

PC.DEL/716/08  
28 August 2008

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

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

28 August 2008

**Regarding South Ossetia and Abkhazia**

Mr. Chairman,

On 26 August 2008 Dmitry Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, signed decrees on the recognition by Russia of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The statement delivered by the President of Russia stressed the fact that the night-time shelling of Tskhinvali by Georgian troops had led to the killing of hundreds of our peaceful citizens. Russian peacekeepers who to the end had carried out their duty to protect women, children and the elderly also perished.

In violation of the Charter of the United Nations and its obligations under international agreements, and in defiance of common sense, the Georgian leadership unleashed an armed conflict that claimed peaceful men and women as its victims. The same fate was awaiting Abkhazia. It is clear that Tbilisi was reckoning on a blitzkrieg that would have confronted the international community with a *fait accompli*. The way chosen for achieving this goal, namely the annexation South Ossetia, was a most inhumane one, whose price involved the annihilation of an entire people.

This was not the first such attempt. In 1991, the then President of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, under the slogan “Georgia for the Georgians” — just think about those words — ordered the storming of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali. Thousands of dead, tens of thousands of refugees, villages in ruins — such was the outcome of that action, and it was precisely Russia that then moved to put an end to the extermination of the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples. Our country became a mediator and peacekeeper, seeking over a period of many years a political resolution to the conflict. In so doing, we took a consistent position of recognizing the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Unfortunately, the Georgian leadership chose a different, extremely dangerous path. The disruption of the negotiation process, the disregarding of agreements already reached, political and military provocations, attacks on peacekeepers — all of this flagrantly violated the regime established in the conflict zones with the support of the United Nations and the OSCE.

Russia showed restraint and patience. We repeatedly called for a return to the negotiating table and we did not abandon our position even after the unilateral proclamation of the independence of Kosovo. However, as it turned out, our persistent proposals to the Georgian side to conclude agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the non-use of force remained unanswered. Regrettably, those proposals were also ignored by NATO and even by the United Nations.

Now it is perfectly clear: A peaceful settlement of the conflict was not in any way part of Tbilisi's plans. The Georgian leadership methodically prepared for war, and the political and material support received from their external backers only strengthened them in their feeling of impunity.

On the night of 8 August 2008, Tbilisi made its choice, a choice in favour of genocide as a way of achieving its political objectives. In doing so, Georgia by its own hand dashed all hope of peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Georgians within a single State. In referendums the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have on more than one occasion spoken out in support of the independence of their republics. After what has happened in Tskhinvali and what had been planned for Abkhazia, they have only been strengthened in their conviction as to the imperative need to exercise their legitimate right to decide their fate for themselves.

The presidents of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, basing their actions on the referendum results and decisions of the parliaments in the republics, appealed to Russia to recognize the State sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Federation Council and State Duma voted to support those appeals.

In light of the situation that had arisen, the President of Russia found it necessary to take a decision that was difficult and had been forced upon him but that was the only one possible in the present circumstances. The decrees signed on the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of South Ossetia and the independence of Abkhazia take into account the free expression of the will of the Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples and, at the same time, are guided by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1970 declaration on principles of international law concerning friendly relations between States, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other fundamental international documents.

Our President specifically stressed that this was no easy choice but that the decision taken provided the only way of safeguarding people's lives. Russia calls on other countries to follow its example and to recognize the independence of these territorial entities.

The President of Russia has issued instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to conduct negotiations with the Abkhaz and South Ossetian authorities on the establishment of diplomatic relations, and also to begin, with the participation of concerned federal agencies of the executive branch, talks with both sides on the preparation of draft treaties of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance.

In addition, instructions have also been given to the Russian Ministry of Defence, namely to see to it that, pending the conclusion of the aforementioned treaties, the armed forces of the Russian Federation carry out peacekeeping functions on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia.

We are keenly aware of the position taken by our OSCE partners, but in this situation the main thing is to protect the interests of the people living in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to prevent a further escalation of the conflict, fresh bloodletting and the killing of peaceful civilians. It is precisely the desire to deal with this noble task that is behind the unavoidable but well-considered decision of the Russian Federation to recognize these two subjects of international law as independent entities.

The overriding need now is to give thought to the restoration of peace, confidence and mutual understanding between the three sovereign States in the region concerned in order to secure there the stability and reliable security that is so necessary.

Mr. Chairman,

As Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, noted in connection with the recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia has no intention of maintaining its peacekeeping forces outside the boundaries of these republics forever. At the same time, we shall insist on reliable international monitoring in the regions of Georgia adjacent to these republics in order to prevent Tbilisi from preparing new military adventures.

We are counting on the start of constructive and practical co-operation between our peacekeepers and OSCE observers.

Thank you for your attention.