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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE JOINT MEETING OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY
CO-OPERATION AND THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 June 2009

**Response to the co-chairmen of the Geneva discussions,
the Head of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the
Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre**

Mr. Chairman,
Madam Chairperson,

In response to the assessments we have heard from the co-chairmen of the Geneva discussions, the Head of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre, we should like to make the following comments.

We sincerely regret that today's meeting is taking place at a time when the presence of the OSCE and the United Nations is being wound down in Georgia. Up until the last moment, Russia had endeavoured, both in Vienna and in New York, to find mutually acceptable and sound compromise solutions that would ensure the continued presence of monitors from the international organizations and that would take due account of the changed realities in the Trans-Caucasus following the military adventure embarked upon by the Georgian leadership in August of last year.

Our position has been and continues to be that the stabilization of the situation in the areas adjacent to the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz borders, the development of a serious dialogue based on mutual respect between Tbilisi, Tskhinval and Sukhum, along with the formulation of strict guarantees of the non-use of force remain the only possible paths towards the restoration of trust and normal relations between Georgia and its two neighbours, which are now independent States. Like it or not, the altered politico-legal landscape requires new arrangements for promoting stability and security in this extremely sensitive region, arrangements that must be worked out with the direct participation of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian peoples.

This is our fundamental position, which, I wish to reaffirm, cannot be the subject of any "bargaining". This was once again openly stated at a meeting of the Permanent Council by Mr. Grigory Karasin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and

also in yesterday's statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the text of which we have circulated among the participating States.

We regard as useful the Geneva platform established on the basis of the agreements reached by Presidents Medvedev and Sarkozy. We are in favour of continuing the extremely important discussions, as difficult as they are, on questions of security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus, which involve the participation as equals of representatives of Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, the United States and South Ossetia and also from the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the OSCE. Despite the substantial differences that exist in the positions taken by the participants, this forum is to some degree making it possible to defuse the tension and to conduct a joint search for ways of resolving the differences. I repeat: The continued viability of the Geneva discussions requires the direct participation in those talks of representatives from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

For Russia, the peaceful development of the Trans-Caucasus region has been and remains a strategic objective. For this reason, we regard as the primary aim of the Geneva dialogue the formulation of reliable security guarantees for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These guarantees must include, above all, a renunciation of the remilitarization of Georgia and the introduction of an international embargo on deliveries to Tbilisi of offensive weaponry. This is particularly relevant against the background of the military exercises conducted by NATO in Georgia and also the desire of a number of countries to restore the infrastructure of the Georgian army through deliveries of military equipment in violation of international obligations undertaken within the OSCE and elsewhere.

It is for the purpose of promoting the objectives of preventive diplomacy that the Russian delegation, during the fifth round of the Geneva discussions, submitted a set of principles for inclusion in the agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia and South Ossetia and between Georgia and Abkhazia, principles that are of key importance for the peace of mind and for the progress and development of the peoples of those countries, for their ordinary citizens. It is our hope that it will be possible in the future through collective efforts to complete the work on the agreement of the texts of the documents in question.

We have once again heard essentially incorrect statements regarding certain alleged "violations" by Russia of the well-known Medvedev-Sarkozy plan and of subsequent measures. It might perhaps be useful to recall in this connection that with the withdrawal of the last military serviceman from the territory of Georgia on 8 October 2008 the Russian Federation fully implemented the provisions of those understandings that apply to it. Nevertheless, we are committed to the international provisions of the documents signed on 12 August and 8 September 2008 and we specifically support the retention in the region of international monitors.

It is not Russia's fault that it has proved impossible to reach an agreement on new mandates for the OSCE and United Nations monitors or to determine the arrangements to govern the work of the OSCE Office in Tbilisi. Political wisdom consists not in indiscriminate labelling in line with the thinking of the past era of confrontation but in displaying sober approaches that take into account the realities of the present day.

As regards the OSCE presence, there is a single task that needs to be resolved: the working out of practical modalities for monitoring activities on both sides of the Georgian-South Ossetian border. However, without the consent of Tskhinval this problem

cannot be resolved, what is involved here having nothing to do with status but with the display of political will. For the fact is that the participants in the Geneva discussions were able to agree on joint mechanisms for the prevention of incidents in the border regions and for responding to them, even though, had that been the wish, a deadlock might have arisen with regard to this issue as well, given the unwillingness of our negotiation partners to accept the fact of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The sense of the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements lies in fact in thwarting new reckless plans by the Georgian side to use force to restore the former territorial integrity of the country. In that context, we are counting on a more effective implementation by the European Union Monitoring Mission of its functions to prevent Tbilisi's aspirations along these lines. After all, the EU monitors bear their share of the responsibility for the way the situation is unfolding in the region, since, as you will recall, in accordance with the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements those monitors are acting as guarantors of the non-use of force by the Georgian side against South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

This critically important circumstance must always be kept in mind. Regrettably, some of our partners prefer to remain silent on this score or they simply forget it, particularly when the EU representatives themselves raise the subject of the Russo-French agreements reached at the highest level as a joint reaction to the Georgian aggression in August of last year.

Nevertheless, Russia is prepared to continue and to step up its co-operation with the European Union, including working together with the OSCE and the United Nations on incident-prevention mechanisms. Many difficult problems and threats to regional stability still lie ahead.

Thank you for your attention.