



**STATEMENT BY NORWAY**  
in response to EU Special Representative for the  
South Caucasus, Ambassador Peter Semneby

**As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik  
to the Permanent Council,  
8 July 2010**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson,**

We warmly welcome Ambassador Semneby back to the Permanent Council and thank him for his informative report.

The protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus still represent the most serious threat to the stability in the region, and we support your efforts in finding peaceful and lasting solutions to these conflicts.

We reiterate our strong support for the Geneva discussions on the conflicts in Georgia. They remain the only forum where all the parties concerned are represented and can interact with the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations. We note with concern the Abkhaz side's unhelpful position of, for the time being, not taking part in the Geneva discussions, as there is no alternative to dialogue. We were genuinely impressed by the presentations of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva discussions to the Permanent Council last week, and we strongly support their very diligent and laudable efforts.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

The European Union's Monitoring Mission to Georgia is of utmost importance, and a robust EU presence throughout Georgia is a vital stabilising factor, especially now when, for the time being, neither the UN nor the OSCE have much of a presence in the country. We reiterate our call for the EU observers' free and unhindered access to the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and we encourage the CiO to intensify the efforts to bring the OSCE back to Georgia as soon as possible. We underline our unwavering commitment to Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also call on Russia to fully honour her commitments under the August 12 and September 8 agreements of 2008, including the withdrawal of Russian troops to the locations and numbers that existed before the war, and also the provision of free and unhindered humanitarian access to the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

As noted by Ambassador Semneby, Georgia has made substantial progress in her reform process over the past years. But, as duly noted by the Ambassador, the progress is neither finalized nor irreversible, and the international community should support in every way possible efforts to cement the progress already achieved and help spur further reforms. Specifically, we believe there is a great need for institution building at all levels. We support the efforts being made, and would welcome further engagement in these crucial tasks by all relevant international bodies, not least by the OSCE itself.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Turning to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, let me begin by extending our condolences to the families and friends of the soldiers who recently lost their lives on the northern part of the Line of Contact. These deaths serve as a stark reminder to us all about the human costs of this unresolved and volatile situation and the urgency of moving the peace process forward. We deeply regret the recent armed incident, which represents an unacceptable violation of the 1994 Ceasefire Agreement. The incident took place shortly after the meeting between the Armenian and the Azerbaijani presidents in St. Petersburg and appears to be an attempt to damage the peace process. In our view, there is no alternative to a peaceful negotiated solution of the conflict. We also urge both countries' leaders to embark on the difficult endeavours of rebuilding trust between the peoples and governments of the region. We

believe that successful implementation of any political peace agreement is facilitated by wide public support. The international community should stand ready to assist the countries in these endeavours, and we commend the EU's efforts in this regard.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

Norway highly values the EU's efforts in assisting the countries in the region in furthering democratisation, promoting the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Good faith and trust between governing parties and the opposition are important in order to improve the domestic political environment, and we welcome your continuous efforts to facilitate dialogue between the government and the opposition in Armenia and Georgia, as well as your engagement in the dialogue on human rights and media freedom in Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the time leading up to the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, international involvement is essential. Norway is supportive of your ongoing discussions with government representatives in order to secure balanced electoral committees, easily understood and fair rules for registration of candidates, and the right to freedom of assembly. We hope and trust that the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative, which was launched a little over a year ago, will contribute to improve the stability and prosperity in, inter alia, the South Caucasus. Norway is convinced that continued integration into European institutions will benefit the region, both in the short and in the long term.

**Finally Mr. Chairperson,**

Norway continues to support the EU's security and regional cooperation with the countries in the South Caucasus; we thank Ambassador Semneby once again for addressing us today, and wish him all the best in the discharge of his important mission.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**