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

18 June 2009

On the OSCE field presence in Georgia and South Ossetia

Madam Chairperson,

As you are all aware, on 30 June of this year the mandate of the OSCE military monitoring officers active in areas of Georgia that are adjacent to South Ossetia is set to expire.

In that connection, it should be recalled that Russia has consistently expressed its support – and continues to do so – for the extension of the Organization’s work on the territory of Georgia and South Ossetia. In December 2008, when the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia ran out, we were prepared to agree to its technical extension, with the exception obviously of those components that refer to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and that had become irrelevant as a result of the repelling of Georgia’s military aggression and the formation of the two independent States recognized by Russia – the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia. However, we were prevented from doing this by the unconstructive position taken by a number of our partners, who have become fixated on formulas asserting the territorial integrity of Georgia within its former, pre-war borders.

Immediately following the resumption this year of the negotiating process on the draft mandates for the OSCE presence in Georgia and South Ossetia, Russia actively involved itself in that work. In so doing, we displayed maximum flexibility and agreed, together with other partners, to an extension of Permanent Council Decision No. 861 of 19 August 2008 on additional OSCE military monitoring officers.

Subsequently, guided by a desire to achieve mutually acceptable understandings on the terms for the continuation of the OSCE field presence in the region, we proposed the adoption of two separate Permanent Council decisions: one on the OSCE Office in Tbilisi, entrusting it with the standard set of duties having to do with assisting the Georgian Government in meeting its OSCE commitments, and the other on monitoring on both sides of the border between Georgia and South Ossetia. It is clear that the modalities of that monitoring activity, including the zone of responsibility, must be agreed upon both with Tbilisi and with Tskhinval. This is a fundamental consideration. Without the consent of the

parties the monitors will simply be unable to carry out their functional responsibilities in a qualitative and effective manner.

The Russian delegation officially distributed amendments to the Greek draft as a constructive contribution to our common efforts. Unfortunately, our proposals were not accepted.

Today again we reaffirm our interest in maintaining the OSCE field presence in the region, including the operations of the Organization's military monitoring officers in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia. Their presence there is necessary in order to help to keep a closer eye on any fresh aggressive designs Tbilisi might be harbouring against its neighbours and to counter them.

We want to once again underscore our readiness to continue serious negotiations on mandates to govern the OSCE presence in the region that will fully take into account the new political realities under international law that have come into being in the South Caucasus following the repelling of Georgian aggression in August of last year.

The position of the Russian Federation on this question was once again set out in detail by Mr. Grigory Karasin, State Secretary and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Permanent Council meeting on 4 June 2009.

Thank you for your attention.