “the moral force of law, fair and transparent negotiations to settle controversies, starting with those linked to the relationship between the territorial integrity and self-determination of peoples, fidelity to one’s given word, a search for the common good: these are some of the principal paths to take with tenacity and creativity in order to build fruitful and sincere relations and to guarantee present and future generations times of harmony and of moral and civil progress”. Expressing the keen hope that these principles will be applied in the present crisis, our delegation wishes to give assurances of the Holy See’s support for any initiatives leading to a peaceful, just and lasting solution.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman