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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

of the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the OSCE
Mr. Paata Gaprindashvili

In response to the Geneva Co-Chairs address to the OSCE Permanent Council

Delivered at the 820th Meeting of the Permanent Council

Vienna, July 1st, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to cordially welcome the Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions once again to Vienna at today's Permanent Council meeting. Almost one year has passed since their last visit and I am glad that we have this opportunity to listen to their presentations and account of the state of affairs in the negotiations which deals with the ongoing conflict between Russia and Georgia.

Let me shortly overview Georgia's position on where we currently stand in the Geneva process and what are the main obstacles for progress. After eleven rounds of discussions we are no closer to the consensus on the most pressing issues, than we were in the beginning of the talks. In fact, we have seen at least three walkouts during these eleven rounds, and today, as we speak the future of the Geneva Discussions is under serious question due to the recent statements from Moscow's proxy regime representatives "temporarily to withdraw" from the talks. As we all know the moderate assessment of the European Union and the Co-Chairs regarding the discussions "without full participation" also refers precisely to this unfortunate reality – other party to keep constantly undermining the talks.

Nevertheless we need to spare no efforts not only to save the Geneva process but further consolidate and strengthen it.

Georgia is motivated to continue its constructive participation in the talks, despite the obstacles that we face today and despite the inability of the talks to yield substantial positive results so far. Geneva Talks has one great virtue – it is an all-encompassing format, where foes sit at the same table and discuss the most acute and problematic issues. This is also the format which deals with the extremely urgent humanitarian issues and the issues pertaining to

the safe and dignified return of the IDPs to their homes. That the talks concern human security and well being, is one of the main reasons, why we become exasperated when the discussions in the Second Working Group take place “without the full participation”, as it was noted here. Geneva Talks is about a dialogue, and you can not have a dialogue, when your interlocutor abandons the negotiation table without any meaningful argument whatsoever.

We believe that we will continue with the Geneva Talks and at the same time we need to continue urging Moscow to play more constructive role in it. Moscow’s influence over the proxy regimes is not a novelty to anyone and therefore the message we all, not only co-chairs, send to Russia should be clear and strong – Geneva process must continue!

Let me now refer to three main issues of the Geneva Discussions.

First of all, let me start with the International Security Arrangements. This is an issue on which we have not progressed much. We maintain that the Russian Federation has to withdraw from the occupied regions and that Russian forces must be replaced with international contingent, including peacekeeping and police units. OSCE can certainly play a role here. Due to the Russia’s rigid position there does not seem to be a room for agreement at this stage. However, we consider it as imperative to continue working with Russia, without giving up, to make her change her mind and withdraw all troops to the pre-August 7 positions, as foreseen by the August 12 cease-fire agreement. In this process, we are ready to be constructive and open-minded. We are ready to discuss the modalities and timetable of such withdrawal, as well as the geographical locations, where the withdrawal could happen in the first place.

Second important issue in the Geneva Talks is the so-called Non Use of Force (NUF) aspect. Our position concurs with the position of the Co-chairs, that the NUF commitment should be a part of a wider International security regime to be established in the regions in question. Georgia is already bound by a non-use-of force obligation, as my President has signed the August 12 cease-fire agreement. Furthermore, my President informed about this obligation the President of France, then the Presidency of the EU. On September 8, 2008, President of Russia in a joint press briefing with President Sarkozy confirmed that such non use of force commitments have been received by Russia. Transcript of that briefing was posted by both official web-sites of the President of the Russian Federation and the Russian MFA.

Now, almost a year and a half later, Russia claims that the non-use of force agreement either does not exist, or it has to be signed again. Not only there is no added value for this, but by doing so the whole process would be largely undermined. Unfortunately, this has been once again confirmed by the Russian Ambassador today. If we are required to just reconfirm the August 12 cease-fire agreement, we are ready to do so, as long as Russia does the same, as this is the agreement between the two states.

Georgia has since made a pledge not to use force in resolving the conflicts on numerous occasions. State Strategy towards the Occupied Territories is one of the recent documents, where this pledge was made. EUMM is located in Georgia and has full access to every facility of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. EUMM has confirmed on numerous occasions that there is no danger from the Georgian side for the stability and security.

Therefore, continued claim from Russia on the necessity to sign the non-use of force, represents a mere attempt to further legitimize the proxy regimes and the so-called new reality recognized only by **Putin, Ortega, Chavez and a pacific island of Nauru**. Russia’s position

with regard the NUF is simply a trap, which aims at underlining the “independence” of the occupied regions and the role of Russia as a guarantor, or a mediator. In reality, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region are occupied territories and Russia is a party to the conflict and the sooner Russia acknowledges this, the sooner we will manage to make Georgia more secure and stable.

Third important issue is the return of the IDPs in safety and dignity to the places of their habitual residence. This is a strictly humanitarian issue and we urge all participants of the Geneva Talks not to politicize it. Unfortunately, so far, we have seen zero progress on this topic. Second Working Group of the Geneva Talks has been discussing the document – “Joint Undertakings”, which encompasses some steps to be taken with a view of facilitating the return process. During the last round, Russia orchestrated a walk-out of Abkhaz and Ossetian participants from the second working group meeting, thus undermining the work of the last few months. We hope to resume the discussions in July and to finalize this document.

Furthermore, we urge Moscow to play a constructive role on the issues, which are relatively minor in comparison to the aforementioned ones. We still have to see progress with regard to the Tskhinvali IPRM, which has not been operational for last several months. We still have to agree to the modalities for ensuring the free movement of persons across the administrative boundary line. And we still have to find modalities for the full participation of the international organizations in both IPRMs. Moscow’s forthcoming attitude is essential in achieving these goals.

Mr. Chairman,

We are ready to hold dialogue with Russia any time any place. We are ready to have unconditional dialogue with Moscow, as long as we see the sincere willingness to solve the outstanding issues, and most importantly, respect Georgia as an independent sovereign state. This is not too much to ask for. Geneva Talks is a good forum for achieving concrete results, and the creation of the IPRMs is a good demonstration of that. We all, therefore, need to continue urging Moscow to engage in these talks constructively. Sometimes naming things as they are can be indeed helpful as we already have witnessed in Geneva on some occasions. Georgia, on its part, is absolutely ready to continue constructive and creative engagement in the Geneva Discussions.

Thank you.