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

STATEMENT

*Of the Delegation of Georgia at the 772th Permanent Council
Vienna 3 September, 2009*

Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to greet you and express hope, that you have enjoyed the summer recess.

Today I would like to give you a brief account of the developments in Georgia throughout the month of August and update you regarding the situation on the ground.

Regretfully, I have to report to the PC that during the summer break the situation in the Georgian occupied regions of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia has remained tense and to some extent has further deteriorated. Let me portray these facts in a chronological order.

The run up to the anniversary of the Russian aggression and invasion of Georgia in August 2008, was marred by the disinformation campaign, carried out by the high-ranking Russian officials and the proxy officials, as well as military provocations across the occupation line. These concerted efforts of Russia and its proxy regimes were intended to escalate tensions. We are grateful to the EUMM Mission, which on various occasions has reported that Russian accusations were groundless and ensured the enhanced patrolling in the areas adjacent to the occupied territories in that sensitive time.

It is noteworthy, that EUMM tried to promptly react to the military provocations that occurred from the occupied territories of Georgia. On July 31 EUMM called an ad hoc meeting of the IPRM to discuss the shelling that occurred in Zemo Nikozi on 29 July, when Georgian checkpoint came under intensive fire. Georgian authorities tried to contact relevant persons via the

hotline, agreed during the IPRM, however those efforts proved to be futile. Against this background, on July 30 in this very hall Russian Ambassador accused Georgia of instigating fire and ignored the ad hoc meeting of the IPRM in Ergneti. Later, during the IPRM meeting in Dvani on August 14 Ossetians acknowledged to have opened the fire.

The August 2009 was marked by frequent visits of the Russian highest officials to the occupied zones. On the anniversary of the August 12 Cease-fire agreement, in violation of the Georgian state borders, without prior consent of the Georgian Authorities, Putin visited the occupied territories of Abkhazia. We highly appreciate the reaction of the international community to the above mentioned visit, as well as to the visit of President Medvedev to Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia on July 13, 2009.

I would like to draw your particular attention to a very alarming instance that happened on the same date. On August 12, 2009 Special Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, Ambassador Charalampos Christopoulos was denied access to the territory of Tskhinvali region. Such approach points clearly to Moscow's attitude to international organizations and its international commitments as such.

Madam Chairperson,

As the anniversary of the illegal, unilateral recognition by Russia of Georgia's occupied territories on August 26, 2008 approached, another wave of gross violations of international norms and principles unleashed.

The Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, prepared a draft resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation on the organization of biospheric polygon of Tabard's national biosphere reserve', envisaging building an ecological corridor in the North Caucasus, which, according to this document, will contain within one zone the internationally famed biosphere reserves of the Caucasus and Tabard, as well as Sochi and Dauti federal reserves and Ritsa and Kodori National Parks of Abkhazia, Georgia. This is another demonstration, that Georgian national resources in the occupied territories are being stolen under the supervision of Russian occupation troops. Moreover, in complete disregard for the requirements of ecological safety, the construction of Sochi Olympic facilities is paralleled by the extraction of inert materials and destruction of forests, which may wreak ecological disaster in the Black Sea region.

On 24 August 2009, leader of the proxy regime in Sokhumi voiced the decision to transfer the right to operate the Abkhaz section of the Georgian railways to the Russian Railways. Clearly, with the goal of transporting the stolen resources Moscow now tries to seize the Abkhaz section of the Georgian railways.

As to the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, on 26 August 2009, a Dzuarikau-Tskhinvali gas line was opened in Tskhinvali providing a connection between Russia and the Georgia's occupied region. Any activity of Russia and its companies, including the construction of the gas-line and its further exploitation on the territory of Georgia, without Georgia's consent, is a direct infringement on Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the Georgian Internationally recognized borders.

The latest military incident from the territories under the full and effective control of the occupying forces, took place on August 28 when a police checkpoint came under fire from the village of Otobaia, Gali district. The Shooting from machine-guns and grenade launchers lasted for ten minutes. As a result, two policemen of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs suffered injuries. This is yet another link in the chain of well-planned and targeted provocations, which already resulted in deaths of 23 Georgian policemen and peaceful civilians.

In addition to the said, we would like to express our deep concern with the destabilizing trend in the Black Sea Region. Whilst Georgia is exercising its constitutional rights in the territorial waters, airspace, the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of Georgia, Russia and its proxy regime have claimed to sink Georgian ships. Based on media reports, the Russian side made a decision to instruct the Federal Security Service (FSB) coast guard to protect from detention the vessels illegally entering the so-called "Abkhazian territorial waters". We are convinced that this is an extremely alarming development and requires imminent reaction from international community.

Dear Colleagues,

One year after the August war we witness continuous negligence of international norms and principles of international norms and non-compliance with international commitments by Russia. We urge the whole international community to continue voicing their calls for the respect of international law and exert pressure on the violating state. On the eve of the second phase of the Corfu Process, which starts already next Tuesday, we hope that our efforts will yield more results as we start to address the vital issues of European Security.

And Finally, we urge the Russian Federation to reverse its totally illegal decision to recognize independence of Georgian provinces and fully withdraw its occupation forces as envisaged by the 12 August ceasefire agreement.

Thank You.