



Statement
in Response to the Address by H.E. Gela Bezhuashvili,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia,
delivered by Ambassador Jivan Tabibian
at the 592nd Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
February 9, 2006

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We, of course, are most happy to see H.E. Mr. Gela Bezhuashvili, the Foreign Minister of Georgia. My delegation cannot try to outdo my colleague, the Ambassador of the United States in the effusion of warmth and welcome. But ours, we know, is based on long, common history as well as genuine, real, physical and cultural neighborliness. We are in an embrace that no one can separate us from. Our history goes back; imagine that I grew up thinking that one of the major contentions between us was deciding on the parentage and parental linkages between the Georgian alphabet and the Armenian alphabet. That is a level of involvement that is quite different. While Georgia is of great interest to some member states, I can say that it is of vital interest to us.

First allow me to thank the Minister for this report on conflicts. I know that he had a very productive meeting with our Foreign Minister and in that meeting many points were touched upon. First let us refer to the conflicts issue and then go on to a couple of related matters.

Armenia has made two-three points very clear. Number one: in a region driven by conflicts, I think the solutions have to pursue the specificity of each conflict. Packages that will apply everywhere are not likely to work out. The closer you get to the ground, the more particular the phenomena look. From some high vantage point conflicts are conflicts; but when you are within the immediate neighborhood, their uniqueness is rather important. Of course, we have every interest to see all the conflicts in the region resolved. We are involved in one, Georgia is involved in others and any resolution, no matter how specific, will cumulatively add to the stability of the region.

May we say something about that stability. One day it may be a stability that engages all contiguous neighbors at the same time. Meanwhile, we find it normal that two plus two plus two plus two, whatever the situation permits, may be a good start. The idea is to transform a rather complicated puzzle into a mosaic.

The final point I want to make is on the nature of neighborliness in a region where there are certain competitions. A neighbor's choice of with whom to have frictions and with whom to have partnerships must remain that neighbor's both right and responsibility. The idea is not to make those frictions and partnerships be reflected in a prismatic way on the interests and needs of third parties. Otherwise, we are

assuming that the only solution is from the beginning, we all should align ourselves along the same policy, same attitudes and same values.

One of the interesting things about our neighborhood is visible to us through a very simple image. What happens is that we are so interdependently linked in many webs that when one or two sneeze, the others catch cold. This is because the networks of energy, transport, economic exchange and trade are so intricate that nobody can remain indifferent to what is happening between any other two. Armenia in this particular case realizes that no one can have absolutely symmetric relations with everybody, but one must always keep in mind that what may happen in some place, may impact somewhere else.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, we say that since we share the longest open border with Georgia, the sense of interdependence is both acute and fully understood and appreciated by my country. Therefore, anything that allows our neighbor to have a healthy, prosperous, stable, democratic future will immediately be reflected in positive echoes in our own society and country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.