

Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**Permanent Council No. 619
13 July 2006**

EU Statement on Georgia

The European Union regrets that it has to raise yet again the situation in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, as indeed alarming incidents are taking place.

The European Union shares the great concern of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, as expressed in a press release of 12 July 2006, at the actions of South Ossetian officers who detained unarmed military monitors from the OSCE Mission to Georgia at gunpoint on 11 July 2006. We agree with the Chairman-in-Office that this was an extremely serious incident involving the threat of armed force against unarmed diplomatic personnel.

These actions are totally unacceptable and cast serious doubts on the willingness of the South Ossetian side to play a constructive role towards peaceful resolution of the conflict. A clear commitment by the South Ossetian side that there will be no repetition of such actions, as demanded by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, is the least we can ask, also given the fact that the European Union and others have only recently pledged millions of Euros aimed at building confidence between the sides to the conflict through economic rehabilitation.

Furthermore the European Union shares the concern of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, as expressed in a press release of 11 July 2006, about increased tensions after the closure of the Zemo Larsi border crossing point between Russia and Georgia on 8 July 2006. This closure reportedly led to a build up of large numbers of passenger and goods vehicles on both sides of the border, severely disrupting normal transit on the Trans Caucasian Highway and impacting on the local population as well. The European Union hopes that the border crossing point can be re-opened as soon as possible, in order to allow for the resumption of normal traffic.

The European Union calls on all parties involved to exercise calm and to refrain from actions or rhetoric, which risk escalating further the situation. It is of utmost importance that the political dialogue between all parties is resumed in order to diffuse tension, normalize the situation on the ground and prepare for a constructive meeting of the Joint Control Commission on 17 July in Tbilisi.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia ¹ and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

¹ Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process