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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 959th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 July 2013

**Regarding the results of the 24th round of the Geneva discussions  
on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

The 24th round of the international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus was held in Geneva on 25 and 26 June. In accordance with established practice, representatives of the three States of the region – the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Republic of South Ossetia – as well as the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE participated in the discussions.

The results of the Geneva meeting have given rise to a feeling of disappointment and concern regarding the future of this forum, which is important for the stability of the Trans-Caucasus.

Regrettably, we must point out that owing to the unconstructive and harsh stance of the Georgian delegation, yet again no progress was made in the discussion of the wording of a draft statement on the non-use of force by all Geneva process participants. Essentially, the Georgian side blocked the discussion of the compromise version of the draft statement prepared by the Co-Chairs. Once again, Georgia made baseless demands for some kind of unilateral commitments by Russia regarding the non-use of force. This is unacceptable in principle for us, as Russia was not a party to the conflict five years ago.

In the security group, the primary focus was on stabilizing the situation on the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia and enabling the population on both sides of the inter-State borders to live a normal life. With regard to the tensions in the border zones that were artificially exacerbated by Georgia recently, the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia provided reasonable arguments to refute Tbilisi's unjustified claims regarding the planned work to mark the borders of the two republics with Georgia. They emphasized that if Georgia refused to conclude legally binding agreements with South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the non-use of force, compliance with a border regime with neighbouring States would be an essential condition for ensuring the security of the local population and stability in the region.

Once again, the willingness of the two republics to set up joint commissions with Georgia on the delimitation and demarcation of bilateral borders was confirmed. Abkhazia informed the group that five additional crossing-points had been opened on the border with Georgia in May this year, which should further facilitate the border-crossing process on both sides. The figures demonstrate how far-fetched the alleged problems in this area are: while more than 65,000 persons crossed the border between January and May last year, more than 75,000 persons have already done so this year. In Leningori, for example, where the majority of the population are Georgian, hundreds of people drive through the border crossing-point each day. “Marshrutkas” (minibus taxis) travel quite peacefully across the border to Tbilisi. These facts make it clear that there are really no serious problems in this regard.

Overall we share the positive assessment of the participants in the most recent round of discussions of the work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in the border region between Georgia and South Ossetia. We support the suggestion of making more active use of the mechanism’s potential for reducing tensions in the border areas. In view of the forthcoming change in the leadership of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, we hope for the resumption of the regular activity of the IPRM on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia. These mechanisms are important practical tools for maintaining stability and security in the region and direct channels for the exchange of information in order to resolve specific border issues affecting the daily life of the population living in the border zone.

In the humanitarian group, unfortunately, just as we warned, the dialogue on refugees was hindered due to the Georgian United Nations General Assembly draft resolution on refugees and the refusal to allow the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to explain their position in New York. Under these circumstances, the delegations of those republics see no point in parallel discussions of this subject in Geneva.

We note the commitment indicated by the interested parties to clarifying the fate of missing persons and the meeting with the families of three missing South Ossetian citizens organized with the assistance of the OSCE Chairmanship for this purpose. We note the usefulness of the water projects being implemented by the OSCE in the border regions of South Ossetia and Georgia.

We hope that the consultations on the parameters for subsequent Geneva meetings that the Co-Chairs intend to hold during trips planned to the Trans-Caucasus in the autumn will enable a return to a constructive tenor in the discussions.

Regarding the “concerns” heard from the European Union and the United States regarding the situation on the border of South Ossetia and Georgia, I repeat: the marking of the State border is being done at the request of the leadership of the Republic of South Ossetia and in accordance with our bilateral agreement of 2009.

We must emphasize once again that the purpose of the infrastructure development work, which is now in its second year, at a number of areas that are potentially dangerous, above all for the local population, is to prevent unauthorized crossings of the State border between the Republic of South Ossetia and Georgia and consequently to reduce the number of detentions.

Against this background, the latest information disseminated on this topic, including allegations regarding the arbitrary shifting of the borderline, are certainly surprising, all the more so in the absence of any work at all on its delimitation.

Thank you for your attention.