

PC.DEL/1427/14
28 November 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1028th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 November 2014

**On the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the
Republic of Abkhazia on Alliance and Strategic Partnership**

Mr. Chairperson,

We cannot accept the immoderate concerns expressed by the esteemed First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Mr. Davit Dondua, and some delegations in this room regarding the signing on 24 November of this year of a new treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Abkhazia on alliance and strategic partnership, since these concerns are unfounded.

Already six years have elapsed since the Saakashvili regime's reckless military venture in August 2008 led to irreversible political changes in the South Caucasus, resulting in the formation of two new independent sovereign States – the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia – and their recognition by the Russian Federation. Everyone should be well accustomed to the fact that our countries are systematically developing all kinds of inter-State relations. A solid legal framework has been established with each country.

Detailed explanations regarding the new Treaty were provided in October to the Permanent Council, in comments by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and during an informal Russia-Georgia meeting in Prague. Unfortunately, they have not been heard, and, clearly, no one has read the actual text of the Treaty, either.

The free, open and lively discussion of its draft in Abkhazia allowed for the eventual creation of a completely transparent document that fully meets the two countries' national interests. It says absolutely nothing about the "annexation" or "absorption" of sovereign Abkhazia, which is impossible in principle. The Treaty focuses on expanding bilateral inter-State co-operation in practically all areas.

The Treaty was the logical outcome of collaborative efforts to update and give systematic structure to the legal framework of Russian-Abkhazian inter-State relations based on almost 80 different bilateral agreements, starting with the Treaty on Friendship,

Co-operation and Mutual Assistance of 17 September 2008. It reflects the policy chosen by the people of Russia and Abkhazia of developing co-operation between our countries in the economic, social and humanitarian fields, with the ultimate goal of improving the people's lives and further expanding human contacts. Let me give you just a few figures. The new goals and long-term objectives are backed by major financing: in 2015 Abkhazia will receive 5 billion roubles for the implementation of this Treaty. In particular, Russia will co-finance an increase in the average salary of Abkhazian Government employees in areas such as health care, education, science, culture, sport and social services to a level comparable to the salary level in the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation. The easing of regulations governing the crossing of the Russian-Abkhazian State border – identification papers and cargo documents will be checked as usual – should help to stimulate the development of the tourism industry in this young republic. After all, over a million Russians take their holidays in Abkhazia every year. Surely this should not give rise to concern or objections on anyone's part.

As for the common security space, everything remains at the level of the already existing legal framework on which relations between Russia and Abkhazia are based, and there is nothing new in the Treaty of 24 November. The same applies to our co-operation in protecting the Abkhazian State border, which is based on an agreement signed back in April 2009.

We stress once again that the systematic development of our bilateral co-operation with Abkhazia is based on mutual respect for State sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and non-interference in internal affairs.

The far-fetched campaign surrounding the new Russia-Abkhazia treaty may cast a pall on the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus, the 30th round of which will be held in December. We call upon all responsible international actors to think seriously about this. We believe that it is important to continue the Geneva meetings.

Such a campaign is not conducive to the normalization of Georgian-Russian relations. Over the past two years, we have taken practical steps together to establish co-operation in those areas where it is possible, given that Georgia still refuses to restore diplomatic relations, which it broke off of its own accord. As you may recall, we warned openly from the very outset against the harbouring of illusions that this might somehow weaken our inter-State co-operation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These processes take place at completely different levels. We have repeatedly and publicly stated this.

Pragmatic efforts are being made to improve Russian-Georgian relations. They have already yielded tangible results in the economic and humanitarian spheres. This is important for the people of both countries. There are no obstacles to the continuation of this work on our part. We sincerely hope that Georgia also stands ready to co-operate in the same non-politicized manner.

Thank you for your attention.