

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 947th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 April 2013

**Regarding the results of the  
23rd round of the Geneva discussions on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 26 and 27 March the 23rd round of the international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus was held in Geneva. Taking part in those discussions in line with tradition were representatives of the three countries of the region – the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Republic of South Ossetia – and also the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE.

During this round the South Ossetian and Abkhazian parties stressed the priority need to conclude with Georgia bilateral agreements of a legally binding nature on security guarantees and the unacceptability of Tbilisi's attempts to evade a discussion of this subject. Unfortunately, it again proved impossible to agree on a joint statement by all the participants in the Geneva discussions on the non-use of force. A discussion of the compromise version of a draft statement prepared by the co-chairmen was deferred until the next meeting because of the unwillingness of the Georgian side to submit it for an expert review. Regrettably, the Georgian side took the unhelpful position of again insisting on certain unilateral commitments by Russia regarding the non-use of force. For us this is fundamentally unacceptable: Russia was not a party to the conflict five years ago.

There was a detailed exchange of views regarding the current situation on the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. It was noted that the situation in that regard was relatively stable. We consider it important that the participants reaffirm the key role of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM) in the process of stabilizing the region. The continuing incidents, the lack of trust and the claims raised by the different parties call for heightened vigilance and greater use of the IPRM. The local inhabitants do not feel completely safe. Also emphasized at the Geneva meeting was the need to resume the work of the Georgian-Abkhazian IPRM in Gali. We trust that the parties will find a solution to the "situation" that has arisen there.

The Abkhazian delegation called attention to fresh instances involving the appearance of Georgian special service personnel on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia and of

“Georgian piracy” in the waters of the Black Sea (the reference is to the seizure on 20 March of the vessel “Ayder”). The South Ossetian side rejected the objections by Tbilisi expressed earlier within the framework of the relevant IPRM regarding the erection of structural barriers in the border zone, reaffirming its right to secure the State border.

There was an exchange of opinions on the drafts presented by specialists from the United Nations and the OSCE having to do with the strengthening of security and the restoration of confidence, specifically with respect to the United Nations proposals on facilitating border crossing arrangements on the basis of the practices developed under the IPRM. The Abkhazian and South Ossetian parties stressed that the problems allegedly occurring in this area were an invention. The numbers involved attest to the fact that no such problems exist: over the last three months 121,000 persons and 7,500 vehicles crossed the Georgian-Abkhazian border, while more than 31,000 citizens and 7,000 vehicles crossed the Georgian-South Ossetian border. As is obvious from these figures, there are in fact no serious difficulties here.

We note the usefulness of the OSCE’s “water” projects in the border regions of Georgia and South Ossetia.

In the humanitarian group the representatives of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia “synchronized their watches” as regards the most pressing issues on the current agenda. Regarding the question of internally displaced persons and refugees, we all know where the problem in discussing that issue lies. The Abkhazian side proposed that the possibility of facilitating the conditions for foreign travel by citizens of the two Trans-Caucasus republics be discussed at future meetings.

Thank you for your attention.