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

14 May 2009

Regarding the OSCE field presence in Georgia and South Ossetia

Madam Chairperson,

The Russian Federation regrets the decision by the Chairmanship to suspend further consultations regarding the parameters of the OSCE field presence in Georgia and South Ossetia. The refusal, for which we are not to blame, to seek a mutually acceptable solution to this highly sensitive issue will inevitably result in the complete winding up of the Organization's field activities there after 30 June 2009 on expiry of the mandate of the OSCE military observers in the parts of Georgia adjacent to South Ossetia. We should like to emphasize once again that this was not our choice.

Russia consistently spoke in favour of continuing the OSCE's activities on the territory of Georgia and South Ossetia even after the expiry of the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Georgia on 31 December 2008, at which time we were willing to agree to the technical extension of that mandate with the exception of the components relating to South Ossetia and Abkhazia that had become irrelevant. To our intense disappointment, however, this was obstructed by the prejudiced and partisan position of a number of partners, who ignored the legitimate concerns not only of Russia but also of the South Ossetian people, who had been the victims of the military adventure by the current Georgian leadership.

Russia immediately played an active role when the negotiations on the draft mandates of the OSCE presence in Georgia and South Ossetia were resumed this year. Along with other partners we agreed to an extension of Permanent Council Decision No. 861 of 19 August 2008 on additional OSCE military monitoring officers. We have taken part in all of the rounds of consultations to which we were invited by the Greek Chairmanship and have regularly made suggestions and elucidated the Russian position in detail.

In essence, the only thing that needed to be agreed upon was the parameters of the OSCE's activities in the region in the new politico-legal situation following the terrible shooting of civilians in Tskhinval and of Russian peacekeepers, who for many years had been reliably ensuring stability and security in this extremely troubled region.

With this in mind and in an effort to find a solution acceptable to everyone, we suggested the most flexible approach possible through the adoption by the Permanent Council of two separate decisions: on the OSCE Office in Tbilisi, giving it a standard set of tasks to provide the Government of Georgia with assistance in meeting its commitments undertaken within the framework of the OSCE, and also on monitoring on both sides of the border between Georgia and South Ossetia.

Obviously, the scope of monitoring activities of this type, including the area of responsibility, must be agreed with both Tbilisi and Tskhinval. This is the cardinal point. Without the agreement of both sides, the observers will be simply unable to fulfil their obligations properly.

Moreover, agreement with South Ossetia became even more important after 8 August 2008 when the OSCE observers effectively left the inhabitants of South Ossetia to the vagaries of fate and fled from the territory in the wake of the Georgian assault. For Tskhinval this behaviour understandably highlighted the OSCE's failure to respond to the aggression by Tbilisi.

We are still interested in preserving the OSCE field presence, including the activities of the observers in the border regions adjacent to Georgia and South Ossetia.

As you know, the Russian Federation officially circulated amendments to the Greek draft as a constructive contribution to our common efforts. We note that our opinions have been simply ignored on the spurious grounds that they concern the status question and that no consensus could be formed.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

We are not demanding the immediate recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, either directly or indirectly. At the same time, we do not expect to have wording and approaches thrust upon us that run contrary to Russia's commitments under international law and force us to indirectly confirm the territorial integrity of Georgia within its old borders. We are willing to work on a basis of mutual respect and urge our partners to do the same.

Turning to the decision by the Greek Chairmanship, I should like to conclude by stating that the OSCE has regrettably once again demonstrated its inability to find a solution to a complex problem that is entirely within the Organization's mandate.

I would ask that this statement be attached to the journal of this meeting of the Permanent Council.