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EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLICS OF AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

*Delivered by Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Paata Gaprindashvili at the 688th
Permanent Council
Vienna, 15 November, 2007*

Mr. Chairman,

I also want to thank the OSCE representative on the freedom of the media Mr. Miklos Haraszi for his comprehensive report and presentation. We took careful note of the comments related to Georgia as well as the statements made by a number of delegations, and I would like to make some comments in this regard.

As for the spirit of comments made by the Russian Ambassador with regard to the freedom of media in Georgia, it was not surprising to me, taking into consideration context of current relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia. Though, in a broader context it would have been more appropriate for the Russian Ambassador to cover more pressing issues related to the freedom of media in the Russian Federation itself.

Mr. Chairman,

Stable environment, sustained during the short period of the state of emergency, as well as total absence of any outbreak of street violence, and confirmed unhindered continuation of public life and activities have proven that state of emergency is no longer needed in Georgia. Therefore, the decision was made yesterday, to lift the state of emergency this Friday, on November 16, almost a week before it was supposed to according to the Presidential Decree.

Thereby, freedoms that were restricted during this short period of time, namely the

freedom to receive and disseminate information, freedom to assembly and manifestation and freedom to strike will be duly restored.

In a broader context I want to mention that the dialogue between the political forces in Georgia is starting to yield positive results. Yesterday a package of amendments to the electoral code was submitted to the Parliament. Among other issues, it is suggested to decrease the election threshold from 7% to 5%, to have the composition of the Central Election Commission on the basis of parity between the ruling and opposition parties and to change the rule of election of majoritarian Members of Parliament in favour of proportional system. These proposals are the result of the constructive dialogue that has been taking place in the Parliament of Georgia between various parties during last days.

And last, but not the least we want to extend our formal invitation to the ODIHR to observe extraordinary Presidential elections expected to take place in January. Today the Parliament of Georgia is planning to adopt changes to the Constitution which will set the exact date of the elections. Immediately as soon as we have this information, official invitation will be sent to the ODIHR. Government of Georgia is ready to welcome as many observers as needed for the full and effective realization of their mandate and to create all the possible conditions to facilitate their work on the ground.

Finally I would like to once again thank Mr. Miklos Haraszti for his continued and even greater attention towards my country and wish him success in his work.

Thank you.