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

1 March 2012

**Regarding the dismantling of the memorial to victims of the
Great Patriotic War in Batumi**

Mr. Chairperson,

According to information received from Georgia, a monument to soldiers who fell in the Great Patriotic War is currently being dismantled in Batumi. Once again, as in December 2009, when a monument was taken down in Kutaisi, the Georgian authorities have despoiled the sacred memory of the heroic joint struggle by the peoples of the Soviet Union against Nazism.

The reason for the “war” on the monument is known. Memorials are clear symbols of the glorious pages in the shared history of Russia and Georgia and at the same time prevent the myth from entering into the minds of Georgians that their country was enslaved first by Russia and then by the Soviet Union. Speaking recently at Georgetown University in Washington, the President of Georgia described graphically how “we were under the authority of another country, the Soviet Union, and we hated this country.”

The Georgian authorities do not stop short of insulting the blessed memory of more than 80,000 sons and daughters of Georgia who fell in the battlefields defending their country and the world from Nazism.

The activities of the Georgian militants concerning the monuments are in direct violation of the OSCE commitments that Georgia has also signed – notably the 1991 Document of the Cracow Symposium of the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States, in which the participating States undertook measures to “preserve and protect those monuments ... which are themselves testimonials to tragic experiences in their common past ... in order that those experiences may be remembered ... and ... are never repeated.”

I should like to conclude by recalling that those who destroy the past deprive themselves of the future. Our peoples paid too high a price in the most destructive war of the twentieth century.