



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

S T A T E M E N T

**of the Georgian Delegation delivered at the Permanent Council
meeting by the Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Paata Gaprindashvili
(Vienna, 18 September 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to express a profound concern with regard to the recent destructive step of the Russian delegation to wreck the negotiations on the deployment of 80 additional OSCE Military Monitoring Officers to Georgia. You are well aware that dedicated efforts of all delegations, who participated in the negotiation process, were directed at elaborating a consensus document. Through intensive cooperation with all participants, tireless efforts by the Chairmanship, our delegations were able to come up with a promising draft on Friday 11 September, which we all believed to be a common denominator between differing positions of the sides. Adoption of the draft by the Permanent Council was expected even this week.

Unfortunately our expectations didn't come true, as this week the Russian delegation distributed an absolutely new draft of the decision, principally differing from the text we had elaborated through our long work here at the OSCE. This step of the Russian side was especially surprising for us since the text of 11 September was drafted by incorporating many of proposals by the Russian Federation itself.

This only indicates lack of serious and responsible attitude from the Russian Federation to this utmost important issue, which is in closest connection to the security in one of the OSCE regions. While deploring this setback caused by the Russian side, we remain committed to look for ways finally to achieve consensus on deployment of additional 80 OSCE Monitors to Georgia.

We are once again witnessing the manipulation of the facts from the Russian Federation, as well as continued attempts to stall negotiations over the issues, which are extremely important and to avoid responsibility of implementing its international commitments. We need to stand strong and united, and we need to make sure that no such attempts are tolerated.

Mr. Chairman,

Against this background it should be noted that the Russian Federation continues to violate cease-fire agreement, which was, as Russian side claims, proposed and signed by the President of the Russian Federation D.Medvedyev.

In contradiction to the principle of the agreement to cease hostilities and refrain from further using of force, Russian armed forces are continuing to open fire at Georgian law enforcers. Even during most recent days repeated attacks have been carried out on Georgian police from the territories currently controlled by the Russian military forces, resulting in casualties among Georgian police officers. On 13 September 2008, a Georgian check-point located in the territory of the village of Ganmukhuri came under fire from the territory currently controlled by the Russian military forces. As a result, a Georgian police officer was lethally wounded and died soon after he was brought to a hospital. We have to note that during this incident Georgian side did not return fire.

Cease-fire agreement envisages that the parties should give free access to the humanitarian assistance towards those in need. Despite this, the Russian Federation's military checkpoints north of Gori represent an obstacle to humanitarian relief efforts as well as to people trying to return to their homes. Several international organizations have complained about this.

Unarmed OSCE MMOs who are supposed to monitor the situation on the ground and report on a number of issues, including humanitarian needs, are not allowed into the Georgian villages south to the zone of conflict. Even though, MMOs have managed to get to the north of the Karaleti, this is not yet a regular practice.

Once again I have to repeat to my Russian colleagues that Russian Federation must comply with its obligations under six-point cease-fire agreement and must give free access to the OSCE MMO's to enter all areas required for effective monitoring of the situation on the ground.

As of the humanitarian situation on the ground, all aforementioned actions are accompanied by conducting widespread pattern of abuse, pillage and destruction throughout South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia and especially in ethnic Georgian villages, which in many cases confirmed in reports issued by international human rights organizations. They note vulnerability of ethnic Georgian civilians in the region to serious human rights abuses, including deliberate attacks on the basis of their ethnicity, despite the end of large-scale hostilities. As reflected in the 16 August Spot Report of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, this process of harassment of Georgian population is continuing even now.

It actually has become even more intense after the Russian President's recognition of independence of the separatist regions, thus providing yet another proof that persecution of ethnic Georgians on the occupied territories is a deliberate policy aimed at achieving political goals, rather than being isolated cases of violence.

Mr. Chairman,

Instead of sparing no efforts to ensure compliance of the Russian side with its international obligations, the Minister Lavrov is rather preoccupied by his visits in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali and preparing the agreements with the criminal regimes of the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which aim at having significant amounts of Russian troops (up to 4000 personnel) in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia. This is an outright violation of the six-point cease-fire agreement, which provides for the withdrawal of all Russian forces to the positions held prior to the outbreak of the hostilities. On this background, the ambiguous request by Minister Lavrov of some additional security guarantees from Georgia is beyond any logic, especially while denying the international monitors entrance in the region, and in exchange offering just oral confirmation of peaceful intentions by criminals, to which he referred to in his recent interview in Tskhinvali.

Decision by the Russian Federation to establish diplomatic ties with Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia needs to be deplored as a further provocation, which in no case aims at resolving the existing crisis in the region. It is even more deplorable, when such decision is commented by the Minister Lavrov as being “good for everyone in the region, including Georgia”.

