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

15 April 2010

**On the results of the March round of the Geneva Discussions on the
Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairperson,

Regarding the tenth round of the international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus, which took place in Geneva on 30 March, we should like to make the following comments.

The central theme of the discussions remains the question of how best to strengthen in treaty form commitments regarding the non-use of force or threat of force. The Russian Government submitted a draft document along those lines. Regrettably, the Georgian Government remains unwilling to take this step.

Tbilisi's bellicose fantasies, which culminated on 13 March in a public provocation by the Georgian television company "Imedi", have merely confirmed the need to legally enshrine the obligations as regards the non-use of force by Georgia. The peoples of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia have long since deserved the right to a peaceful life and to guarantees of security.

All the participants at the Geneva meeting resolutely condemned the actions by "Imedi", referring to them as irresponsible and inhumane. At its meeting on 18 March the OSCE Permanent Council also roundly condemned this provocation by the Georgian television producers. At that time, we might recall, our Organization categorically rejected the actions of the Georgian Government as unacceptable and as destabilizing the situation in the region.

During the last round the Abkhazians and South Ossetians set out their basic assessments of the so-called "State strategy regarding the occupied territories" for which the Georgian authorities are lobbying. Tbilisi is actively pushing this document, presenting it in various international organizations as proof of its "peace-loving" intentions. As you will recall, the Georgian minister for reintegration recently made a similar presentation to the OSCE. In any case, Sukhum and Tskhinval criticized the Georgian "strategy", pointing out that it was provocative in nature and absolutely unacceptable to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

You don't have to be a prophet to understand that this time too the Georgian authorities will not pay heed to the views of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides, this having in fact been the way they have acted throughout the entire post-Soviet period. We have no doubt but that they will continue to lobby for their "strategy", since the true objectives of this scheme are more than evident, namely, to secure the return to Georgia in any way possible of the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with no particular concern as regards the means chosen – from provocation and the intimidation of their own population, as we have just noted, to cheap demagoguery and empty promises aimed at the naïve segment of the international community that is either unaware of, or has managed to forget about, the cruel actions of the Tbilisi administration.

The Geneva discussions require the kind of sound and flexible approaches that take into account the real situation in the Trans-Caucasus and promote the development of good-neighbourly relations among Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We think it extremely important to invite representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to Vienna so that they can state both their own attitude towards the Georgian "strategy" and their general view of how the situation in the South Caucasus is unfolding. As of today, the Geneva discussions remain the only international forum where official representatives from Georgia, the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia meet together on the basis of parity for an open discussion of the existing problems. There is a need to expand the opportunities for dialogue, which at this time is one of the few effective confidence-building measures in the area of security. As equal participants in the Geneva discussions, the Abkhazians and South Ossetians have the right to speak before the OSCE community and also in national capitals so as to bring their point of view to the attention of official structures as well as civil society, academic circles and the media.

During the tenth round of the discussions the Russian Government spoke out in favour of increasing the effectiveness and momentum in the work of the joint mechanisms to prevent and respond to incidents in the region, mechanisms that provide for direct contacts between the parties "on the ground".

Regarding the humanitarian component of the Geneva discussions, we should like to draw attention to two fundamental aspects that should be taken into account when considering the prospects for possible human-rights monitoring in regions that suffered as a result of the conflict in August 2008. First and most importantly: Those events resulted in the creation in the region of two new sovereign and independent States – the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia. Second: The point of departure when considering this difficult subject must be the limited nature of the mandates of the international organizations as regards the protection of human rights and also the specific nature of the corresponding commitments assumed by the States. It is important to remember that in the system of international monitoring mechanisms an important function is accorded to the principle of the self-determination of nations, the implementation of which plays a defining role in ensuring and advancing human rights.

Under current conditions any use of international control mechanisms and procedures with respect to Abkhazia and South Ossetia may be misinterpreted by the Georgian side, namely as the monitoring of the human-rights situation not in two independent countries but in "regions of Georgia", something that is not in accord with the new politico-legal realities

in the South Caucasus. There is no need to make the point that an approach of this kind would be absolutely unacceptable to Sukhum and Tskhinval.

Strictly speaking, no one international agency is entitled to seek for itself a human-rights monitoring role in the sovereign countries of Abkhazia and South Ossetia until such time as those countries become members of the United Nations and other international organizations and also parties to multilateral treaties and conventions on the protection of human rights.

As far as the OSCE is concerned, this means that the mandates of the Organization as a whole and of its institutions, specifically the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, do not extend to Abkhazia or South Ossetia since these two republics are not members of the OSCE and, consequently, do not fall within its area of responsibility or have any kind of obligations vis-à-vis the Organization in the humanitarian sphere whose implementation might theoretically be monitored by the executive structures, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

One final point. If the OSCE is genuinely interested in peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus and if it wishes to regain the trust it has lost on the part of the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to make its return to the region, it must take an unequivocal position on the aggressive actions of the present regime in Tbilisi and must also learn to listen to and take account of the opinions of all parties concerned, and not turn away from its partners and remain silent in the face of problems, acting as if nothing has changed following the events of August 2008.

Thank you for your attention.