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

3 September 2009

**Regarding South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia**

Madam Chairperson,

Over the past month, during which the Permanent Council was not in session owing to the holiday period, it is fair to say that two truly important and fateful dates have been marked in the context of Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz affairs. First of all, on 8 August we observed the first anniversary of the aggression by the Saakashvili regime against the people of South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeepers there. We discussed this subject in detail at the last meeting before the summer recess. I do not think that there is any need to return to that subject, all the more since the international community and the OSCE community are gradually approaching a point where they understand the full scale of the crimes committed by the present Georgian leadership.

For that reason, permit me straight away a few words regarding the natural consequences of Tbilisi's armed adventure, namely the formation of two sovereign republics – South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The date 26 August marked one year from the day of the signing by the President of Russia of the decrees recognizing their independence.

During the period that has elapsed considerable work has been done to provide a structure for and give substance to bilateral inter-State relations. On 17 September 2008, treaties of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance were signed at the highest level, which were to become the foundation for the establishment of a basis in treaty law and a framework for stepped-up co-operation in a range of areas. As of today, the documents signed with Tskhinval and Sukhum include 12 inter-State, intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements; 36 documents with South Ossetia and 43 with Abkhazia are at the agreement stage. These instruments deal primarily with the development and strengthening of co-operation in the military sphere, the restoration of the economic and social infrastructure, and interaction in the trade and economic area.

It is symbolic that coinciding precisely with the first anniversary of Russia's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia the Dzaurikau-Tskhinval pipeline came into operation, over which the republic will directly receive Russian natural gas in the amount of 250 million cubic metres a year. These deliveries will fully cover current gas requirements.

On that same day, *Gazprom* concluded a gas co-operation agreement that provides for the implementation of a large-scale gasification programme for the republic. In this way, Russia, faithful to its obligations, intends to continue to provide these young States with all the assistance they require in rebuilding their war-ravaged economies and in strengthening the foundations for the peaceful life of their citizens.

A significant contribution to ensuring stability and security in the region is being made by the Russian military and border guards who are serving in South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the basis of bilateral agreements that are in full accord with the norms of international law. The Russian contingents are maintaining the necessary contacts with the European Union monitors located on the Georgian territories adjacent to South Ossetia and Abkhazia and deployed in accordance with agreements reached between the presidents of Russia and France.

The recent visits paid by the President and Prime Minister of Russia to South Ossetia and Abkhazia testify to the serious nature of Moscow's relations with those republics and of its intention to continue to promote their security and regional stability. As underscored by President Medvedev, Russia's decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia was legitimate from the point of view of international law, just and absolutely necessary. And that decision will be scrupulously implemented, being irreversible. No one should have any doubt that we shall continue to pursue long-term, multi-faceted co-operation with South Ossetia and Abkhazia at the inter-State level.

We once again call on our OSCE partners to abandon stereotypes in their perception of the situation in the Trans-Caucasus and to structure their relations with the countries of the region on the basis of the changed political and legal realities. It is necessary to clearly understand that without a recognition of the new status quo the deployment or expansion of any form of an international presence, including an OSCE presence, on the territory of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is simply unthinkable. The participation on the basis of equal rights by official representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the Geneva Discussions and in the joint mechanisms for preventing and responding to incidents in the border regions confirms the imperative need to take into account the positions held by Sukhum and Tskhinval when examining questions of vital importance to the region.

Madam Chairperson,

A number of delegations have in their statements referred to the question of the meeting planned for 11 August in Tskhinval that failed to take place between Mr. Charalampos Christopoulos, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for conflicts, and the South Ossetian leadership. An analysis of the circumstances surrounding that episode reveals the existence of an excessively politicized approach to the issues involved in practical co-operation with the South Ossetian side.

We might recall the chronology of the events. The car belonging to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Vladikavkaz (Russia) in which the OSCE representatives usually travelled to Tskhinval from the Georgian side was not available during the period in question for technical reasons. The South Ossetian side proposed to Mr. Christopoulos and the staff members accompanying him the use of one of their own vehicles – an armoured car – to travel from the Georgian-South Ossetian border to Tskhinval, obviously taking all the appropriate security measures.

However, this compromise solution turned out to be unacceptable to the special representative, who categorically refused to enter the territory of the republic in a vehicle made available by the South Ossetian authorities. Instead, he began to insist on using a vehicle belonging to the Greek embassy in Tbilisi, something that drew a fitting reaction from the South Ossetian partners.

In this way, we must regrettably once again take note of the, to put it mildly, strange attitude towards the maintenance of working contacts on the basis of equal rights with the South Ossetian participants in the Geneva Discussions.

It is well known that South Ossetia has favoured and continues to favour establishing constructive co-operation with the OSCE. A graphic example of this desire can be seen in the active participation of representatives from Tskhinval in the latest meeting, held on 14 August, within the framework of the joint mechanisms to prevent and respond to incidents in the Georgian-South Ossetian border region.

The further pursuit of a politically motivated course of action may lead to breakdowns in the functioning of those joint mechanisms as an important confidence-building instrument. A statement to that effect was made to the special representative during conversations held in Moscow on 5 August.

We should also like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the latest provocation by the Georgian side. Yesterday the Georgian authorities refused to allow into Georgia two Russian journalists – Mr. V. Mamontov, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Izvestiya*, and Mr. M. Shevchenko, a presenter on television Channel One in Russia, from among the members of the delegation of a Russo-Georgian commission to overcome the crisis in the Caucasus. The commission had planned to meet with the Patriarch of Georgia, Iliya II, and with Georgian journalists, to take part in round-table discussions, to visit national television stations and also to hold meetings with prominent political figures of Georgia both from the government side and the opposition.

However, the Georgian border guards refused the Russian journalists on their arrival entry into the city from the Tbilisi Airport terminal, stating that they had both been banned from entering Georgia. After this, Messrs Mamontov and Shevchenko were deported.

We assume that this incident will be properly analysed by Mr. Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, who will not only provide a proper assessment of the actions of the Georgian side but will also take the necessary preventative measures to see to it that similar illegal actions on the part of the authorities in Tbilisi in dealing with members of the journalistic community are not repeated in the future.

Thank you for your attention.