



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

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Mr. Chairperson,

I am delighted to welcome Ambassador Peter Semneby, the EU Special Representative for South Caucasus at the OSCE permanent Council Session today.

I would like to express my gratitude to him personally and to the EU for the crucial role in providing significant political and economic support to my country, thus contributing to Georgia's political and economic achievements.

Together with the EU-Georgia cooperation institutions, the EU Special Representative has become a powerful tool for channeling EU's political support and advice to Georgia. It has been equally important for tackling both Georgia's external and internal challenges. The EUSR, we all know, is an active participant of the ongoing democratization process in Georgia.

The EU enlargement of 2004 opened a new window of opportunity for Georgia. It brought the EU borders to Georgia even closer. Through such powerful initiatives as the Eastern Partnership and European Neighborhood Policy, we hope that peace, stability and prosperity will be successfully exported to the EU neighboring countries.

We are looking forward to the opportunities that the EU offers to us through the Eastern Partnership framework. For Georgia achieving gradual visa liberalization, establishment of the free trade areas and conclusion of Association Agreement with the EU have become the top foreign policy priorities.

These initiatives will significantly contribute to the closer EU-Georgia political ties and Georgia's gradual integration to the EU market.

Mr. Chairperson,
Ambassador Semneby,

The European Union is an important security actor for Georgia. From the recent history, when in August 2008 Russian army invaded the Georgian territory, the EU French Presidency successfully mediated the August 12 six point cease-fire agreement and prevented my country from the occupation of a larger scale. I would like to thank the EU for its steadfast political backing and decisive efforts through its statements, as

well as high level visits to Georgia. And certainly, we are thankful to the EU for its unwavering support to the Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the non-recognition policy which it pursues towards the occupied Georgian territories.

The European Union Monitoring Mission was another prompt response to the August War. The EUMM is monitoring the implementation of the 12 August agreement, as well as supplementary agreement of 8 September. Further, the EUMM reports on the human rights situation, the respect of international humanitarian law, security situation, as well as the return of internally displaced persons. Regrettably, due to resistance of the Russian Federation and its proxies the European Monitors are unable to operate on the whole territory of Georgia, including the occupied zones. We value the principles of transparency and accountability. Therefore we have concluded two agreements with the EUMM, one through the Ministry of Defense and second through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. These agreements prove that Georgia has and always had only peaceful intentions towards the occupied territories and that all the allegations regarding our supposed military buildup are nothing but lie.

Given that on May 13th Russia again blocked the decision on the mandate of the OSCE mission to Georgia, the EUMM, practically becomes the only international presence on the ground. Therefore, we hope for strengthened EUMM role in the area. Most importantly, the EU monitors have to be allowed to enter the occupied zones thus preventing the areas from turning to black-holes where illegal trade of arms and drugs prospers and where ethnic cleansing is legalized.

EU's role is especially important when we talk about the Geneva Discussions and the decisions adopted within this framework. We are strongly convinced that the constructive involvement of the EU is crucial to maintain the format, especially today, when Geneva Talks are faced with a new wave of artificial obstacles. Tomorrow we await the continuation of the Incident Response and Prevention Mechanism in Dvani. We hope that some important decisions will be reached there, which will be conducive to the decrease of the number of incidents occurring over the administrative border. As you are well aware during last several months 18 Georgian citizens have been killed as a result of these incidents.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the end I would like to once again express our appreciation to the EU for its immediate response to the humanitarian needs in Georgia following the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008. The EU's emergency aid proved indispensable for the country. In this context, we welcome the European Commission's decision to increase the financial assistance package for Georgia up to EUR 500 million for 2008-2010, as well as the donors' conference organized by the European Commission in close cooperation with the World Bank, which proved incredibly successful and pledged US \$4.5 billion to my country.

Thank you