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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

1 July 2010

**In response to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva discussions
on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome to this meeting of the Permanent Council the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva discussions from the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the OSCE. The approaches of the participants in the international meetings on the Trans-Caucasus, including the approach taken by Russia, are well known and therefore there is probably no need to set them out in detail, especially given that on 10 June we had an opportunity here in the Permanent Council to discuss the results of the June round. We shall focus on what we believe to be fundamental aspects, which should be taken into account in formulating a policy for the future.

Russia has been consistently in favour of continuing the multilateral dialogue in Geneva, launched in accordance with the agreements reached by the presidents of Russia and France on 12 August and 8 September 2008 following Georgia's military adventures involving the people of South Ossetia and Russian peacekeepers. Perhaps the main value of these international meetings lies in their status. To date, this is the only format in which representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Republic of South Ossetia as well as Russia, the United States of America, the United Nations, the EU and the OSCE take part on an equal basis.

It is time to expand the opportunities for dialogue for all the participants in the Geneva discussions without exception. We believe that the OSCE, with its comprehensive approach to security, is the ideal forum in which the Abkhaz and South Ossetian parties can bring their positions to the attention of the participating States. We could listen to representatives of Sukhum and Tskhinval on a regular basis under the auspices of the Chairmanship in the form of informal briefings for interested delegations. Contacts of this kind are necessary if we are to receive first-hand information to facilitate a better understanding of the parties' concerns, an interactive exchange of views and a joint search for compromise solutions.

It is important to realize that, without mutually respectful communication both on the part of international structures and on the part of non-governmental organizations and

humanitarian and educational programmes, it will be impossible to restore confidence. And this is a principal condition for achieving lasting peace and stability in the Trans-Caucasus for the benefit of all the peoples and nationalities living there, which is naturally the philosophy behind the Geneva process.

During the last round of the talks, Russia once again proposed that consideration should be given to the possibility of adopting unilateral declarations on reciprocal non-use of force or the threat of force within the “triangular framework” of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia could act as a guarantor for the implementation of such agreements but could not be a party to them. Relations must be agreed upon and regulated between, on the one hand, the Georgian leadership, which unleashed the military operations, and, on the other, the South Ossetian and Abkhaz parties, who were the victims of that aggression. The fact that on the night of 8 August 2008 Georgia attacked Tskhinval using military force was clearly stated in the EU commission’s report, and the commission head Heidi Tagliavini directly said this from the rostrum of the OSCE Permanent Council.

The national delegations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia constantly stress the priority nature of the question of security guarantees for the peoples of both countries. It is the absence of progress in such a vital area that resulted in the disappointment of the Abkhaz side, which declared in its well-known note that it saw no need to hold the next round of the Geneva discussions planned for 27 July. Instead of a new meeting Sukhum proposed to the Co-Chairmen that the additional time should be used to prepare a realistic draft agreement on the non-use of force, which could be examined at the next international meeting in Geneva this autumn. What this means is that there can be no talk of suspension of the participation by the Abkhaz representatives in the Geneva format.

At the same time, we regard as well founded Abkhazia’s concerns regarding the virtual stalemate in the Geneva discussions on the question of the non-use of force by Georgia against Sukhum and Tskhinval. Furthermore, attempts by the Co-Chairmen to establish a discussion of secondary issues mainly of benefit to Tbilisi are regrettable. It should be noted that neither the draft agreements on the non-use of force submitted by the Abkhaz, Russian and South Ossetian parties nor Russia’s compromise proposal concerning the adoption by Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia of unilateral declarations in this regard in a status-neutral form have been considered, under the pretext that Tbilisi allegedly refuses to discuss them.

It cannot be ruled out that the blatantly disrespectful statement by the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 8 June 2010 distorting the position of the delegations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the 11th round may have served to encourage the Abkhaz note. In this situation, Russia was forced to appeal to the Co-Chairmen in writing to indicate the unacceptability of this kind of confrontational rhetoric on the part of Georgia. We specifically stressed that in this kind of atmosphere there can be no hope of success in the Geneva discussions.

We should like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Russia’s intention to participate in the next meeting in Geneva scheduled for 27 July. We trust, however, that the Co-Chairmen will use the remaining time to resolve the existing disagreements so that the forthcoming round can proceed with the involvement of all the participants.

Thank you for your attention.