

ENGLISH only

**Statement by the Delegation of Georgia at the
2008 Annual Security Review Conference**

Working session III
(Vienna, 2 July 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

- Here at this session I would like to go into further details with regard to the general views on conflict resolution, presented by the Head of our Delegation at the opening session of this Conference.
- As already stated by our Delegation, the main reasons for continuous deterioration of the situation in the conflict regions are outdated and inefficient formats of the peace process underway in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.
- Let me first elaborate on the reasons of failure of current conflict resolution frameworks in both regions, but especially with regard to Abkhazia.
- By far the most important is the Russia's role as party to the conflict and its decision to undertake a series of aggressive policies aiming at the de facto annexation of Georgian territories; this has fatally compromised Russia's putative role as sole "peacekeeper" and "facilitator" of the conflict resolution processes.
- This tendency has become especially evident during the latest months. The President Putin's Decree of 16 April and subsequent Russian military build-up in Abkhazia, Georgia, seriously endanger peace and stability not only of Georgia but the wider European region.
- The measures enumerated in the Decree directly violate Georgia's sovereignty as well as international law while it encourages the separatists to withdraw from the negotiation process, thus undermining any peace efforts.
- By withdrawing from the 1996 CIS Decision, Russia no longer considers itself bound by the obligation to prevent sale and supply of armament to the Abkhazian side as well as to prevent the hiring of its citizens and their enrollment in any armed group in the conflict zone.
- The build-up of Russian troops, especially in Abkhazia through unlawfully deploying additional military units in region does not contribute to maintaining peace, notwithstanding under whatever pretext it is done.
- On the contrary, this step involves an extremely dangerous provocation that increases the risk of escalation to an alarming extent and poses a serious threat to international peace and security.
- Furthermore the composition newly dispatched military units – paratroopers, artillery, including air defense systems, and railway troops - has nothing to do with peacekeeping mandate.

- Another important reason for failure of current peace formats is the absence of direct, systematic, structured and, which is most important, result-oriented dialogue between the central government and the separatist regimes. It is self-evident that without direct negotiations no tangible result on the way to solution may be expected.
- The failure to address the grave human consequences of the conflict, especially the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their place of origin is the next indicator.
- And last but not least - the current formats proved to be unable to address economic stagnation and self-isolation, which has crippled the development of the conflict regions, especially Abkhazia, and left this Georgian territory far behind the rest of Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

- We believe that the urgent and decisive actions are necessary from Georgian side, as well as from the side of international community not to allow this tendency to continue and to irreversibly turn the processes towards stabilization and reintegration.
- The Georgian side has presented peace proposals with regard to both Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Actually, this is about application of European models, based on constitutional arrangements that are both equitable and successful in balancing and respecting the needs of ethnic minorities within a framework of national unity.
- With regard to Abkhazia, Georgia, these proposals, *inter alia*, envisage broad political representation of the Abkhaz in the central government, including the post of Vice-President of Georgia; the right to veto on all issues related to the constitutional status of the region; promotion of Abkhaz culture, language and ethnicity; establishment of a free economic zone in the Gali and Ochamchire regions, etc.
- Georgia proved its commitment to this peaceful approach already with regard to Tskhinvali region. Establishment of the Provisional Administration of the Former Autonomous District of South Ossetia was a clear step forward to achievement of above goals. The work of the Administration, that has managed to win the confidence among both Georgian and Ossetian parts of the local population, has already brought visible results, first of all, in economic and social fields.

Mr. Chairman,

- First and foremost objective towards achieving the full resolution of conflicts in Georgia is the de-escalation of tensions on the ground, while beginning a policy discussion on new peacekeeping and negotiation formats.
- We believe the OSCE should contribute to facilitation of negotiations with the Russian side to withdraw illegally deployed Russian military forces in Abkhazia, Georgia; halt the ongoing construction of military infrastructure; reverse the April 16 decree of the President of Russian Federation that established official ties between Russia and the separatist regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. These steps would contribute de-escalation of the situation in conflict regions.

- The main pillars of a strategy in this regard could involve establishing a new negotiating format that allows for direct dialogue between the sides in conflict, with the participation of the OSCE and EU; creating security guarantees on the ground, including using the OSCE and the EU to develop an internationally guaranteed policing arrangements on the ground; implementing coordinated humanitarian, rehabilitation, economic/trade, confidence building, and reconciliation programs in Abkhazia, Georgia, and further promoting the OSCE-led Economic Rehabilitation Programme in Tskhinvali region.
- The current frameworks for conflict resolution and peacekeeping should be restructured to foster transformative changes and peace-building. We firmly believe that the EU does have the potential to enhance its role in this process. With regard to Abkhazia, Georgia, it is the EU that should take the leading role within the new peace formats, together with the UN.
- In this context, it should be noted that the Comprehensive In-Depth Review of the Peace Process in Abkhazia, Georgia is currently being conducted within the UN framework. Hopefully, it will provide us a chance to give a new impetus to the stalled peace process.
- In Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, the role of the OSCE should be reinforced. We offered “2+2+2” format as a way to adequately respond to the existing reality and give a fresh impulse to the peaceful settlement process. This format envisages the grouping of Russia and Georgia, Provisional Administration and *de facto* Tskhinvali regime, OSCE and the EU, namely, the European Commission.
- Being a logical follow-up to the latest Georgian position and efforts to facilitate direct dialogue with the separatist regime, such format would fully reflect the existing reality and enable progress of the resolution process. We believe that this approach is truly consistent. Moreover, it is firmly based on the peace plan of Georgia endorsed by the international community at the OSCE Ljubljana Ministerial Council of 2005.

