

REMARKS

ENGLISH only

President of Georgia H.E. Mikheil Saakashvili

at OSCE Summit

Astana, Kazakhstan

December 1, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Heads of States and Governments,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to thank the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE for their tireless efforts in organizing this Summit in Astana.

I also would like to express my appreciation to the people of Kazakhstan for their always wonderful hospitality and the very warm welcome they have extended to us.

An OSCE Summit is a rare event, and we must seize the opportunity it affords us.

Our common mission at this summit is to agree on a set of concrete steps to make the OSCE a true security community—one free of dividing lines, conflicts, and spheres of influence, a community in which human rights are

respected and people live in dignity. We need a common vision for how to enforce the principles that define the OSCE, for how to foster cooperation and quell rivalries, and a strategy to help us overcome the dangerous tensions and so-called “frozen conflicts” that undermine the stability of our common area.

I am confident that we can make substantial progress.

But we cannot do so if we ignore the difficulties we face or overlook the problems still to be resolved.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thirty-five years ago, the Helsinki Final Act marked a fundamental shift in the history of international relations by affirming a set of principles to bind the behavior of states. These included the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the territorial integrity of states, and respect for international law and human rights.

Unfortunately, over three decades later, these principles are still being violated within the OSCE area.

Eleven years ago, at the last OSCE Summit in Istanbul, we witnessed the adoption of another set of fundamental principles embodied in the Istanbul Summit Declaration and the Charter for European Security.

If those commitments had been upheld, Georgia would have been liberated from the presence of foreign troops on her soil. Unfortunately, Russia reneged on the obligations it undertook in Istanbul—both with respect to Georgia and to other states.

In fact, contrary to the spirit of Istanbul, Russia dramatically increased the size of its forces illegally stationed within our internationally recognized borders. Today, more than 12,000 heavily armed troops enforce the Russian occupation of 20% of Georgian territory. This is in blatant violation of the Helsinki principles, the Istanbul Declaration, international law, and the August 12, 2008, ceasefire brokered by the European Union.

If we treat these principles as a dead letter, our community is destined to die as well. By contrast, if we commit to implementing them, we can make progress toward being a real security community—one in which there is mutual sympathy, trust, and a sense of common interest.

These commitments have to be respected in all three dimensions, not only in the politico-military realm. We all agree today that the human dimension is a prerequisite for comprehensive and indivisible security. But in our case, the human dimension commitments have been violated as well. In 1994 and 1996, the OSCE Summits in Budapest and Lisbon condemned the ethnic cleansing in Georgia and called for the safe, dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

And yet, the number of IDPs and refugees has continued to increase since then, climbing to 500,000 after the ethnic cleansing campaign of 2008. Half a million souls are thus deprived of their most basic human rights because of their origins, their nationalities, their faith, or their political views. Human rights continue to be violated on a daily basis in the occupied Georgian regions. The OSCE has reported on this many times throughout the last two years, as you all know very well.

These facts, ladies and gentlemen, must not be ignored or overlooked, and

previous OSCE agreements must be fulfilled.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I came here not with a litany of laments, but with a message of hope—and a profound commitment to helping lead positive change in our security community. I came here to tell you that these tragic facts can be reversed, that they will be reversed, and that our conflict with the Russian Federation can be resolved.

The way forward is through a comprehensive dialogue, not permanent confrontation. We must rely on the power of words, not of bombs.

On November 23rd, one week ago, I made the solemn pledge in front of the European Parliament that Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty, that it will only resort to peaceful means in its quest for the de-occupation and reunification of its territory.

Even if the Russian Federation refuses to withdraw its occupation forces, even if its proxy militias multiply their human rights violations, Georgia will only retain the right to self-defense in the case of new attacks and invasion of the 80% of the Georgian territory that remains under control of the Georgian government. We have made this pledge because we believe that peace is the only way to achieve our legitimate and legal goals.

I have just sent the letters formalizing Georgia's pledge to the Secretaries General of the OSCE, the UN and NATO, as well as to the Presidents of the European Commission, the European Council, and the United States.

I came here animated by the same spirit, reiterating my call to the Russian leadership to engage in serious negotiations—to engage in dialogue rather than in polemics.

Unfortunately, despite our numerous calls, Russia has not agreed to a dialogue with Georgia, either bilaterally or within the framework of the OSCE. Dialogue between Moscow and Tbilisi remains one of the stumbling blocks of the Astana Declaration. Yet this organization is built upon dialogue and consensus. At our last Summit, 11 years ago, we encountered serious differences and overcame them through dialogue. We must muster the same resolve today, because without dialogue, we will never bridge our differences.

I am committed, without any reservations, to engage in a dialogue as soon as possible and to seek a peaceful resolution of our conflict with the Russian Federation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all want to forge a new common space, free of dividing lines, spheres of influence, and the tensions we have inherited from history. We all want to have a true security community.

We need a stronger, better, and more resolute OSCE, one that does not shy away from tackling real problems and that serves as a forum for dialogue between both partners and foes, between Presidents and Foreign Ministers, among diplomats from all our states.

Our future as a secure community will depend on our ability to keep making progress, to move out from under the accumulated weight of the problems of the past, and thus have the strength to confront the common challenges we face in the 21st century.

We must not allow the past to undermine our future. The tools we have at our disposal are dialogue and consensus. For these to work, we must engage each other with mutual respect and a true commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Georgia is committed to this path and I am confident that, with the help of a strengthened OSCE, peace and cooperation will prevail in our region.

Thank you.