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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 March 2010

**Regarding the presentation by Mr. Temuri Yakobashvili,  
Vice Prime Minister and State Minister for Reintegration of Georgia**

Mr. Chairman,

In response to the address by the Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, we should like to make a few comments on the new Georgian “State Strategy”. A reading of this document leaves no doubt that we are dealing with the latest propagandistic action by the current Georgian leadership, which is intended somehow to mitigate the destructive consequences of its policy in the region, especially after the tragic events of August 2008.

As it happens, this is not the first instance in which there has been a desire to actively engage the international community. We recall that in 2005, the Georgian Government presented the so-called “peace plan on the political status of South Ossetia”, trying, as it is doing now, to enlist the support of various international organizations. True, the presentations were made at a higher level: in the OSCE, by the then Prime Minister, Zurab Nogaideli, and in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the United Nations General Assembly, by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili himself.

All of us in the OSCE recall very well how similar efforts by Georgia to “make peace” with its closest neighbours ended. Three years after the document in question was issued, Georgian troops carried out a treacherous attack on South Ossetia, unleashing a bloody massacre of the South Ossetian people.

In this connection, a number of logical questions arise. After all that has happened, can one believe the Georgian authorities’ “peaceful” declarations? Is the current “strategy” not another ploy, masking Georgia’s true intentions, namely, returning Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the borders of the Georgian State by force? Will its implementation not lead, as has already happened more than once in the past, to new military and political catastrophes in the South Caucasus, which, incidentally, have entailed for Georgia itself the loss of a portion of its territory?

As it did in 2005, with the “peace plan”, and as it is doing now, with the “new strategy”, the Georgian leadership is continuing to make the same mistakes by stubbornly ignoring the views of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples and their legitimate interests. It is not surprising that the document contains not one word about its content from the standpoint of the main actors, whose vitally important needs the “strategy” is in theory designed to satisfy. What, strictly speaking, do the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples themselves think about the “strategy”? Do they agree to live in an “administrative zone” under the name of the “Tskhinvali region”? In the context of a discussion of the new Georgian initiative, it would be extremely useful and timely to invite representatives of Tskhinval and Sukhum to the OSCE and to listen to them.

We should like to highlight just one provision of the “strategy”, which shows, in a highly revealing manner, that the policy of the ruling regime in Tbilisi long ago lost all sense of proportion. Judge for yourselves. Does the passage at the very beginning of the document, on the declared intentions of the “strategy”, not sound like the height of hypocrisy? I quote from the text: “to ensure that residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia enjoy the rights and privileges available to every citizen of Georgia”?

We shall not go over today how the Georgian Government ensures – not in words, but in deeds – the rights of ordinary Georgians and representatives of other nationalities residing in the country. That is not what we are dealing with right now. We draw attention to a fact of no small consequence, which speaks for itself. You will agree that there is a sharp contrast between the formulations in the “strategy” regarding the pseudo-concerns for the well-being of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples and those which Mr. Saakashvili actually demonstrated in August 2008, by giving the order for the barbaric bombardment of the peaceful inhabitants of sleeping Tskhinval and surrounding villages using “Grad” multiple rocket launchers, heavy artillery and tanks – something that, by the way, was plainly verified in the report of the European Union special mission (IIFFMCG) headed by Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini.

It turns out that first the President of Georgia annihilated part of his own people as a result of the armed aggression, literally wiping from the face of the earth several settlements where South Ossetians lived, and then he began to think about the “rights and privileges” of those persons in South Ossetia who survived, those whom he did not succeed in physically eliminating in the course of the most recent military campaign.

And now, as if nothing had happened, he is proposing some kind of “strategy”, which, as Tbilisi sees it, should restore confidence and respect on the part of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples. There is a massive campaign under way in multilateral structures to promote such a document rather than the Georgian leaders openly asking the elderly, women and children who survived for their forgiveness for everything that happened.

We believe it important to reiterate the fundamental position of Russia, which is well known to the OSCE community and which the population of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the leadership of these two now sovereign and independent States fully share. The decision by the Russian Federation to recognize the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia is final, irrevocable and irreversible. This is the only way to guarantee the survival of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples in view of the never-ending attempts by the current Georgian authorities to physically destroy these people, and it is the only way to preserve their national identity and the right to live peacefully in the historic lands of their

ancestors. Our recognition of these two republics and all-round assistance to them constitute a practical contribution to ensuring reliable stability and security in the South Caucasus.

Russia intends to continue to strengthen inter-State relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia in all spheres in the interests of peace and prosperity in the Trans-Caucasus. And no “strategies” will be able to hinder the ongoing development of Russo-Abkhaz and Russo-South Ossetian co-operation.

Restoration of the confidence in the Georgian authorities that was lost during the years of Tbilisi’s confrontation with Tskhinval and Sukhum needs to begin not with “strategies” and “plans”, but with learning the lessons from past mistakes and the recognition of the new politico-legal realities in the region. The sooner this happens, the quicker stability and an atmosphere of genuine co-operation will be restored in the South Caucasus. It is important that this work is carried out through direct dialogue between Georgia and the Abkhaz and South Ossetian parties. As you are aware, a suitable format for this kind of discussion has been created in the form of the Geneva talks, and also in the mechanisms operating under their aegis to prevent incidents from occurring along the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian borders, in which official representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia participate on an equal basis.

Mr. Vice Prime Minister,

If your “strategy” had appeared at least three years earlier, some kind of practical benefit could have been expected from it. Back then there was still a chance of preserving the territorial integrity of Georgia. Today, however, in view of the current realities – the appearance of two independent and sovereign States – Georgia’s response is clearly too late. The situation has changed dramatically, and it is difficult to imagine after the events of August 2008 the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia deciding to return voluntarily to being part of Georgia.

We shall repeat once more – the present-day realities in the region are completely different and this needs to be taken into consideration. We must look to the future and not to the past.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today’s special meeting of the Permanent Council.

Thank you for your attention.