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EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze
at the 744th Permanent Council Meeting
Vienna 11 December, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to provide the Permanent Council with the brief account of events which have taken place in Georgia over the last week, and which we deem significant to be brought to the attention of this distinguished audience.

During the last ten days situation in and around the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been extremely volatile. OSCE Activity report No 27/08, that you were able to get acquainted with yesterday, confirms a number of incidents, starting from the use of the anti-tank missiles, ending with looting and kidnappings, which is becoming a routine practice in these regions.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to, nevertheless, bring your attention to two incidents which have occurred yesterday and which are vivid examples of the deteriorating security situation in the occupied Georgian regions.

On December 10, 2008, at 6:00 am, remotely controlled explosive device was set off from the Russian-occupied Tskhinvali Region near the village Nikozi of the Gori District. During the explosion police vehicle owned by the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs was seriously damaged.

On the same day, at around 17:00 pm another incident occurred near the village Khviti of the Gori Region. This time the fire was opened at the patrol car owned by the OSCE from the territory currently under the Russian occupation. Patrol car was severely damaged as a result of the shooting.

Fortunately neither incident ended with casualties.

These incidents once again demonstrate the volatility of the security situation on the ground and the necessity to have the international monitoring organizations in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia. Continuous provocations and verbal or physical attacks at the OSCE Mission Military Officers and EU Monitors are clear demonstration that the Russian Federation and the puppet regimes dislike the idea of transparency and impartial monitoring of the occupied regions, where the number of Russian troops and military technique has been increasing recently. Georgian side is strongly convinced that the reinvigoration of the presence of the international monitoring organizations in the occupied regions of Georgia is essential for ensuring the security and stability on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

It is also extremely important to continue monitoring of the human rights situation in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, Georgia. In Gali region, Abkhazia, we witness violation of the human rights on the daily basis and we have brought these facts to your attention on a number of occasions. These violations continue even today as we speak. Georgian citizens are forced to abandon their citizenship in exchange for the bogus Abkhaz citizenship, they are often physically assaulted, their property is often taken away forcefully, and their lives are in constant danger. Ethnic Georgians residing in the Gali region are under constant threat of being repressed. We have had many instances of forced labor. These facts have to be brought to the attention of international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Per your request Organization for the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner on National Minorities issued the report describing the situation in the occupied Georgian territories. I am strongly convinced that we have to find ways how to follow up on this report, which I can only describe as “hundred pages of ethnic cleansing”. This report shows horrendous facts, which have occurred during and after the August activities. All responsibility for these acts of ethnic cleansing falls on the Russian Federation, as they have been and continue to be in effective control of the Georgian regions, while ethnic cleansing is taking place there on a continuous basis.

Mr. Chairman,

In the end allow me to respond to the issue raised by the Russian Federation today, as well as raised by the Minister Lavrov during the Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki. I am personally extremely surprised with the allegation that Georgian authorities are deliberately not providing gas to the population of Tskhinvali and Akhagori. .

The reality is that, during the August invasion of Russia gas pipelines in the region were damaged at several spots, causing some areas to be cut off from the Georgian gas supply system. The Tskhinvali and Akhagori regions are two of such areas, to which no gas can be supplied at the moment.

We would like to underline that the Georgian side started necessary repairing works immediately after the cease fire. All pipelines under the control of Georgian authorities have been already repaired, or in some cases, the works will be finalised as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, there is a problem with the parts of the pipeline, which are situated either within the administrative boundary of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District, or in its immediate vicinity. These areas are dangerous, and Georgian authorities can not conduct repair works there due to the hazardous environment, UXOs and a high probability of the shooting from the territory currently under the Russian occupation, which poses high risk for the lives of the repair workers. We need security guarantees and international presence to mend the pipeline and ensure that it is fully operational. Moreover, parts of the pipeline are damaged within the administrative boundary of the Tskhinvali Region. This is the area to which we have no access.

Mr. Chairman,

Having said this I can not refrain from stressing that it seems to me exceptionally sensational and cynical that the representative of the country, which is responsible for the occupation of the parts of Georgian territory, which does not recognize the territorial integrity of Georgia, which is responsible for the acts of ethnic cleansing on the territories of Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which is not allowing humanitarian aid and international monitors to these regions, which has introduced several thousand troops in both occupied territories and which remains in full and effective control of these regions, argues that Georgian authorities are deliberately discontinuing provision of gas to the civilian population.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to close by saying that as long as the Russian Federation does not fully implement the six-point cease-fire agreement of August 12, withdraws its military from the occupied Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and allows full international presence in these regions, situation in the occupied parts of Georgia will remain tense and these regions will continue to be safe havens for ethnic cleansing, human rights violations, uncontrolled drugs and arms trafficking, human trafficking, forced labour and organized crime. And the Russian Federation shall continue to be responsible for these deeds.

Thank you.