



Statement
at the 491st meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council,
January 22, 2004

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ENGLISH only

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the GUUAM Group countries - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – I, too, should like to welcome H.E. Mr. Dick Roche, the Irish Minister for European Affairs to the Permanent Council and congratulate Ireland on assuming the Presidency of the European Union. We wish this country every success in all its endeavours in this important and responsible function. Availing myself of this opportunity I also wish to express our gratitude to the Delegation of Italy for the cooperation with the GUUAM Group during its term in the Chair of the EU. The GUUAM Group also thanks the distinguished Minister for his comprehensive and thought-provocative statement, which both clearly outlines priorities of the Irish Presidency and highlights the issues of inter-institutional cooperation between the OSCE and the EU.

Mr. Chairman,

Our countries attach particular importance to the development of close and multifaceted cooperation with the European Union since progressive integration into European structures is one of our foreign policy priorities, which represents the conscious choice of our peoples in favor of the European values. In this regard the GUUAM Group counts on the EU's active support to the process of further strengthening democratic societies and market reforms in our countries. We highly appreciate the assistance to our countries rendered by the Union and its individual Member States so far, including through their various programs and projects. The implementation of the TRACECA, a project aimed at creating a transport corridor between Europe and Asia, continues to take a prominent place on the agenda of our interaction with EU and its institutions.

Our countries are also interested in further strengthening the GUUAM-EU dialogue in the framework of the international organizations, in particular in Vienna and Brussels.

We welcome the EU enlargement and hope that it will not lead to the creation of new dividing lines in Europe. We are convinced that "Wider Europe" initiative could not be successful without setting clear objectives for carrying forward relationship of Ukraine and Moldova with the EU. We believe that elaboration and implementation of

the Action Plans in frames of the “Wider Europe” concept will in the near future create an opportunity for concluding new enhanced agreements between Ukraine and the EU and Moldova and the EU aimed at supporting their European integration.

The GUUAM Group also looks forward to the forthcoming visit of EU Commissioner on enlargement Mr. Gunter Verheugen to Azerbaijan and Georgia, which will provide another important opportunity to discuss ways of further enhancement of relations between these countries and EU.

Mr. Chairman,

At the first PC meeting this year, our Delegations expressed disappointment and concern at the lack of progress in the peaceful settlement of the on-going conflicts in some of the GUUAM States. We remain convinced that the international community should not reconcile with the situation that emerged in the Abkhaz and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the Transdnestrian region of Moldova. We believe that the EU can make its valuable contribution to finding just and durable solutions to these conflicts based on norms and principles of international law, including those pertaining to sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, the relevant UNSC resolutions and the OSCE decisions.

The escalation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism over the recent years has highlighted a need for coordinated and comprehensive efforts of all countries and relevant international institutions in combating this evil. Trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs, as well as organized trans-border crime are also serious challenges to our security. All factors causing terrorism and lawlessness in the OSCE region including aggressive nationalism, violent extremism and armed separatism should be dealt with by the international community in an effective and consistent manner. The cooperation between the OSCE and EU in this regard is of importance for effective fight against traditional and emerging threats to security in the 21st century.

Mr. Chairman,

The GUUAM Group as a regional structure makes its contribution to the promotion of security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Let me assure you, Mr. Minister, of our entire support to the EU’s important work in this regard.

Thank you.