

**Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, H.E. Ms. Maia  
Panjikidze at the OSCE Kyiv Ministerial Council Meeting**

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank the OSCE Ukrainian Chairmanship and personally the Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara for their efforts aimed at enhancing the role and effectiveness of the OSCE. My deep gratitude goes to Ukrainian friends for their wonderful hospitality in Kyiv. We wholeheartedly support the European aspiration of Ukraine and are confident that the year ahead will bring us closer to the EU and further advance us on our steadfast path of European integration.

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present my views on the challenges that we all face in the OSCE area and the priorities we need to move forward. Before, let me start by briefly updating you on the situation in my country since our last meeting in Dublin.

The recent presidential elections, highly praised by international community, displayed two very important aspects: first of all, they marked our political maturity and strong adherence to democratic values; and second, they once again stressed that the choice of the Georgian people to integrate the European and Euro-Atlantic structures is as unwavering as ever before. The first peaceful transfer of power through two free and fair elections and the successful accomplishment of the cohabitation further underpin the foundation of our European identity and aspiration. Since October 2012, we are advancing on the path of democratic reforms based on our active cooperation with the international community and the increased participation of civil society. In this context, let me once again emphasize the importance of the expertise provided by the OSCE and its institutions that Georgia highly values. Close cooperation with the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of Media has allowed Georgia to further solidify its democratic achievements. This leads me to strongly advocate for safeguarding the independence and autonomy of these institutions.

Dear Colleagues,

In the light of our commitment to European values, we see the European integration process as a natural path for our country's development. European and Euro-Atlantic integration is the cornerstone of our foreign policy, which is determined by the choice of the Georgian people and embedded in our identity. The EU Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, where we initialed the Association Agreement, turned a new page in the EU-Georgia relations that makes the Europeanization of Georgia and other committed Eastern European partners irreversible. Our immediate objective is to complete the signature of the Association Agreement by September 2014.

Being committed to its European choice, since October 2012, the Government of Georgia undertook a number of constructive initiatives with the aim at de-escalating and

normalizing relations with Russia. Our efforts have resulted in gradual opening of Russian market for the Georgian products, and the creation of additional channel for regular communication. Yet, unfortunately, against the background of the restored economic and cultural relations, Russia has further intensified its illegal activities. As we speak, Moscow continues to impose barbwires, fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, dividing peoples, families and communities. Local residents are prevented from accessing the cemeteries, agricultural lands and water systems and reaching emergency medical services and schools. In the face of such illegal activities, we are not going to deviate from our determination to seek the resolution of the conflict exclusively through peaceful means. Allow me to express my gratitude for your unwavering support to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Your continuing support is decisive to prevent further provocations and destabilizing measures and stop the process of the installations of the barbed wire fences along the occupation line. At this forum, let me once again call upon the Russian Federation to comply with the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and its commitments under international law, to reverse the process of the installation of artificial obstacles, and cease the flagrant violations of fundamental rights of the population residing in the occupied territories and in their vicinity.

I am profoundly disappointed that yesterday, as a result of Russia's opposition, we have once again missed an opportunity to strengthen OSCE's contribution to the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict through providing support to the Geneva International Discussions. The existing impasse once again stresses the importance of the enhanced role of the OSCE in ensuring the implementation of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, achieving security in the occupied regions of Georgia, and facilitating the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to the places of their residence – issues that the Geneva Discussions are mandated to achieve. Furthermore,

- We need intensified diplomatic efforts to persuade the Russian Federation to reciprocate the Georgia's unilateral legally-binding commitment on non-use of force, undertaken by the President in November 2010 and reiterated by the new Parliament of Georgia in March 2013;
- With the aim to prevent the further deterioration of the human rights situation on the ground and overcome the humanitarian deadlock, we should effectively restore an international human rights monitoring mechanism in the occupied regions;
- While we welcome OSCE's engagement in the implementation of concrete initiatives for the benefit of the population divided by the war, we deem it important to further reinforce its role in meeting their humanitarian needs, and building confidence and trust;
- We need to redouble our attempts to work towards the restoration of a full-fledged and comprehensive OSCE presence on the ground, equipped with the peacekeeping and police mandates within the occupied regions.

Let me express hope that the upcoming Swiss and Serb Chairmanships will be resolute in successfully addressing these tasks. While we all recognize the immense importance of maintaining the wide-ranging dialogue among the participating States of the OSCE in this

floor, we all agree that the ultimate test of the effectiveness of the OSCE is the concrete and tangible results - statements of good will should be translated into specific actions, Organization's mandate needs to be fulfilled in its increased ability.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main purpose of our annual Ministerial Council Meeting is to move forward a vision that will allow the OSCE to be on guard of the Helsinki principles that, to our dismay, are not always upheld. We need to agree upon the concrete steps that would help this Organization overcome a prolonged state of uncertainty and strengthen the mandate that the OSCE was granted more than two decades ago. By limiting our activities to the lowest common denominator, we are discouraging those, who expect solutions from us.

First of all, we need to revive the Helsinki resoluteness to address and reconcile the conflicting visions and contrasting values. Today, in the face of a continuous challenge to make the Organization more effective and resolute, we need, first of all, to find the concrete ways to ensure in practice the respect for the Helsinki principles and the implementation of the OSCE commitments in all three dimensions. We should be more determined in denouncing the violations of rules and principles, rights and freedoms, upon which we all have agreed.

Second, to fully meet our commitments, we need to redouble efforts to resolve the existing conflicts in the OSCE area in a peaceful manner, within agreed formats, fully respecting the norms and principles of international law as enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. Today, we fail not only to leave our mark in solving the existing conflicts on the ground, but simply to name them and to set clear roadmaps and expectations of outcomes. Instead of endorsing efforts to streamline our work in this direction, we have again failed to adopt a Political Declaration.

Furthermore, we have repeatedly emphasized that the security of the participating States is inseparable and cannot be achieved without safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of each individual, without protecting the human security and justice.

Dear Colleagues,

We should grant the upcoming Chairmanships and the participating States a clear and strong mandate for achieving tangible progress in these directions. As we are approaching the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our organization, I would like to express my sincere hope that during the coming two years, as never before, we will uphold political will, empower the OSCE mechanisms, converge our interests and make tangible progress in achieving the establishment of a genuine security community - free of conflicts, dividing lines and spheres of influences, where the rights and freedoms of each individual are guaranteed. To make the world better, we need to ensure the effectiveness of international organizations and forums to which we all belong. Therefore, we hope that the Helsinki+40 process will help us make tangible steps in this direction. Let me wish our Swiss and Serb colleagues strong spirit and success in dealing with the pending tasks within the OSCE area in the coming year.

Thank You!