



German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

666th Meeting of the Permanent Council

17 May 2007

EU Statement on developments in South Ossetia, Georgia

In its statement at last week's Permanent Council, the European Union conveyed its concerns about the high number of violent incidents in South Ossetia. This week regrettably we have to repeat our concerns. As described in the Spot Report of the OSCE Mission to Georgia of 13 May, the recent appointment of Mr. Sanakoyev as Head of the temporary administrative unit for South Ossetia was followed by a statement by Mr. Kokoity that he would take "all necessary measures" to remove Mr. Sanakoyev's "self declared government". The Trans-Caucasus highway was closed by the order of Mr. Kokoity, and there were heavy exchanges of fire throughout the weekend. In addition, there are reports about movements of South Ossetian armed units and sightings of night time truck convoys.

Furthermore, a joint OSCE/JPKF patrol was ordered by South Ossetian special police forces to proceed without OSCE monitors. We repeat last week's EU statement that any impediment to OSCE monitors to perform their duties is unacceptable since it violates the OSCE's right to unhindered access to the whole of the zone of conflict, as guaranteed by the South Ossetian side in the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding with the OSCE. We agree with the OSCE Mission that full monitoring of the relevant areas by JPKF together with OSCE military observers is necessary.

Given the tense situation on the ground, the EU urges all parties to exercise caution, to refrain from provocative actions, and to make good on previous promises regarding demilitarization. The fact that only last week an anti-aircraft weapon and anti-aircraft missile were discovered inside the zone of conflict demonstrates again the urgent need for implementation of the agreed demilitarisation and confidence-

building measures. The EU reiterates its call for more OSCE military observers, which should help to reduce tensions, allay fears, aid transparency and build confidence.

The EU encourages the parties to continue using all existing negotiation formats, including the JCC, to explore ways of increasing the effectiveness of the conflict resolution process. The EU supports all steps that contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in South Ossetia on the basis of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. In this context, we welcome Georgia's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. The EU welcomes the Georgian government's invitation to South Ossetian society as a whole – i.e. representatives of all political forces and local groups – to participate actively in discussions on progress towards peaceful conflict resolution. We hope that, in spite of some initial negative responses, the South Ossetian population and all political and societal forces will engage constructively and in a spirit of dialogue and compromise, in efforts towards conflict resolution. An all-inclusive consultative process, open to members of civil society, is regarded by the EU as a basic principle of conflict resolution. This all-inclusive consultative process, however, can only succeed if it is given sufficient time to unfold, and if it is accompanied by concrete confidence building measures.

The EU reiterates its appreciation for the valuable work done in South Ossetia by the OSCE Mission and, in particular, looks forward to seeing further progress in respect of the OSCE economic rehabilitation programme to which the EU and its member states are major contributors. The EU also reiterates its commitment to continue in an inclusive manner and with concrete measures to support pragmatic solutions and improvement of the situation in South Ossetia, including through the work of the EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.