



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 Delegation of Georgia

at the 932nd session of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, November 22, 2012

Dear Mr. High Commissioner,

I would like to welcome you to the Permanent Council and thank you for your informative statement in which you shared with us the outcomes of your activities, opinions, findings and recommendations that we always value highly and are ready to consider.

At the same time, I would like to note the practical usefulness of the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, and commend the efforts undertaken by your staff who contributed to this publication.

Hereby, let me refer to your recent visit to Georgia and reiterate our commitment to continue close co-operation with your office in facilitating the integration processes and upholding the rights of national minorities. We fully acknowledge the challenges that still remain to be addressed and, taking stock of your recommendations, we are determined to work further towards finding the lasting solutions to the issues of our mutual concern.

Another important aspect of your activity refers to the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this regard, I would like to note that we appreciate your engagement and continuous attempts to observe and report on the human rights situation on the ground. I strongly hope that such a practice will be maintained in the future.

In this context, I would like to express our gratitude for your very timely and adequate reaction to the outrageous statement of the leader of the Tskhinvali regime, Leonid Tibilov, concerning his intention to demolish the remainders of the ethnic Georgian villages. I am sure you all agree that such publicly stated intentions do not contribute to peace and security on the ground and should be the subject of particular attention by the international community. Furthermore,

in order to make sure that such unacceptable statements do not materialize we urge the relevant OSCE institutions to remain seized on the matter and have the issue on their radar.

Hereby, allow me to use this opportunity and provide you with a very brief update on the current situation in the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia:

The human rights situation still remains pressing in both regions and ethnic Georgians residing in and across the conflict affected areas are deprived of their basic rights and freedoms – and, especially, the right to property, free movement and education.

In case of Abkhazian region the situation remains particularly dire when it comes to right to education, which has been further worsened by administrative redistricting of Gali region. More specifically, in September 2012 Georgian schoolchildren were not allowed to study in Georgian school on the territory controlled by the central Government of Georgia. These children were compelled to go to the Russian-language school instead. According to the latest information, an ad hoc solution has been achieved as a result of EUMM engagement; however, the problem still needs to be resolved.

The situation is no better in terms of preserving the cultural heritage in Abkhazia. So called “rehabilitation works” of St. Ilori Church and Bedia Monastery aim at obliterating the Georgian traces from the occupied region. Moreover, on 6 June 2012 A. Ankvab had declared the commencement of so called “rehabilitation works” of the Church of Virgin Mary in Lykhny.

Also you have touched upon the issue of the movement across the administrative boundary line. In this regard, I would like to confirm that the situation with the movement across the boundary line has indeed worsened.

Dear colleagues,

I also wish to update you regarding the issue of the repatriation of the forcefully deported persons (the Meskhetian population), which Georgia has committed to upon the accession to the Council of Europe. For now, a total of 864 applicants have been granted the status of repatriates, which enables them to receive the citizenship of Georgia through a simplified procedure within 2 years. The Georgian authorities remain committed to the repatriation process, and stand ready to demonstrate further progress in this regard.

At the end, I would like to stress that Georgia remains a strong advocate of autonomous, effective and pro-active office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and wishes all the success to You and your dedicated staff.

Thank you!