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**Permanent Council No. 494
12th February 2004**

EU Statement in response to the Address by UN SRSG in Georgia, Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini

The European Union would like to warmly welcome Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Georgia, and the Head of the OSCE Mission in Georgia, Ambassador Roy Reeve to Permanent Council this morning.

We believe this is a timely appearance given the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for a new period terminating on 31 July 2004, as decided by the UN Security Council on 29 January. We welcome the meeting chaired by Ambassador Tagliavini on 10 February in Tblisi to discuss security guarantees.

We welcome the cooperation between the UN and OSCE in Sukhumi, for example in the human rights area and in training of police officers in the Kosovo Police Service School.

The recent changes in the leadership of Georgia, following the Presidential elections, have opened a new window of opportunity for the country. We hope that this new momentum will be seized to transform the country into a democratic, stable and prosperous society. The EU remains committed to assisting the reform process in Georgia through the range of EU instruments and policies.

Mr Chairman, once again we would like to stress our full support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia.

A peaceful resolution of the outstanding conflicts in Georgia will facilitate the democratisation of the country and contribute to stability in the whole region of the South Caucasus.

In this context, we fully support the ongoing efforts for a conflict settlement in Abkhazia, Georgia. We welcome the positive momentum given to the United Nations-led peace process by the Georgian-Russian summit meeting in March 2003 and high level meetings of the Group of Friends in Geneva and hope the upcoming Geneva 3 meeting next week, designed to bring the peace process forward, will

provide concrete results. We hope that the visit earlier this week by President Saakashvili to President Putin in Moscow will be instrumental in this respect as well.

We lend full support for the document on “Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competence between Tbilisi and Sukhumi”, which we believe forms the basis for the settlement of the political status of Abkhazia within the state of Georgia.

We regret the continuing lack of progress on the initiation of the political status negotiations. However, we note with satisfaction the understanding of all parties that a settlement of the conflict can only be achieved through peaceful means, and their willingness to engage constructively in this matter.

Mr Chairman, success in Georgia will have significant potential for positive spillover for the region as a whole. The EU continues to actively contribute to these efforts. Our Special Representative Heikki Talvitie continues to follow the situation closely and lend his full support. The European Commission remains ready to examine how its rehabilitation instrument can be used to further the conflict settlement process.

Success can, however, only be achieved if all parties work together constructively. We therefore call upon them to engage and participate in a more active, regular and structured manner in the political settlement process. We wish to thank Ambassador Tagliavini for her work and wish her success in the future.

The Acceding Countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia and the Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey align themselves with this statement.