In general, it is quite disappointing that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation took a role of main mouthpiece for the Russian propagandist machinery to the extent higher than even Mr. Putin. Instead of engaging in constructive dialogue with the international community, which is the primary task for the Foreign Minister, he prefers to stage and orchestrate press-conferences held jointly with the heads of the criminal regimes.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the decision taken by the Council on External Relations of the EU to send an independent civilian observer mission to Georgia, under European Security and Defence Policy, to be deployed by 1 October 2008. Further we appreciate appointment of Mr. Pierre Morel as the Special Representative of the European Union for the crisis in Georgia and look forward to fruitful cooperation with him. Georgia highly values and appreciates decisiveness and promptness with which the EU is deploying its ESDP mission in Georgia.

Accordingly, together with the EU and the rest of the International Community we expect the Russian Federation to start withdrawing by 1st of October all of its military forces from the occupied territories in Georgia, to the lines held prior to the outbreak of the hostilities, and finalise the process of withdrawal by 10th of October, as agreed between the Presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev on 8 September 2008.

Failing by the Russian Federation to comply with this obligation would clearly demonstrate its extreme disrespect to its international commitments and to one of the core principles of international relations – *pacta sunt servanda*. It is our common understanding that compliance of the Russian Federation with its international

obligations will be a catalyst it can start redeeming its international reputation as a more or less reliable international partner.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Russian Ambassador in his much lyrical statement today once again tried to manipulate with facts and to mislead the OSCE community. Let me state as clear as possible: The Russian Federation had been conducting provocations, including military ones for years against Georgia. This year it started a full scale war against Georgia.

Therefore, allow me to give you a non-exhaustive list of remarkable episodes in this connection. From 2004 onwards, Russia repeatedly rejected Georgian peace proposals, notably undermining implementation of the 2005 Ljubljana Peace Plan, which we all agreed on in Ljubljana. Further instances of Russian actions and activities include: gaining a stranglehold over separatist governments from 2005 onwards; building an illegal base near Tskhinvali (2006); the illegal lifting of the CIS arms/economic embargo in March 2008 before the Bucharest Summit; the establishment of legal links between Russia and the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in April 2008 right after the Bucharest Summit; downing the Georgian aircraft in Georgian airspace in April 2008; increasing troop strength and introducing paratroopers and other illegal heavy weaponry and offensive forces into Abkhazia in May/June 2008, including railroad troops to prepare railroads for invasion; responding to Georgian peace proposals with provocations in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia; the attempt by separatists to assassinate the South Ossetian unionist leader (July 3, 2008); Russia's defiant acknowledgement that it had violated Georgian airspace (10 July 2008); large-scale Russian military exercises undertaken near South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia, in July 2008, without the forces being redeployed to their peacetime locations after the conclusion of manoeuvres on 2 August; the rejection by separatists, on Russian instructions, of the German-mediated peace plan (18 July 2008); the failure of the separatists to appear at the EU-organized peace talks from 22 to 24 July 2008; and the rejection of the peace talks proposed by the OSCE in late July 2008.

The Russian Federation has conducted its premeditated full scale invasion against its neighbour. As I said, that was a brief list of actions that, as we saw later, were a prelude to Russia's large-scale military aggression against Georgia, invasion and subsequent occupation of large parts of Georgia's territories both within and beyond the conflict regions.

Since 29 July, for the first time since the last major hostilities in early nineties, separatist militia have begun intensive and continuous shelling of ethnically mixed villages under Georgian control with large-calibre artillery (greater than 82 mm), that is to say, weapon-types prohibited by the existing agreements. The facts of the continuous bombings have been confirmed by numerous spot reports made by OSCE monitors, and also by a report by the commander of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces issued from 28 July to 7 August 2008. Shelling of this magnitude continued on a regular basis until 8 August, in advance of the Russian land invasion into Georgia.

Moreover, the materials we have distributed to various international organizations and members of the international community provide irrefutable evidence that in the early morning of 7 August massed Russian forces, including heavy armoured vehicles (main battle tanks, etc.), entered Roki tunnel, and that they established control over the tunnel on the same day. This was even confirmed by the Russian soldiers in their interviews with the Russian media. (These interviews disappeared from the Russian websites, but thanks to Google it was possible to retrieve them.) This was the turning point. In violation of all its international obligations, Russia now started the invasion and subsequent annexation of the Georgian territories.

In the course of these events the Georgian side three times called for negotiations. On 5 and 7 August 2008, please pay attention to the dates, the State Minister of Georgia on Reintegration visited Tskhinvali, but separatist leaders refused the meeting. The Russian representative to the Joint Control Commission Mr. Popov refused to meet the Georgian minister on 7 August, claiming that his car had broken down because of the tires was punched!

On 7 August President Saakashvili ordered an immediate unilateral ceasefire and once again called for negotiations. The ceasefire was confirmed by the relevant OSCE Mission spot report. On 8 August the Georgian troops were once again ordered to cease fire for three hours. In spite of the ceasefires, the Russian regular army streamed into South Ossetia, Georgia.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, underline it once again as clear as it is possible: All Russian military forces must stop aggression, ethnic cleansing and leave the occupied territories of Georgia.

Thank You.