



PC.DEL/1011/08
20 November 2008

ENGLISH only

Présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne

**Permanent Council No. 741
November 20th 2008**

**EU response to Ambassador Heikki Talvitie,
Special Envoy of the OSCE CiO**

The European Union warmly welcomes the Special Envoy of the CiO, Ambassador Heikki Talvitie, back to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his report.

The EU is very pleased that the participants to the Geneva Talks engaged in constructive discussions on the most pressing issues in order to reduce tensions on the ground and to address the situation of IDPs and refugees before winter. Promoting lasting security and stability, as well as building confidence in the region are of common interest for all parties but will take time. The EU fully supports the continuous endeavors of the three co-chairs to achieve these goals and notes with satisfaction that the parties agreed to continue the Talks, and that the two existing working groups will reconvene shortly.

The EU remains concerned about the situation in Georgia, in particular about the increasing number of violent incidents in the areas close to the administrative boundary lines with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. These incidents, some of which resulted in loss of life and serious injuries, are unacceptable and risk escalating the still tense situation in the region. The EU

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calls on all parties to respect the cease-fire agreements and especially condemns all acts that endanger the safety of members of international missions. We call on all sides to contribute to the investigation of these incidents and refrain from further provocations. The recent incidents show once more the urgent need to establish an incident prevention mechanism between the sides, and to start implementing confidence building measures across the administrative boundary lines.

The General Affairs and External Relations Council on 10 November welcomed the rapid and effective deployment, on 1 October, of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia. It emphasized the quality of the work done to date and the need to maintain the same level of engagement over the coming months, and reaffirmed its determination that the mission would continue fully to implement its mandate in Georgia.

We renew our call for the OSCE MMOs to be allowed immediate safe and unhindered access to South Ossetia in accordance with their mandate. The EU reiterates its firm support for the renewal of the current mandate of the OSCE mission to Georgia and calls on all participating States to engage - in good faith - in constructive discussions to this end.

We would like to reiterate our high appreciation and full support for the work of the OSCE mission in Georgia in difficult times. We are convinced that the Mission and its Military Monitors have done their utmost to gather information and to impartially report before, during and after the August events for the benefit of all parties involved.

The EU would like to recall that the GAERC has decided on September 15th to support the establishment of an international inquiry mission into the conflict in Georgia, and calls on all sides to fully cooperate with this mission.

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We recall that the European Council on 1 September strongly condemned Russia's unilateral decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and underlined that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Georgia must be based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity recognized by international law.

In concluding, the EU would like to seize this opportunity to convey its high appreciation for Ambassador Talvitie's excellent work throughout the year, and assure him of its full support for the period ahead.

La Turquie, la Croatie* et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine*, pays candidats ; l'Albanie, la Bosnie – Herzégovine et le Monténégro, pays du processus de stabilisation et d'association et candidats potentiels ; l'Islande, pays de l'Association Européenne de libre-échange et membre de l'Espace économique européen ; ainsi que l'Ukraine et la République de Moldavie se rallient à cette déclaration.

*La Croatie et l'ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine continuent à participer au processus de stabilisation et d'association.

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