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**EU Statement on Georgia and the Batumi Conference**

The EU welcomes the initiative of the Georgian government in hosting the international conference in Batumi on 10 July 2005 to continue active cooperation in the interest of a political settlement of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict. The EU hopes that this initiative will provide new impetus to the peace process and, in this context, reiterates its view that the conflict must be solved exclusively by peaceful means. In the process of political settlement, active cooperation among all parties remains indispensable. The EU therefore regrets that representatives from the South Ossetian region of Georgia did not participate in the conference. We suggest that the results of the conference should be brought to the attention of the authorities in South Ossetia and encourage them to participate in any further initiatives.

The EU welcomes all efforts aimed at the prevention of any further escalation of the conflict, including full implementation of the demilitarisation agreements which were reached between the sides previously. The EU underlines the importance of demilitarisation of the region as a basis for the peace process and calls upon both sides to proceed with full demilitarisation without delay.

The EU shares the belief that economic rehabilitation can strengthen confidence between the sides and create more favourable conditions for a constructive political dialogue. The EU therefore welcomes the intention of the Georgian government to implement economic rehabilitation projects in the region. In this respect, the EU recalls the contribution of 2.5 million euros which it has made available for such projects. The EU also welcomes the agreement reached in the Joint Control Commission concerning an OSCE "Needs Assessment Study" aimed at rehabilitation of infrastructure and economic development in the region.

The EU believes that respect for democratic values, the rule of law and human rights constitutes a significant prerequisite for a viable, peaceful and durable settlement of



Georgia's internal conflicts. Therefore the EU expresses readiness to support further political, economic and administrative reforms in Georgia.

Mutual compromise and confidence building remain essential. The EU welcomes all steps which would enable parties to regain mutual trust. The EU emphasizes the importance of proceeding with the conflict settlement only by peaceful means, based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. The EU will continue to support such a settlement of the South Ossetian conflict, drawing on the instruments at its disposal.

The Accessing Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia <sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process