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

10 March 2011

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

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to share our assessments of the results of the 15th round of the international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus held on 4 March in Geneva with the participation of the delegations of the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, the United States of America and the Republic of South Ossetia as well as representatives of the European Union (EU), the United Nations and the OSCE.

In our opinion, the meeting proceeded in a working atmosphere. The desire of the parties to find a solution to the specific and pressing problems facing the local population was confirmed at that meeting.

At the meeting of the security group, it was noted that there had been a strengthening of stability and a reduction in the number of incidents, including those involving detentions, in the border regions. The parties admitted that the meetings within the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms that are now taking place regularly are helping to strengthen stability. The atmosphere of these meetings also changed for the better following the exchange on 21 February 2011 in Ergneti of persons who had been detained or arrested by the Georgian or South Ossetian authorities. The situation is improving as regards border crossings for the local population. The decision by the Government of South Ossetia to organize simplified crossing points on the border with Georgia in the Leningor district met with a positive response.

Socio-economic projects, including the water and gas projects launched with the assistance of the OSCE in the border regions of South Ossetia and Georgia, are playing a particular role in restoring trust among the local population, and this was something that was recognized in Geneva.

The discussion of the principal topic of the Geneva talks – the non-use of force in the region – continued. Despite the fact that the unilateral statements by the presidents of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia regarding the non-use of force made at the end of last

year were recognized by all the parties to the discussions as an important factor in improving the situation in the region, the joint Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian proposals regarding the enshrining of these commitments in international law are still not receiving support. At the last round, the Abkhaz and South Ossetian parties set out in quite some detail their arguments in favour of concluding bilateral agreements on the non-use of force with Georgia. We hope that Georgia and the representatives of the EU, the United Nations and the OSCE will at last listen to these arguments.

In this connection, we should also like to point out that Russia was not a party to the conflict and has no intention of adopting any statements on the non-use of force, something that some of the parties to the discussions are insisting on. At the same time, we are ready for a constructive discussion of the provision of international guarantees with the obligatory involvement of Russia with respect to the non-use of force between Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.

The discussion of questions connected with ensuring the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons is proceeding with difficulty. Owing to an unwillingness to discuss the proposals by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian parties regarding a stage-by-stage solution of the problem of the return of refugees to the Gali and Leningor districts, no formal document was adopted on principles to govern the work on the topic of refugees.

We should like to take this opportunity to draw attention once again to the calls made in Geneva by the Russian, Abkhaz and South Ossetian delegations that people should refrain from using aggressive language and incorrect terminology both with respect to the authorities of these two independent republics and with respect to the Russian military presence on their territories. Ultimately, the principal task of the Geneva discussions is not confrontation among the parties but the achievement of stability and security in the region. And if the results of the latest round are anything to go by, this process is already showing some positive momentum. Now the participants just have to consolidate this positive momentum during the next meeting, which is scheduled for June of this year.

Thank you for your attention.