



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA,
MR. ZURAB NOGHAI DELI**

As delivered by Ambassador Mette Kongshem
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2005

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Norway warmly welcomes H.E. the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr. Zurab Noghaideli, to this Special Permanent Council meeting. The OSCE is actively assisting Georgia on its path towards major, democratic reform and this Organization is also fully engaged in efforts to reach a peaceful resolution to outstanding conflicts. We are therefore encouraged by the presence here today of the Prime Minister. We welcome his presentation of the Full Scale Settlement Plan for peaceful resolution of the South-Ossetian conflict.

President Mikheil Saakashvili's announcement of a peace initiative in January 2005 was a positive step towards peaceful resolution of the conflict. The measures went in the right direction. But since then relations have remained tense and the security picture has paled. Recent incidents in the zone of conflict have resulted in a very volatile situation. Deep concern has been expressed in the Permanent Council and the parties have been urged to exercise restraint and take all possible measures to defuse the tension. The aim remains, which is that the conflict must be resolved in a peaceful manner, through a negotiated settlement.

It is therefore very encouraging that steps are now being taken to address the situation, and Norway agrees that the best way forward is the approach suggested in the Settlement Plan just presented by the Prime Minister. In our view it is important to initiate an immediate and effective demilitarisation of the conflict zone for confidence building processes to move forward, and such processes will by themselves significantly contribute to easing tension and establish a stable negotiating environment. Experience has taught us time and again that economic prosperity and stability is essential for restoring mutual trust and creating more propitious conditions for a constructive political dialogue. Norway therefore regards the elements of the plan, and a step by step approach, as crucial for reaching the final stage: a comprehensive political settlement. Mutual confidence is needed before the status question can be addressed.

The plan also introduces a new framework for the conflict settlement process. Norway finds that proposal interesting. It is no secret that the last year's work of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) has yielded few results. The quadripartite JCC has not proved to be an effective mechanism for the peace process. Changing the current negotiating format, through the active engagement of the OSCE, the EU and the US, might be a suitable way to get back on track and create momentum in the peace process. We believe that agreement on a new format of negotiation should be sought among all parties involved.

In our view this Plan is a commendable roadmap for the conflict resolution process and we stand ready to support these efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

We also fully support the initiative of the OSCE Chairman-in-office, Minister Dimitrij Rupel to hold high-level talks on South Ossetia in Ljubljana in November. Bringing together the foreign ministers of Russia and Georgia, and having the OSCE and the South Ossetian side participate, might be conducive to breaking the current impasse and move forward, also with a view to putting the Settlement Plan into action.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, allow me to restate Norway's preparedness to continue its support to foster peace and stability, as well as economic and social progress in Georgia. On a bilateral basis, Norway has deployed a group of experts to Georgia, including judges, public prosecutors, police lawyers and personnel from the prison service, tasked to provide guidance and assistance in connection with the development of institutions throughout the entire Georgian judicial system. The group is part of a crisis response pool established by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, we highly value the initiative by the OSCE Mission in Georgia and the Strategic Police Matters Unit in the OSCE Secretariat to establish a Short-Term Assistance Programme for reform of the Georgian police, to which Norway has contributed financially.

Thank You, Mr. Chairman.