



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

As delivered by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the OSCE,

Ambassador Paata Gaprindashvili

at the 904th session of the OSCE Permanent Council

Vienna, March 8, 2012

Mr. Chairperson,

Dear Colleagues,

Georgia continues to employ its best efforts to resolve the conflict between Russia and Georgia exclusively by peaceful means, in line with the unilaterally undertaken pledge of non-use of force, which, so far, has not been reciprocated by the Russian Federation.

Agreement reached with regard to Russia's accession to WTO is yet another proof that Georgia stands ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with Russia. Among other constructive steps one could name the opening of the Larsi checkpoint for transit movement, lifting of the visas for the residents of the Northern Caucasus and re-establishing the air links between the two countries, despite the state of ongoing occupation of the Georgian territories and the conditions of continued economic embargo from Moscow. The call for dialogue has also been extended to the Russian Federation to discuss the issues that divide us, in a peaceful and civilized way.

Just recently, on 28th of February, 2012, President of Georgia, in his annual address to the Parliament has announced yet another peaceful initiative - to unilaterally lift visa requirements for all citizens of the Russian Federation. This initiative was duly enacted the next day.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me draw your attention to the fact that during the last few days 2500 persons have already enjoyed Georgia's visa free travel regime with Russia. This initiative is yet another proof that Georgia has been and remains strongly in favor of removing barriers for people-to-people contacts and makes concrete steps for promoting the economic, cultural and human relations between the societies of both countries. This new initiative demonstrates that Georgia remains widely open to Russian tourists, representatives of the business community and the civil society.

Allow me to express our sincere hope that the Russian side will find enough power to reciprocate to this step and will also lift visa requirements for the citizens of Georgia. We have seen the statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to this respect and it appears that the decision to reciprocate has not been made so far; however, we are still hopeful that the common sense will prevail in Kremlin.

Thank you.