



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Joint FSC/PC Meeting No. 33 11 June 2008

EU Statement on Abkhazia, Georgia

The EU recalls the General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions on Georgia adopted on May 26, 2008. On that occasion, the Council reiterated the European Union's serious concern about the recent series of events that have raised tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation. In that context, the Council reaffirmed its full commitment to the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, as most recently reaffirmed in the UNSC Resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008. The Council underlined that it is essential now to reduce the risk of further escalation and take steps towards normalisation of relations and emphasised that all parties should tone down public rhetoric and abstain from provocations and implementation of decisions that undermine the above principles.

The Council reconfirmed its support for international efforts aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Abkhazian conflict. The Council also welcomed the peace initiative on Abkhazia put forward by the Georgian President, as well as the direct talks by the parties, hoping that they will contribute to a constructive dialogue on the issue. The EU stands ready to contribute to all these efforts and calls on the parties to continue these talks on a higher level in order to reach peaceful and sustainable solutions. The Council also underlined the importance of the work of the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and recalled that the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the European Commission will continue to implement confidence-building measures in support of resolving the conflict.

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The EU reconfirms the leading role of the United Nations in Abkhazia, Georgia in negotiations aimed at the peaceful resolution of the conflict. We support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General and his special representative, with the assistance of the United Nations Secretary General's Group of Friends. In addition, we welcome the Chairman-in-Office's efforts to make full use of existing OSCE mechanisms in support of the UN-led peace process. We take this opportunity to emphasise that the procedure laid down in the Vienna Document 1999 continues to be a viable means to provide a framework for assisted dialogue, thus helping to reduce tensions between participating States.

The EU welcomes UNOMIG's timely investigation, which was supported by the EU Satellite Centre, and the issuing of its report on the downing on 20 April of a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle over Abkhazia, in Georgian airspace, by a Russian fighter. We take note with concern of the report's observations, in particular that enforcement action by third parties, in this case by the Russian Federation, in the zone of conflict is fundamentally inconsistent with the Moscow Agreement and, aside from possible considerations under international law, undercuts the ceasefire and separation of forces regime.

The EU condemns any act which might raise tensions and place at risk the search for a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict.

We also take note of UNOMIG's position that the overflight of the zone of conflict by surveillance aircraft constitutes a breach of the Moscow Agreement. We thus welcome Georgia's recent decision to suspend its UAV flights over Abkhazia. In order to meet legitimate security concerns, we believe that UNOMIG's capacity should be reinforced, including by the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles and artillery radar, as

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recommended in the UN Secretary General's report S/2007/588 of 4 October 2007 and supported in UNSC Resolution 1781 of 15 October 2007.

The EU is concerned by the recent deployment of additional Russian military railroad construction troops, into Abkhazia, Georgia, without the consent of the Georgian Government. We call on the Russian Federation to withdraw these troops. We urge all parties involved to refrain from armed or military action – or actions that are likely to be perceived as such - and to take action to rebuild confidence. In conclusion, we once again call on all parties to respect Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and advocate a rapid resumption of negotiations leading to a peaceful, viable and long-term solution to the conflict.

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

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