



STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY

***IN RESPONSE TO THE ADDRESS BY H.E. MAIA PANJIKIDZE
FOREIGN MINISTER OF GEORGIA***

*966th PERMANENT COUNCIL
(10 October 2013)*

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

We join the previous speakers in warmly welcoming H.E. Maia Panjikidze, Foreign Minister of Georgia to the Permanent Council. Thank you Madam Minister for your comprehensive presentation. It provided us with in-depth information about the current situation in Georgia, as well as the priorities and the ongoing reform process in your country.

Turkey's longstanding position has been one of full support to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders. We have been pleased to observe our bilateral relations steadily develop to the benefit of not only our peoples, but also of regional peace, prosperity and stability. Our flourishing bilateral relations coupled with our joint economic projects at the regional scale set an example.

We will be happy to observe Georgia continue with resolve to develop its democracy further and build a steadily growing sound economy. We are also among those who support the restoration of OSCE presence in Georgia. We believe that such a presence will help expand the ties of reciprocal contribution between Georgia and the Organization.

Madam Chairperson,

Protracted conflicts stand as obstacles to peace and stability both within Georgia as well as in the region in general. Indeed, the peaceful resolution of all conflicts in the South Caucasus will contribute to political stability and economic prosperity of all concerned countries, and open up new avenues for bilateral as well as regional cooperation.

In this vein, we hope to see progress in the Geneva Discussions. Such progress will help to improve the overall situation and living conditions of the population in the conflict-affected areas. In light of recent developments, we call on all parties to act with outmost care and restraint, with the aim of preserving the already fragile security conditions in the region.

Having said this, we would like to underline the statement issued by the co-facilitators of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meeting that took place in Ergneti on September 16, 2013. In this statement, the co-facilitators expressed their appreciation for the willingness of participants to cooperate in defusing tense situations at short notice, as was the case within the framework of an ad-hoc meeting on 12 August. We took note of this as a positive sign of the parties' will to work together to overcome existing hardships. We call on them to continue on such a path of constructive cooperation.

Finally, we wish to emphasize the importance of the upcoming Presidential Election for democracy in Georgia. We are confident that the elections will be held in a manner that fully satisfies all internationally accepted standards and our shared commitments and in a peaceful atmosphere as was the case during last year's parliamentary elections.

Thank you.