

Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 614
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EU Statement on South Ossetia, Georgia

1. The European Union regrets that it has to address the security situation in the zone of conflict again, only one week after the successful OSCE Donors' Conference on South Ossetia, Georgia. The reason for raising this issue today is the Spot Report of the OSCE Mission to Georgia of 15 June 2006 on an increase of Georgian Special Forces police operations in the zone of conflict. It also refers to the Spot Report of 1 June 2006 which describes how the detention by the South Ossetian side of several Georgians sparked off an overreaction by Georgian local law enforcement agencies and an immediate rise in tension which nearly spiralled out of control in the confusion that followed.
2. Already on previous occasions, the European Union has underlined the importance of law enforcement cooperation between the sides in order to build confidence among the communities. In this context, the European Union welcomes the information by the Georgian delegation of 20 June, that it is being planned to have a meeting between the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia and his interlocutor from the South Ossetian side.
3. The European Union shares the concern that new incidents could lead to an armed confrontation. Therefore, the European Union appeals to the sense of responsibility of all parties and calls on them to remain calm and to refrain from actions or rhetoric which risk escalating the situation. The implementation of agreements reached earlier on demilitarisation remains crucial and long overdue. Particularly against the background of the Donors' Conference, it is essential that parties resume full and good faith cooperation at all levels in order to move the peace process forward. The European Union reiterates that it stands ready to contribute actively to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on the respect

for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, EFTA countries Island and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process