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

27 May 2010

**In response to the report by the former Tagliavini commission**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are delighted to welcome the highly esteemed Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini to this meeting of the Permanent Council. At last, the long-awaited report of the European Union commission headed by her has also been presented in the OSCE.

The Swiss ambassador Heidi Tagliavini is well known in the Caucasus and Russia. She is a person who in all the positions she has held endeavours to be objective and to perform her duties conscientiously. It is probable that these highly professional qualities also manifested themselves in many ways in the drafting of the document in question. This is confirmed by the wide range of material in the document provided by Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia, which is important for those, particularly among the countries of the European Union, who are actively concerned to investigate the events that took place in the South Caucasus in August 2008.

The main conclusion of the Tagliavini commission report, for the sake of which the document, we repeat, was commissioned by the European Union, coincides with the assessment made earlier by Russia and its partners in the South Caucasus, namely South Ossetia and Abkhazia. At last, it gives a straightforward answer to the basic question of who unleashed the war. It states: "The shelling of Tskhinvali by Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia." We have been saying this from the outset, but no one in the OSCE wanted to listen to us, ignoring Russia's point of view and the victims of Georgian aggression, namely the people of South Ossetia.

It is worth pointing out that the main conclusion regarding Georgian aggression is repeated several times in the document. I quote again from the document: "Open hostilities began with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas, launched in the night of 7 to 8 August 2008. Operations started with a massive Georgian artillery attack."

The document clearly states: “There is the question of whether the use of force by Georgia in South Ossetia, beginning with the shelling of Tskhinvali during the night of 7/8 August 2008, was justifiable under international law. It was not.” It recognizes that the night-time shelling of the peaceful inhabitants of Tskhinval was carried out by the Georgian forces using GRAD multiple rocket launching systems and heavy artillery, indication of a disproportionate use of military force against a civilian population.

The Tagliavini commission draws one further important conclusion: “It follows from the illegal character of the Georgian military assault that South Ossetian defensive action in response did conform to international law in terms of legitimate self-defence.”

As far as the reasons for the conflict in August 2008 are concerned, the Tagliavini commission unequivocally mentions as serious destabilizing factors the military support offered to the Saakashvili regime, particularly through the supply of arms, above all by the United States of America, Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Israel, and the recognition of the independence of Kosovo and the promise given to Georgia at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008 regarding its future membership of the Alliance.

The report attaches as an annex Order No. 1 and Order No. 2 issued by the Saakashvili regime regarding the start of the military operation in South Ossetia, which are included in full in volume III under the heading “Official documents” in the original Georgian language and with Russian and English translations. These orders were issued on the morning of 7 August 2008 by Major G. Kalandadze, commander of the Georgian 4th Infantry Brigade, to the head of the same unit. Amongst other things the orders contain the following: “Units of the 4th infantry brigade will be put on high combat readiness at the location of their deployment no later than 11.00 on 7 August 2008 in order to provide support to the Task Group.” And another important passage in these orders: “The Task Group shall carry out a combat operation in the Samachablo region (*South Ossetia*) and defeat the enemy within 72 hours. Restore Georgia’s jurisdiction in the region.” The contents of these orders alone repudiates the claim by Tbilisi of an allegedly spontaneous action by the Georgian armed forces and once again clearly confirms that the Georgian leaders planned the attack on South Ossetia deliberately and in advance with a view to regaining control over the republic with the aid of the military force.

It is interesting to note Georgia’s reaction to these published orders. Tbilisi was quick to call these documents forgeries. This opinion is contained in a letter of 27 July 2009 attached to report from Mr. G. Bokeria in reply to the official request by the Tagliavini commission to provide it with the original orders. In this letter, Mr. Bokeria asserts that the originals, whose contents allegedly “differ from the falsifications”, are with the Georgian Government, which is in the process of declassifying them and also studying the signatures on them. The deputy minister promised to hand over the originals to the commission in the near future.

It is important to emphasize that the Tagliavini commission conducted an expert analysis to determine the authenticity of Order No. 1 and Order No. 2 and did not consider them to be forgeries, as is unequivocally stated in the report.

We trust that even though almost eight months have elapsed since 30 September 2009, the publication of the Tagliavini report will prompt the OSCE community finally to correct its public position on the events of August 2008. The time has

come for our Organization make a clear and open statement, as it says in the document, about the crimes and violations of international law committed by the Saakashvili regime. The absence of a fundamental assessment by the OSCE of the war unleashed by Tbilisi against the people of South Ossetia and its impact on the development of international relations in general undermines the OSCE's authority, adversely affects its prospects for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, and makes its return to the region extremely problematic.

Thank you for your attention.