



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAD OF THE OSCE MISSION
TO GEORGIA, AMBASSADOR TERHI HAKALA

**As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council,
11 June 2009**

Madam Chairperson,

Let me first join previous speakers in warmly welcoming Ambassador Terhi Hakala back to the Permanent Council, unfortunately for the last time in her present capacity, and thank her for her report.

What is even more unfortunate is that the whole existence of the OSCE Mission in Georgia – for many years one of the flagships among OSCE missions – is coming to an end, and that this is happening at a time when a continued, robust OSCE presence in Georgia would have been more needed and more useful than ever. As we have stated on every given occasion, we strongly supported all the valiant efforts of the former Finnish and the present Greek Chairmanships to secure a meaningful continued OSCE presence in Georgia, with two main pillars.

We firmly believe that a continued and strengthened presence of OSCE military observers, operating on both sides of the administrative boundary line, could have made a significant contribution to overseeing the adherence to the 12 August six-point agreement by all parties to the conflict, to easing tensions and preventing unfortunate incidents, and to providing reliable and unbiased information. As pointed out by the Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the EU, the present group of monitors have clearly proven their worth, even within the severe limitations imposed on their activities. Speaking of the military monitors, let me also echo the concerns expressed by the EU over the deterioration of the security situation in the Perevi-Karzmani region, as reported by the monitors.

In addition to the continued need for monitors, we also remain convinced that the maintenance of a regular OSCE mission in Tbilisi, with comprehensive activities in all three dimensions, could have played a very useful role in assisting the host country in the further development of Georgian society and institutions.

Madam Chairperson,

On this very sad occasion, I must pay a sincere tribute to Ambassador Hakala and her competent and dedicated staff for their hard work and all their achievements, under very

difficult circumstances, especially during the last year. Let me also express my Delegation's profound sympathy and commiseration with the staff of the Mission for all the uncertainty and the other personal difficulties they had to endure during these last months, and for the profound disappointment they must have felt when all the flexibility, dedication and stamina they had shown, proved to be fruitless.

I must also voice a particular note of regret that it was not possible to complete various projects under the confidence-building Economic Rehabilitation Programme, to which Norway is a contributor, mainly because of lack of access to the Georgian region of South Ossetia.

Madam Chairperson,

I must take this opportunity to reiterate Norway's unwavering commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and also recall our previously expressed regrets over Russia's unilateral decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the signing of agreements on joint protection of borders, and the holding of so-called "parliamentary elections" in the South Ossetian region of Georgia on 31 May. These were all steps in the wrong direction and represent further setbacks in the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Georgia.

Finally, Madam Chairperson,

My delegation remains convinced that the Chair's compromise proposal of 8 May, that was hammered out after months of laborious negotiations, where every stone was turned, was a good and very reasonable compromise, and in fact the only viable solution for maintaining a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia, of which everybody says they are in favour. I therefore take also this opportunity to appeal once more to the Russian Federation to reconsider their position on this issue.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.