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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

S t a t e m e n t
Delievered by the Head of Mission Victor Dolidze
at the 739th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
13 November 2008

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to once again draw attention of the Permanent Council to the tense and volatile situation in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia and the territories adjacent to it.

As we have been stating earlier, various violent incidents occur in the area quite too often, keeping all of us highly alerted to a possible dangerous developments in the region. The explosion incidents, attacks on Georgian police checkpoints from the villages controlled by the Russian backed militia, using various types of weapons including automatic grenade launchers, assault rifles and snipers are becoming more frequent with the time. The tensions are being further escalated due to the recent spate of detentions/kidnappings across the administrative boundary of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District, mainly targeting civilians. All these occurrences are confirmed by the recent OSCE Mission reports.

Recent incident in the area of the village of Dvani, where 2 Georgian policemen were killed and several others injured due to the explosion of an improvised explosive device, is a matter of serious concern, as it clearly indicated signs of a deliberately planned murder. OSCE spot report also covers this incident extensively.

The matter of our special concern, as we have been stressing it earlier, remains the situation around the village of Perevi, Sachkhere district. As confirmed by the monitoring of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, the Russian Armed Forces checkpoint is still located there approximately 100m outside the administrative boundary and now is manned by the militia, as well as the Russian Armed Forces personnel. It is noteworthy that Russian side is continuously attempting to mislead international community about the situation in Perevi. In the OSCE spot report it is clearly visible that on November 8, while questioned by the OSCE military observers the Russian Army personnel in Perevi denied presence of separatist militia there. But, on November 9, the OSCE monitors clearly observed presence of so called South Ossetian "personnel" at the Perevi checkpoint, even fulfilling honorable duties of checking civilians passing through.

We would like to stress once again that besides clear violation of the 6-point cease-fire agreement by its positioning just outside of the administrative boundary, this checkpoint causes severe detriment to the humanitarian situation in the village itself, since it grossly impedes the freedom of movement of local civilian residents of the village, and puts them under permanent fear of violence from the separatist militia, which could lead to further amounts of population forcibly leaving their homes, should the situation further deteriorate. The assessment by the OSCE Mission that this post could become a potential confrontation point, is especially worrisome for us.

Mr.Chairman,

The most important tools to avoid such dangerous developments are the monitoring missions of the EU and OSCE. It is utmost important that the international monitors have access to Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Indeed, without transparency and international monitoring, the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia will remain safe heavens for continuous violent incidents and provocations, human rights violations, including ethnic cleansing, as well as organized crime, terrorism, and arms and drugs trafficking. They will serve as a means to continually undermine Georgia's sovereignty and stability.

In this context, continuous criticism of the EU and OSCE by Russia and continuous undermining of the OSCE's and EUMM's credibility and international standing, is self-explanatory and easy to understand. It is absolutely clear by now that Russia would welcome to have no presence of the OSCE and EU in Georgia, so that all their actions, as the ones we have mentioned above, go unpunished and unobserved.

Recently Russian Federation has been heavily relying on the articles published in print media, which are using dubious sources to claim as if there are some kind of secret reports within the OSCE that supposedly confirm Georgia's aggression. I regret that we have to once again remind the Russian colleagues of the reality underlined many times before – all information gathered by the OSCE observers during their patrols is then circulated to all Delegations to the OSCE without exception and no part of it ever is either “secret”, or distributed to only some delegations. Spot reports from August 6, 7, and 8 and onwards, as well as from before are available for everyone. We have heard recently how Minister Lavrov raised need of some kind of additional investigation to look into the OSCE reports. If Russia is so keen on investigations and finding out truth, I urge them to cooperate with the commission that the European Union created just recently with an aim of looking into the origins and development of the conflict.

We also believe that if the Russian Federation genuinely wants to contribute to the security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia, it should better grant the international monitors access to these regions, and act in a more constructive and cooperative manner here in Vienna, abandoning its permanent policy of obstructing consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian Federation needs to fully implement the cease-fire agreement brokered by the President of the French Republic. This means that the *status quo ante*, which existed on the August 6, before the hostilities broke out, has to be restored. There are several issues which are extremely important in this regard:

Georgian jurisdiction over the Akhgori region and Upper Abkhazia, as well as over the Georgian controlled enclaves within the Tskhinvali region has to be restored. In this regard, Akhgori region is of paramount importance. This region had never been under the control of Russian or separatist authorities in the past; Akhgori region was occupied by the Russian troops after the cease-fire had been brokered on August 12, as Russian troops entered the region on August 15.

Russia has to cease its military presence in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, including the illegal build-up of the military bases; at the same time Russian Federation should remove all its soldiers from the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia, including the seconded Russian officers who are in charge of the proxy regimes.

Russia has to revoke the recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Illegal recognition of the independence of Georgian regions by President Medvedev contradicts to the fundamental principles of international law, and directly undermines the six-point cease-fire agreement.

Russia should join efforts of the international community and according to the six point cease-fire agreement should participate in the discussions in the new Geneva format in a good faith. November 18 is just around the corner, and we hope that Russia will engage itself in the talks in a constructive manner.

There are many other examples of violation of the six-point cease-fire agreement by the Russian Federation, such as artificially obstructing the provision of humanitarian aid and international humanitarian missions throughout the occupied territories, illegally maintaining and even increasing its military presence there, further violations of Georgian airspace by Russian military aircraft etc. The Georgian Delegation has been informing the OSCE community on these issues in a very detailed manner at earlier stage, so I will spare your time and not go into repeating those statements again.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally I would like to once again stress that the situation on the ground is far from encouraging. The violent incidents and provocations I've been talking about today are becoming more frequent, becoming a dangerous pattern resembling the period preceding the war in summer. If no timely and consolidated international measures are taken, further large scale provocations are to be expected, which could lead to reoccurrence of events similar to August 7. A new intrusion by Russian armed forces and new wave of aggression would be devastating not only for Georgia and its peaceful population, but for the whole region as well. Therefore we call upon the international community to take swift consolidated measures to counter such tendency.

Thank you.