

**Address of Ambassador Altai Efendiev  
Secretary General of the  
Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM  
(OSCE Permanent Council, June 8, 2017)**

At the outset, I would like to thank the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, as well as the Georgian GUAM Presidency for the invitation and for the opportunity to address the OSCE Permanent Council on behalf of the ODED-GUAM. I'm honored to do that at this august body.

I will briefly share with you our assessment and concerns of the situation evolving within and around our frontiers, our collective responses to the challenges we are confronted with, as well as our priorities and prospects of cooperation.

I will try also to outline the areas where our organizations can develop closer cooperation aimed at the promotion of security, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

GUAM, as a regional framework of cooperation, which unites 4 founding members – Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, has evolved into a full-fledged international organization with developed mechanisms of cooperation embracing wide spectrum of activities in political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, as well as security spheres.

This year we celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Organization today represents coherent, consistent and solid regional framework of cooperation, where Member States are united by a common interests and strategic goals. It is unfortunate that all four Member States also share common problems and challenges emanating from the flagrant violation of their territorial integrity.

It is due to these features that all our activities are streamlined to enhance security, stability and cooperation in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea region - strategically increasingly important area for European and wider international security and economy.

Charged with such a vision and a set of objectives, the Program of the current Georgian Chairmanship under the motto "Together for Stronger GUAM", provides a very good platform to strengthen the role and place of GUAM as a regional stakeholder.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me briefly depict the security environment in which we operate. As you well know, all our Member States suffer from unresolved conflicts, some of them for decades. To our deep regret, the situation in GUAM area has evolved through the years from bad to worse, and by now it counts the highest score of most hot and dangerous conflicts in Europe.

Two years ago, in 2015, my predecessor in his statement to the PC outlined the most important events of concern to our Organization following the annexation of Crimea, raising serious concerns and calling for international engagement.

However, our countries continue to stay in political epicenter and are treated with all feasible ways of destabilization: acts of direct or hybrid annexation of territories, defrosting of the conflicts, fueling the new ones, sustaining economic blockade at outer borders and triggering political crisis at home.

These conflicts undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of our Member States, impede their democratic development and hinder regional cooperation and development.

In 2016 we all witnessed unprecedented escalation of tension and military warfare across the region, entailing increasing death toll among military personnel and civilians, causing many casualties and damages.

In February 2017 we have voiced our growing concerns at the UN Security Council Open debate on “Conflicts in Europe” under the agenda item “Maintenance of International peace and security”, held under Ukrainian Presidency at UN SC.

In April 2017 we all mourned for the loss of a life of a team member of the OSCE Special Monitoring mission in Eastern Ukraine, yet another stark reminder of the gravity of the situation.

These conflicts are major source of instability not only for GUAM Member States, but also for Europe and should be addressed through active and purposeful engagement of international community to bring peace, stability and security through their resolution.

We strongly believe that the conflicts in GUAM area should find peaceful resolution exclusively on the basis of the universally recognized norms and principles of the international law with strong and consistent support of international community. OSCE could provide a unique capacity towards that end as this is the only large scale platform which puts together almost all global players.

With this view, GUAM stands a consolidated position, sustaining the OSCE principles of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders, and seeking for collective solutions on stabilization of political situation and economic development.

Mr. Chairman,

ODED-GUAM in its activities is trying to adjust to unstable, very complicated, extremely challenging and dynamically evolving environment through elaboration and adoption of common policy responses, based on common interests. Our aim is to preserve stability, enhance security, encourage tighter regional cooperation and ensure economic development, as well as to broaden and strengthen ties with international partners.

I would refer just to two major regional initiatives based on the long-term strategic interests of the GUAM member states – development of the GUAM Transport Corridor and implementation of the “Agreement on the establishment of Free Trade Zone among GUAM Participating

States” that are being realized. GUAM Member States have embarked on these intertwined initiatives to stimulate trade and transportation as well as utilize their transit potential.

The concept of GUAM Transport Corridor envisages establishment of transport links for multimodal transportation utilizing its geographic advantage by providing connection between Central and Northern Europe and Central Asia and beyond.

GUAM geography and its transport/transit potential sound even more relevant and important now for providing alternative connectivity between Europe and Asia in view of the regional and wider international developments. The development of alternative land route along the East-West connection, passing through the Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus and further to the West is viewed as potentially most viable and competitive. One of the strongest advantages of the GUAM Transport Corridor, which underpins its international importance and significance, stems from its possibility to provide interconnections and extensions in different geographical directions.

We are confident that by serving as an important international trade and transport artery linking two global economic centers, GUAM Transport Corridor can contribute to cooperation, development, stability and prosperity that will spill over well beyond its frontiers. GUAM Transport Corridor perfectly fits into the concept of connectivity that is gaining popularity as a mean to address many regional imbalances and inequalities that is considered as the feeding and breeding ground for all sorts of extremism. It can provide a vital alternative for the landlocked countries in Central Asia with no access to international markets, to promote cooperation and integration. GUAM concept also can be viewed in line with “One Belt – One Road” initiative of China. Route passing through the GUAM territory is praised as potentially most attractive land route, alternative to the functioning ones that are rapidly approaching their capacity limits.

