



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

S T A T E M E N T

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze at the 734th Permanent Council
Vienna 25 September, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

Russia last month invaded Georgia. Russian troops together with separatists' militias conducted ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity on the territory of a neighbouring state. The invasion entailed casualties among civilians. The Russian army and aviation targeted and caused massive damage to Georgia's civilian economic infrastructure. Furthermore, Russia conducted sickening campaign of "ecocide" as part of the invasion; fire bombs were dropped on old-growth forests in Borjomi region that formed our national center of tourism, recreation, culture and water resources.

Here, I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary General and Office of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities for their prompt response to my letter of August 20 and for providing assistance in monitoring and assessing the environmental damage caused by the Russian military invasion in Georgia. I look forward to the joint OSCE/UNEP Assessment Mission on the Environmental Impact that will take place in Georgia from September 30 to October 3, 2008.

In grave violation of principles and norms of the international law, UN Charter and Helsinki Final Act, Russia illegally recognised so called "independence" of two breakaway Georgian regions. Moreover, the Russian Federation has tried to depose democratically elected government of Georgia.

Russia is striving to maintain its broad and completely illegal military presence in our country, as it claims thousands of its invading troops will stay on the territory of Georgia, and in addition to the existing military bases in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, Georgia, it will build new ones.

This is a non-exhaustive list of real state of affairs clearly showing the current true face of Russia, which continues to violate the six-point cease-fire agreement, which was, as the Russian side claims, proposed and signed by president of the Russian Federation D. Medvedev.

This Delegation had kept the PC informed, at its previous meetings, about the continued facts of harassment and serious human rights violations as well as killings of Georgian policemen after the large scale hostilities were over. Unfortunately, we have yet another fact of this kind. On 21 September 2008, targeted fire was opened from a Russian checkpoint illegally operating on the territory of Georgia towards a Georgian police post. As a result, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Police Lieutenant Ramaz Kitia was shot dead, three other policemen were wounded, one of them severely.

Against this background, Russian invading forces together with separatist militias continue to block OSCE Monitors to fulfil their mandated functions, bar provision of free access for humanitarian aid in most areas where help is needed. Just recently the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities was prevented by separatists from entering the Tskhinvali region.

Many documents with which you are hopefully familiar– different OSCE reports, Human Rights Watch reports and inquiry, including the recent ones – all confirm the facts of ethnic cleansing, continued harassment and abuses and violations of human rights and, last but not least, continuous non-compliance of Russia to the fulfilment of the principles of the cease-fire agreement.

Against this background, the Russian side, including its top officials, still endeavours to continue its disgraceful propaganda, attempts to manipulate with the facts and mislead the international community, although all in vain. As the President of Georgia stated on 23 September at the UN General Assembly, “the international community has emerged from the invasion of Georgia with something truly valuable - clarity”.

As for the OSCE, as you are all aware, yesterday my Delegation made a lengthy and exhaustive presentation on the Russian invasion and occupation of Georgia, in which we gave full coverage on the real set of facts. There is an increasing understanding that no questions are left unanswered.

Mr. Chairman,

It was my Minister here in this hall that first aired an idea about launching an independent international commission, which would look into the emergence and genesis of the conflict and establish facts in question. President of Georgia in his address to the UN General Assembly once again elaborated on the issue. Let me quote: “Rather than recite our case, let me repeat a simple invitation that I first made on August 17, standing next to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. There should be an exhaustive, independent investigation of the origins and causes of this war.

Investigators must have unimpeded access to all officials, documents, and intelligence. Georgia welcomes such an investigation. My government is ready to share every piece of evidence and provide access to every witness sought by investigators. We call on the other party to this conflict to fully cooperate and not obstruct this investigation. This is how democracies behave. The truth must come out not only to clarify how events unfolded last month, but to help us answer the fundamental questions that this invasion has raised”.

Now let me repeat the same question that of yesterday we put at the FSC: Is Russia willing to do the same and cooperate in a good spirit?

Mr. Chairman,

Even aggressors should stand by their signatures. Russia should fully comply with the cease-fire agreement and fully withdraw all its military forces from Georgia to the pre-conflict positions. *Pacta sunt servanda.*

Thank you, Mr.Chairman