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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
TO THE OSCE, AT THE 924th MEETING OF THE OSCE  
PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 September 2012

**In response to the statement by Mr. Sergi Kapanadze**

Mr. Chairperson,

In connection with today's statement by the distinguished Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Mr. Sergi Kapanadze, we should like to make the following comments.

The difficulties currently experienced by Georgia are well known in Moscow and we can only sympathize with the Georgian people. However, attempts to look for the guilty parties somewhere else and make Russia responsible for Georgia's own mistakes are completely unjustified. The blame rests with the policy of the Georgian leadership, which through its irresponsible actions led the country into a deep crisis, a crisis which resulted among other things in the loss of some of the country's former territories.

The facts established by the international community are well known. In August 2008, the Georgian authorities drew a line through the efforts made by Russia and the international community over a period of many years to find a peaceful settlement to the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict (and the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict) and launched a large-scale armed attack on the peaceful inhabitants of South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeepers there. After they had been repulsed the authorities in Tbilisi decided to exacerbate the crisis by severing diplomatic ties with Russia and engaging in a policy of the destruction of all aspects of the traditional good-neighbourliness. No one is surprised any more at the regular outbursts against Russia and its leadership. It is evident to many that President Saakashvili has an interest in maintaining a hostile atmosphere with respect to Russia and the continuing conflict. He needs this both to consolidate power within the country and to keep the international community's attention focused on Georgia.

This is the only way to explain the "concerns" spread by Tbilisi (and at its instigation by several other countries) regarding the "Caucasus 2012" exercises that are currently taking place, despite the repeated explanations given by the Russian Ministry of Defence and Russian diplomats at various forums, including here in the OSCE (at the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation). I shall not repeat them now. The exercises are taking place at several sites in Astrakhan, Novorossiysk and Kapustin Yar. All of these places

are far away from Georgia. I might add that foreign observers, including some from the United States, are present at these exercises.

Let us make it clear that the joint operational strategic exercises of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization that started this week in Armenia using the Russian military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri have nothing to do with the “Caucasus 2012” exercises and even less to do with Georgia.

At today’s Permanent Council meeting we have once again heard references to the conflict in Georgia and to the “occupation”. These terms are, legally speaking, simply incorrect.

Let us repeat once more that the proposals regarding the establishment of an OSCE presence in South Ossetia should be addressed directly to the leadership in Tskhinval – although it is difficult to imagine a situation in which there would be an OSCE presence in a country that is not a participating State of our Organization. As for the question of an OSCE mission in Georgia, this matter should be examined separately, and we would be ready to do this together with our partners.

The OSCE is currently taking part as one of the co-chairmen in the Geneva Discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus and is involved in several humanitarian projects in the border region between South Ossetia and Georgia. We believe, however, that the Organization could play a more active role in post-conflict rehabilitation. The most important thing in this respect is a non-biased, politically impartial and honest approach aimed at restoring confidence in the OSCE, especially in the Republic of South Ossetia.

The conclusion of bilateral legally binding agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia, on the one hand, and the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia, on the other, is of key importance for the consolidation of post-conflict security in the Trans-Caucasus. The unilateral declarations on the non-use of force made at the end of 2010 by the leaders of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia were a step in the right direction. In March of this year, Russia put forward a draft joint declaration of the participants in the Geneva Discussions, which would set out these unilateral commitments in a status-neutral format and confirm the commitment of the parties to the generally recognized norms of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of the non-use of force. This proposal remains on the negotiating table.

As for the calls to allow the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) access to the territory of the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we should like to remind you that its international mandate set out in the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements, with which you are all familiar, is clearly limited to Georgia only and has nothing to do with the territory of the neighbouring independent States.

Unfortunately, the presumptuous intention on the part of EUMM observers to enter the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia provoked a crisis in the work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism on the Georgian-Abkhazian border. Things escalated to such a point that the Abkhazian authorities were forced to declare the head of the EUMM, Lieutenant General Andrzej Tyszkiewicz, a persona non grata.

At the same time, the EU observers remain totally passive in the face of determined terrorist activities and acts of sabotage carried out from Georgian territory against the Gali district of Abkhazia. The authorities in Tbilisi are training and arming reservists in the border region on a massive scale. Tbilisi is making active use of methods of information sabotage. Rumours are being systematically circulated among the population of South Ossetia and adjacent districts of Georgia about the “forthcoming war in autumn”, and this naturally leads to a fomenting of tension and increases the risk of provocations. The President of the Republic of South Ossetia, Leonid Tibilov, alerted the co-chairmen of the Geneva Discussions during his meeting with them in Tskhinval on 18 September to the military preparations being made by Georgia in the border region.

Mr. Chairperson,

The regular outbursts against Russia by the authorities in Tbilisi come as no surprise to us. Unfortunately, using declarations of a desire for dialogue as a smokescreen, the leadership of Georgia is instilling in Georgian society an image of the enemy in the form of Russia. A law remains in force in the country, under which a considerable number of Russian citizens – namely all those people who in recent years have visited Abkhazia or South Ossetia just a single time – would automatically be subject to criminal prosecution upon entering Georgia. But the problem is not limited to this. Russian citizens visiting Georgia on private business (primarily ethnic Georgians) are subject to provocation and are at the mercy of arbitrary decisions by the Georgian intelligence services. All kinds of increasingly improbable espionage affairs are being fabricated. There is a desire to eradicate everything that for centuries has united Russians and Georgians, hitting the citizens of our countries hard and severing spiritual, cultural, family and kinship ties.

I should stress that the Russian authorities are ready to discuss matters and work to resolve practical issues concerning people’s lives, to preserve and strengthen humanitarian ties between our peoples and to facilitate as much as possible the contacts that are so important for the citizens of both countries.

Russia continues to do all it can. Overland and direct air connections between the two countries have been restored. Russian visas to visit relatives, not to mention in the case of emergency humanitarian cases, are processed smoothly. Cultural and academic exchanges are encouraged. Business contacts are continuing, albeit on a small scale. We see it as our task not to allow the traditional and historical close relationship between our peoples to be destroyed. We shall continue to adhere to this policy in the future.

Given our interest in strengthening ties between the peoples of Russia and Georgia, the Russian authorities expressed their willingness to introduce a visa-free regime for the citizens of Georgia on a reciprocal basis and suggested that diplomatic relations between our countries should be resumed. However, if this is to happen it is essential that the Georgian authorities ensure reliable legal conditions that guarantee the security of Russian citizens visiting Georgia.

Despite the targeted and systematic efforts by the authorities in Tbilisi to inflict huge damage on bilateral relations, it has not proved possible to sow enmity between Russians and Georgians. We trust that there are sensible politicians in Georgia who understand the need to restore the traditional good-neighbourliness between Russia and Georgia.

Thank you for your attention.