Our vision of the role and the place of the GUAM Transport Corridor within the developing transport network architecture connecting Europe with Asia reflected in a written contribution to the Berlin OSCE Conference “Connectivity for Commerce and Investments”, held in May 18-19 2016 in Berlin, organized by the German OSCE Chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman,

Realization of this initiative can constitute an important area of cooperation between our two organizations within the OSCE Economic dimension. We are confident that if, together with all interested parties, we succeed in developing this route as safe, secure, efficient and competitive, it will contribute immensely to stability, security and sustainable development well beyond the region.

It is with this vision that on March 27 this year GUAM Heads of Government met in Kyiv to provide political impetus to the implementation of these flagship initiatives. Prime Ministers signed documents aimed at facilitation of their practical implementation, as well as adopted Joint Statement in which reaffirmed strong political will and backing.

The same day Prime Ministers addressed the GUAM Business Forum calling upon and inviting business communities and foreign partners to actively participate in the implementation of

these initiatives. And I'm glad to inform that responding to that appeal, just a week ago, on May 31 in Odessa, a new initiative to establish GUAM Association of Business Cooperation to provide an important link between private enterprise and commercial entities with inter-governmental bodies was launched in Odessa. Representatives of interested third countries also attended the event.

We are very much interested and keen in further promoting and developing these projects with all interested parties, who share the same vision and objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Stressing the necessity of international cooperation, its purposes are also seen as promoting stability and strengthening security via enhanced cooperation in particular on securing border and customs control, combating international terrorism, crime and drug trafficking, based on norms and principles of international law, as well as best patterns of regional cooperation and European experience.

These activities are based on solidarity of four member-states, concerted foreign policy priorities in appropriate spheres and common challenges we are facing. GUAM has a strategic vision of law enforcement cooperation fixed in a number of appropriate quadrilateral agreements of its Member States. It stands for a framework of cooperation implemented by GUAM working bodies linked by the Virtual Center and based on the cryptographically protected Intergovernmental Information Analytical System. In particular, in the context of new challenges, GUAM Memorandum of Understanding on Cyber Security, which is underway now, is very commendable. We deem it also to be very topical in the light of the conference "Cyber Security for Critical Infrastructure: Strengthening Confidence Building in the OSCE" held last February in Vienna.

Resting on its regional ownership, GUAM is also interested in extending partnership in the sphere of the "second basket" of OSCE, covering, in particular, the issues of environmental crimes: trafficking hazardous and other waste, ozone-depleting substances, rare and endangered species where the latter has an excellent experience and history of project implementation.

It is obvious that this cooperation implies the advantage of implementation of joint projects and programs of cooperation, including the support of external partners.

Having said that, I would derive that it is highly important to maintain and augment the existing GUAM-OSCE dialog and cooperation, especially in the context of the development of new projects in law enforcement and emergency situation spheres.

Based on the benefits gained from the existing model of OSCE-GUAM interaction, I feel confident that this might be what we need to get started with developing joint programs of cooperation in future. These programs could include for example some specific areas as risk-mitigating activities.

Mr. Chairman,

In pursuance of its objectives GUAM stands to broaden and strengthen its international cooperation with all our partners – the Baltic states, the countries of the V4 group, the US. As an example I would like to refer to GUAM-Japan cooperation. In December 2015, on the sidelines of OSCE Annual Conference in Belgrade, GUAM-Japan Cooperation Program has been signed by ministers aimed at widening and deepening of our multi-faceted interaction. In 2016 on the sidelines of the OSCE Council in Hamburg, Ministers adopted the Joint Communiqué confirming principled and consistent stance of parties on important issues of common interest. We are grateful and highly appreciate the support and assistance of the Government of Japan.

The 71<sup>st</sup> UN GA Resolution of November 26, 2016, based on the experience of our cooperation, acknowledged the role and place of ODED-GUAM as regional organization and called for strengthening and widening of cooperation with the UN organizations and specialized agencies aimed at joint implementation of initiatives and projects of common interests.

Another important factor that will add new dynamics to the development in the region is relations and cooperation between the EU and GUAM Member States emanating from the Association agreements with the EU of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and Comprehensive Partnership agreement under negotiation with the Republic of Azerbaijan.

We believe that all mentioned above opens up new promising prospects and opportunities for a fruitful cooperation aimed at promotion of security, stability and sustainable development across the Black Sea-Caspian Sea region.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished participants,

ODED-GUAM, as a regional stakeholder, now as never before, is facing the challenge of transforming this strategically important area into the zone of peace, stability, security, cooperation and sustainable development. We believe that it is in the interests of the whole international community. We are looking for partnership and cooperation with all who share same vision, goals and objectives.

I thank you for your attention.