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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

10 February 2011

**In response to the statement by the Special Representative of the
European Union for the South Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, I should like to draw attention to the unacceptable situation in which statements on such an important subject as conflict settlement in the Trans-Caucasus are not distributed in good time. Nevertheless, I shall venture to offer some considerations and observations of principle on the written version of the report of the Special Representative of the European Union (EU), Mr. Semneby, which we have just received.

Most importantly, it is our deep conviction that co-operation between Russia, the EU and other participating States is the key to solving the problems of the Trans-Caucasus. The Russia-EU summit held in December 2010 reaffirmed the interest of Russia and the European Union in resolving crisis situations in the Trans-Caucasus region. Despite the fact that our views and approaches on questions of crisis resolution do not always coincide, a constructive and serious discussion of these questions, whether as part of the Russia-EU dialogue or here in the OSCE, will help to bring the resolution of these complex conflicts nearer and should facilitate the achievement of agreements in the interests both of the parties involved and of European security as a whole.

Regarding the report itself, I should first like to note that it is possible to observe, in the points made by Mr. Semneby, a clear similarity with what was said yesterday at the meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Mr. Vashakidze. This is noteworthy and does not appear to be an accident. I will not hide the fact that the report of the EU Special Representative disappoints me. Above all because a number of his propositions show a clearly anti-Russian tendency.

Noticeable is the use in the report of incorrect terminology. The events of August 2008 are persistently referred to as a "war" between Russia and Georgia. I should like to repeat once more that there was no such war: what took place was a barbaric attack by Georgia on South Ossetia, including the Russian peacekeepers present there, together with necessary steps taken by Russia to protect the peaceful population.

The new independent States are persistently described in the report as “separatist entities” and “occupied territories”. Mention is constantly made of a supposed ceasefire agreement reached in August 2008. No such agreement exists. I would also bring this point to the attention of our United States colleague, who likewise referred in his statement to such an agreement. What do exist are the Medvedev-Sarkozy agreements, and that is how the document concerned should be referred to.

Nor will there be a withdrawal of Russian forces to pre-conflict positions. We have complied fully with our obligations under the agreements between the Russian and French presidents with regard to armed forces. As far as the question of the legitimacy of the presence of Russian military personnel in South Ossetia and Abkhazia is concerned, this matter is not a subject of discussions with the EU at all. I would repeat that Russian forces are there on the basis of bilateral agreements concluded between Russia and these independent republics.

It is not part of the responsibilities of the Special Representative to offer assessments of the situation in the Northern Caucasus. No one has authorized him to do so, and this question is clearly outside his mandate.

We regard the linking of the results of the coming presidential elections in Russia with the prospects for the settlement of the continuing conflicts in the Trans-Caucasus as a provocation. We take a similar view of the bold pronouncements about a toughening of Russia’s approach to the problems in this region following the unilateral declaration, and the recognition, of the independence of Kosovo and the decisions of the NATO summit in Bucharest on Georgia and Ukraine. Our position has not changed, and this is well known to everyone.

With regard to an OSCE presence in South Ossetia, we are not, as everyone knows, opposed to such a presence. However, its modalities need to be discussed, in the first place, with the authorities of this independent republic.

A revelation for us has also been the support of the EU for, and its readiness to participate in, the implementation of the Georgian “Strategy on the Occupied Territories”. Another striking fact is that, against the background of the abundant references to the statement made by Mr. Saakashvili in the European Parliament on 23 November 2010, there is no word in the report about the December declarations of the presidents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia regarding the non-use of force against Georgia.

We are no less surprised by the daring statements made by Mr. Semneby concerning the meagre results of the activities of the Minsk Group, despite the active efforts of the negotiators to seek a solution to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the initiatives taken by the Russian President.

In conclusion, I should like to observe that, in spite of the rather conflictual and indeed somewhat confrontational nature of Mr. Semneby’s report, we hope for further fruitful co-operation with the EU, the United States of America and other partners in developing concrete joint solutions to the problems of crisis resolution in the South Caucasus, with full account taken of the interests of all the parties concerned.

Thank you for your attention.