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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 916th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 June 2012

**Regarding the 20th round of the Geneva Discussions on the
Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

Ensuring security and the non-use of force remained the main topic of the latest and 20th round of the international discussions on stability and security in the Trans-Caucasus held in Geneva on 7 and 8 June, with the participation of representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the Republic of South Ossetia as well as the United Nations, the OSCE and the European Union (EU).

In the working group on security issues the delegations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia once again underscored the key importance for ensuring the security of their States of legally binding bilateral agreements with Georgia on the non-use of force.

The Russian delegation provided detailed explanations regarding the contents of the draft joint declaration by the participants in the Geneva Discussions that it had submitted during the previous round in March of this year. The adoption of such a document would provide a status-neutral confirmation of the unilateral commitments regarding the non-use of force undertaken by the leaders of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia at the end of 2010. At the same time, it would reaffirm the commitment of the parties to the generally recognized standards of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of the non-use of force. In this connection, the blatantly politicized draft submitted in turn by the Georgian delegation did not receive the support of the participants in the discussions. The ideas pressed by the Georgian side of creating some kind of international security-building measures in the South Caucasus were also rejected.

During the discussion of the security situation along the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia, the Abkhazian side expressed serious concern regarding the escalation of the situation in the Gali district of the republic. In this regard, the participants restated the need for an immediate resumption of the regular work of the joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Gali. The South Ossetian side took a generally positive view of the work of the IPRM on the border with Georgia and called on its participants to pay greater attention to resolving the issue of missing persons.

We should also like to draw attention to the discussion on the eve of the official meetings of the legal aspects of the terms “occupation” and “occupied territories”, which are regularly used by the Georgian side with respect to the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Reports by independent experts on international humanitarian law have confirmed that it is completely inadmissible to use these terms with respect to the Russian military contingents and bases stationed on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia. The Abkhazian and South Ossetian representatives made a joint statement in which they called on the international community to refrain from using the term “occupation” with respect to the situation in their countries since this has no legal and factual basis.

The question of the so-called “neutral travel documents” that Tbilisi is attempting to issue to citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also touched upon. The representatives of Sukhum and Tskhinval expressed their outright disapproval of the decision by a number of EU countries and the United States to recognize these documents, pointing out that initiatives like this one were likely to destabilize the situation in the region.

The working group on humanitarian issues continued to consider the most pressing socio-economic and environmental problems of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.

Thank you for your attention.