

PC.DEL/356/12
23 April 2012

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 908th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 April 2012

**Regarding the results of the 19th round of the Geneva discussions
on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

The principal subject of the latest, 19th, round of the Geneva international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus, held on 29 March of this year with the participation of delegations from the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the Republic of South Ossetia as equal partners, as well as the co-chairmen from the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE, had to do with issues concerned with ensuring security and the non-use of force.

The representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia noted the need for the earliest possible conclusion of legally binding agreements on the non-use of force between those republics and Georgia. The urgency of legally formulated commitments on the part of Tbilisi in this sphere, in accordance with the agreements reached by Dmitry Medvedev and Nicolas Sarkozy in their discussions on 12 August and 8 September of 2008, takes on added importance in the light of the increased tension along the border regions. The reference here is to the provocations in the Gali region, the active involvement of armed formations in the Zugdidi region and the stepping up of activities by criminal groups.

We call on the European Union observer mission to work more effectively on the Georgian side of the borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Incidentally, I might note that we have never objected to an international presence in Georgia.

The Russian delegation has put forward a new idea. This idea calls for the adoption of a joint declaration by the Geneva discussion participants regarding the non-use of force in support of the unilateral commitments in this area assumed at the end of 2010 by the presidents of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and for the confirmation of a common commitment on the part of all the countries involved in the Geneva discussions to the generally recognized norms of international law and the provisions of the Charter of United Nations, including the principle of the non-use of force.

The Georgian Government attempted to block this proposal, yet again raising the question of the need for some sort of statement on the non-use of force against Georgia on the

part of Russia. In that connection, it was once again pointed out that to put the question in those terms was unwarranted. The Abkhaz and South Ossetian delegations in Geneva reminded those present that the Russian military and border contingents stationed on the territory of these two sovereign republics in conformity with international law and on the basis of bilateral agreements are acting as guarantors of stability and security on the borders of the new Trans-Caucasus States with Georgia.

The participants and the co-chairmen expressed their interest in examining in detail during subsequent rounds the Russian draft of a joint declaration, which remains on the negotiating table in Geneva.

We regard as useful the exchange of opinions that took place on the question of the impropriety of using the term “occupied territories” when speaking of the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We welcome the agreement reached on organizing in June of this year a special expert meeting to discuss the implications of that term under international law.

The Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants again spoke out against the artificial imposition of the so-called “international security measures”. The South Ossetian delegation noted in that connection the negative experience accompanying the presence on the territory of the Republic of international field missions on the eve of the tragic events of August 2008.

In reply to questions raised by a number of participants, the Russian side provided explanations regarding the subject of the regular “Kavkaz-2012” command and control military exercises planned for the autumn of this year. It is not anticipated that military personnel from Russian military bases abroad or armed forces of any other countries will be involved in these exercises. In that same connection, attention was drawn to the Georgian-American exercises “Agile Spirit 2012” held in March of this year on the territory of Georgia, the purpose of which, namely to combat some sort of “insurgents”, is a subject of concern in a number of States in the Trans-Caucasus region.

One favourable development can be seen in the fact that all the participants in the Geneva discussions spoke of the usefulness of continuing the work of the joint incident prevention and response mechanisms in the region of the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia, referring also to the need to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of those mechanisms.

The second Geneva discussion group heard a detailed exchange of views on humanitarian issues. The international experts held an informative briefing on the subject of preserving the cultural heritage of the three Trans-Caucasus States. We note the agreement reached on new projects to restore the water supply systems in South Ossetia and Georgia and also to provide assistance in agricultural and environmental matters in Georgia and Abkhazia. Unfortunately, there was no progress on the question of supplying the Republic of South Ossetia with gas from Georgia. Finally, the representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia spoke of the need to conclude the investigations into the cases of citizens from those countries who have disappeared without trace on Georgian territory.

Thank you for your attention.