



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
35th Special Joint FSC/PC Meeting
11 June 2008

Madam Chair,

Norway is deeply concerned over the many measures and incidents testifying to and also contributing to increased tensions in the Georgian region of Abkhazia and between Georgia and the Russian Federation, and notably:

- establishment of formal links between the Russian Federation and the *de facto* authorities of Abkhazia
- massive granting of Russian citizenship to inhabitants in the area
- build-up of forces in the region
- the flying and downing of UAVs over Abkhazia, and most recently
- the uninvited and unannounced transfer of Russian railway troops to the territory of Abkhazia and Georgia.

We welcome UNOMIG's timely initiative to investigate the shooting down of a Georgian UAV on 20 April and take note of the thorough report, which indicates that it was downed by a Russian fighter.

We find that this incident lends itself very well to the use of the procedure laid down in Chapter III of the Vienna document of 1999, and we note with satisfaction that a series of very substantive contacts and meetings have already taken place under this procedure, unfortunately without leading to any agreed conclusions, but contributing to shed more light on the situation and keeping the dialogue open. This meeting will hopefully bring the dialogue forward and contribute to gradually reduced tensions and a resumption of more forward-looking efforts towards a lasting solution to the conflict.

We welcome the Georgian decision to suspend the flying of UAVs over the conflict zone, taking into account UNOMIG's views on that matter.

We appeal to all parties to the conflict to show moderation and restraint, both in deeds and in words, and to refrain from all actions and from rhetorics that could contribute to exacerbate the situation.

We commend the Finnish Chair for all its expedient and determined efforts to help defuse the crisis and re-launch the negotiating process. We fully share the Chair's view that resumption of negotiations towards settling the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts would be the best way to promote confidence and stability in the region. We welcome all bona fide initiatives and contributions to that end.

We welcome President Saakashvili's peace plan, which in our view deserves careful and positive consideration.

We welcome the reports of direct contacts between the two Presidents of Georgia and of the Russian Federation, and we urge the continuation of such contacts at all levels, particularly the highest level.

Finally, we would like to reiterate our commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders.

Thank you, Madam Chair.