



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

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STATEMENT

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze at the 685th Permanent Council
Vienna, 1st November, 2007*

Mr. Chairman

I would like to address the Permanent Council today regarding the dangerous incident that occurred on October 30 in Ganmukhuri, Zugdidi District, Georgia, during which scores of Russian peacekeepers in three armoured personnel carriers surrounded a youth peace camp and severely beat five Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel who were guarding the camp. The guards, who were then handcuffed to a Russian personnel carrier, were released only after the intervention of Georgian police and arrival of Georgian President and Minister of Internal Affairs on the spot.

This attack was recorded on video by the Russian peacekeepers, which accidentally, due to the courageous behaviour of one of the journalists, was seized from them. This video is available here and also on the Web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and you can clearly see the armoured vehicles approaching the Ganmukhuri youth camp and Russian peacekeepers attacking employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and beating them severely.

These reckless and inhuman actions of the Russian peacekeepers are in direct violation of the CIS mandate and are aimed at destabilizing the situation in the conflict zone. I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that this attack is only the latest in a series of destabilizing acts by the Russian side aimed to undermine the peace process in Georgia. Bombing of Upper Abkhazia on March 11 and missile attack on the territory of Georgia on August 6 are among such acts as well.

This unprecedented act is even more worrisome, if we take into account that the former commander of the CIS PKF, Russian General Sergey Chaban is still acting in his capacity despite his mandate having expired in February 2006. The CIS Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs never extended his mandate since then, therefore his actions and all the orders that he issues are illegitimate. Moreover, General Chaban is staying on the territory of

Georgia without visa, thus in direct violation of Georgian legislation. Georgian side has addressed the CIS and the Russian Federation on numerous occasions to recall General Chaban, but to no avail.

Yesterday Georgian side has once again addressed the Russian Federation and the Executive Committee of the CIS to recall General Chaban while the National Security Council of Georgia, which met in the emergency session, recommended declaring him unwelcome on the territory of Georgia. Now we are hoping for the rational decision from the side of Russian Federation to immediately recall this person.

It is especially worrisome that Ganmukhuri incident took place against a backdrop of recent small progress in the conflict resolution process, which was reified in the visit of the Georgian State Minister on Conflict Resolution Issues to Sokhumi on 25 October and handing over to Abkhazian side saboteurs detained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in the special operation on September 20, 2007.

This attack also occurred at the time when the Prime Minister of Georgia and the State Minister on Conflict resolution Issues were visiting Vienna to address the OSCE delegations on current issues with regard to the conflict resolution processes, with an aim to consult with you on the future ways for peaceful solution.

And need not forget that this attack has taken place only two months after the 6 August Tselubani missile attack, during which a Russian fighter jet fired an-anti radar missile on Georgian territory and discussions over which are still continuing in different international organizations, including this one, to find a forward looking approaches aimed at preventing such acts from happening in the future.

While Georgian side is taking steps to ensure the peaceful solution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while we are extending our hand to re-launch the peaceful dialogue with all sides, the state, which has taken a responsibility to facilitate the conflict resolution is undertaking steps that are aimed only at the destabilization of the situation and undermining the dialogue. We can only conclude that this chain of events reveal the Russian policy of provoking tension immediately after every positive development in Georgia, especially with regard to the conflict resolution processes.

The above unprovoked attack has once again made it obvious the need for comprehensive in-depth review, under the UN aegis, of the current peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia. In order to reach this goal, the Government of Georgia decided to hold consultations with international organizations and partner states.

We make clear distinction/separation between peacekeeping operation proper and peace negotiations. While requesting drastic changes in the current peacekeeping, we stand ready to continue peace negotiations using all result oriented mechanisms.

I want to be absolutely clear on that, our aim is not to further escalate the situation in the conflict zone, but to make sure that the tensions in the region are reduced and no such attacks ever happen again in the future. We do not plan to make any hasty decisions, hence our appeal to the international community to discuss how and under what modalities can we continue peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, but this time without the presence of the biased side.

We call for the support of the international community and international organizations involved in the maintenance of peace and security in Europe to take this issue seriously and to start elaborating the ways together with us how can Russian peacekeepers be replaced in Abkhazia.

Thank You.