Mr. Chairman,

- Allow me to once again reassure the OSCE community that Georgia is firmly committed to the peaceful conflict resolution and we support this principle also with regard to other conflicts. We thank the Chairmanship for its dedicated engagement in all the processes where the OSCE could contribute to progress, and express the hope that the cooperation on the issues outlined above will lead to the tangible results and in terms of final resolution of conflicts in Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

- Since the adoption of the Vienna Document 1999, the OSCE has assumed an active role in the international efforts to address various issues with regard to the politico-military dimension and promote dialogue and cooperation between its Member States with an aim to build confidence and prevent potential tensions of military nature, particularly through establishing appropriate mechanisms for political dialogue and consultation and cooperation as regards unusual military activities.
- The recent developments with regard to the 20 April incident of shooting down the Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia, Georgia by the Russian fighter jet clearly indicated that these mechanisms represent useful and operative tools

for providing the OSCE Member States the possibilities to address their concerns using diplomatic channels, thus preventing further escalation of tensions.

- The Bucharest Mechanism, established by the Bucharest Ministerial Council Decision No. 3, was activated on 30 April 2008, by the request of the PC Chairmanship to the FSC Chairperson for FSC expert advice with regard to the 20 April incident. The Georgian side proposed on 29 April, besides activating the Bucharest Mechanism, to send an independent group of experts from the OSCE participating States to Georgia with the purpose of verifying available materials and establishing the facts of the incident. The FSC Chair has responded with its letter, based on the available conclusions of the UNOMIG Fact Finding Team and Group of Independent International Experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and United States; consultations held in Vienna at the FSC plenary meetings; as well as in the framework of Vienna Mechanism, as stipulated in chapter III of the Vienna Document 1999, activated by the Georgian and Russian Delegations on 28 and 30 May 2008 respectively.
- As a result, through the active discussions the sides had the possibility to exchange views and present the state of affair and available expert conclusions to all OSCE Delegations. Consequently the whole international community clearly expressed its concern and condemnation of this act of overt aggression committed by the Russian Federation.
- Although the activation of aforementioned mechanisms represent a step forward in strengthening the OSCE role in addressing the issues of the politico-military dimension, some shortcomings were also identified, mainly related to the lack of appropriate provisions in respective documents, stipulating essence and procedures of activating and implementing these mechanisms.
- The Bucharest Ministerial Council Decision No. 3, while entitling by the paragraph 8.b the FSC to make available its expert advice on issues of a politico-military nature at the request of the Permanent Council, do not contain provisions concerning the procedures of elaborating such an expert advise.
- Furthermore, the Bucharest Mechanism do not contain provisions on possible links with other relevant OSCE mechanisms, such as Vienna Mechanism, discussions in the framework of which would serve as a significant input and enable the FSC Chair to provide more comprehensive expert advice. Vice versa, the Vienna Mechanism would also gain in effectiveness, if appropriate provisions would be elaborated to stipulate the experts' input to the discussions under this mechanism.
- We firmly believe that, while expressing full confidence to the work carried out by the UNOMIG FFT and the independent international experts, the OSCE should be equipped with appropriate and effective rapid reaction/response tools, such as capability to summon required experts from its Member States for timely dispatching on the ground. This would immensely reinforce the OSCE in its efforts to address the security concerns of its Member States through facilitating the aforementioned mechanisms.

Mr. Chairman,

- As a possible way out Georgia would encourage the Chairmanship, Secretariat and OSCE Delegations to consider possibilities of documenting, presumably through the

Permanent Council or even a Ministerial Council decision, an understanding on how to facilitate timely, effective and comprehensive expert advice with regard to the issues raised in the framework of the existing OSCE mechanisms.

- We believe that each OSCE Member State shall have the right to request from the CiO and the FSC Chairmanship, upon providing appropriate explanations, to dispatch a team of experts, which would be tasked to assess the situation on the ground and then report back to the CiO and FSC, should an incident or activity of a military nature occur, which is conducted by one Member State, thus causing a security concern of another one.

Mr. Chairman,

- We firmly believe that consideration of this issue would supplement the existing OSCE mechanisms, including the mechanisms stipulated by the Vienna Document 1999 and Bucharest Ministerial Council Decision No. 3, and express our hope that the Delegations will take serious efforts to facilitate this step aimed at strengthening the OSCE capacity in the politico-military dimension.

Thank you.