



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON GEORGIA

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Asbjørn Brandsrud
to the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council, Vienna
14 August 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian delegation joins other speakers in welcoming Special Envoy Heikki Talvitie to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report on the very difficult situation in Georgia.

Norway expresses her full support to the mediation activities jointly undertaken by the OSCE and the EU presidencies to promote a peaceful settlement in Georgia. We wholeheartedly commend President Sarkozy, Foreign Minister Kouchner and the CiO, Foreign Minister Stubb for their strenuous efforts, and we support their further work. We call upon all parties to stand by their international commitments and to fully adhere to the agreement reached. A lasting and viable solution can only be achieved through negotiations and not by military means. In this context, Norway once again reiterates her commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We are prepared to enter into discussions on how the OSCE can best continue its long-term engagement for a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

Like others, we regret the loss of numerous lives and physical damages inflicted on the civilian society. The conflict is a serious threat to Georgia's territorial integrity and to wider regional stability. We are very concerned about the fact that not all military activities have yet come to a definitive halt and call upon the parties to refrain from any further violent actions which could jeopardize the cease-fire agreement.

We underline that the Russian Federation and Georgia, as members states of the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, must refrain from resorting to military force in order to resolve any conflicts or disputes. We deeply regret that the parties reverted to military means without fully exhausting existing diplomatic and political mechanisms.

We deplore Russia's disproportionate use of force. As by far the largest party to the conflict and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia carries a particular responsibility to put an end to the violence and to respect Georgian territorial integrity.

Mr. Chairman,

The cease-fire agreement holds promise of starting extensive humanitarian aid necessary in order to alleviate the grave situation facing all victims of the conflict. Norway has already sent a Red Cross field hospital to the Gori region. We will assist in the work related to the refugees in the region through the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the activities of the UNHCR in North Ossetia. The Norwegian Government has contributed 30 million NOK in humanitarian assistance to this effect. We call upon all parties to the conflict to give full access to international humanitarian agencies seeking to relieve the suffering of the civilian population in the areas affected by the conflict.

Mr. Chairman,

Like others, including the EU, Norway very much welcomes the CiO's proposal on an increase in the number of military observers by up to one hundred, and expresses her full support for the proposal. We believe that a substantial and speedy deployment of the OSCE military observers will have an immediate and positive effect on the ground, not least in the interim period until an agreement on an even more robust international presence is reached.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I would thank the Finnish Chairmanship as well as the OSCE Mission in Georgia for their tireless efforts in a very critical situation.

Thank you.