



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 Georgian Delegation at the
Special Permanent Council Meeting
(Vienna, 14 August 2008)

Mr. Chairman,
Dear Colleagues,

You all have been thoroughly following the latest developments in Georgia. We have distributed detailed information regarding ongoing events hour by hour, besides, international media has been extensively covering all the events. So, I'm not going to enlist the whole timeline of the recent Georgian-Russian war, following occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian armed forces and subsequent atrocities and severe damage to the peaceful population of Georgia.

The international community will have the opportunity to thoroughly consider, investigate and assess all violations of the international law by the Russian side. This will happen here at this, as well as other international forums.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me in the beginning to cordially thank all friends of Georgia who spared no diplomatic efforts to stop Russian aggression, occupation and attempt to topple democratically elected government. I would also like to thank all those states who provided humanitarian assistance to the citizens of Georgia, which suffered as a result of Russian aggression.

Before the August events, every time you were witnessing an utmost restraint and cautious approach by the Georgian side in response to the provocative acts conducted by the Russian side itself or through satellite separatist regimes in Georgia. In all past cases it was possible to avoid major confrontation and keep the situation under control, to the great extent thanks to the international involvement.

The latest aggression, which took place on August 6 against peaceful population of the villages in the Georgian-controlled territories in the zone of conflict we cannot qualify as just a provocation. Simultaneous military attacks on several villages had been undertaken by the separatists on August 6. As a result of these attacks around ten civilians and peacekeepers were killed. Georgian government even declared a ceasefire, but criminal regime took advantage of calmness and continued shelling civilians, completely destroying two Georgian villages. The Georgian authorities had no other choice but to react and defend security of the peaceful population. It turned out to be a well thought provocation from the Russian side, as Russia instantly mobilized its armed forces and attempted to occupy Georgia under the pretext of protecting the rights of its citizens. I have to say here that how Russian Federation protects its citizens became very obvious just on the very first day, when Russian aviation and artillery completely destroyed Tskhinvali, making it a stone-age town.

I'm sure you all know the chain of events developed after that. Russian Federation chose a path of war and occupation and did everything to make sure that Georgia ceased to exist. Fortunately, due to the consolidation of Georgian society, heroic fighting of Georgian army and international pressure on the Russian Federation, these plans were halted. In this war, Russian Federation showed that this is the country, which does not oblige itself with any international norm and regulation. Russian Federation toppled international law in front of our own eyes. They not only challenged the international order, as we know it today, but also challenged international law, including humanitarian law.

It became obvious during recent days that Russia's goal was to occupy Georgia. They went really close to fulfilling this goal. For this purpose, Russian occupants continued to violate all the verbal or written agreements they have concluded. Russian army continued military action after the President of Georgia ordered on 10 August all Georgian troops to unilaterally halt fire and withdraw from the territory of the Tskhinvali region. The appropriate verbal note of the Georgian Foreign Ministry to the Russian side containing proposals on cease fire was left unanswered. Moreover, Russian Federation used the momentum and instead of halting military activities, undertook a series of raids on peaceful population, bombing peaceful cities, committing atrocities, destroying civilian infrastructure, blockading the country by closing east-west highway and targeting critical infrastructure of international dimensions, such as pipelines, ports, et cetera.

How credible a partner Russian Federation is, becomes obvious when we see how the Russian military acted after the President of Russia declared ceasefire on August 12. Since then several hundred Georgians were killed, kidnapped, tortured. Several cities have been bombed. On 13 August the Russian troops seized the city of Gori, causing mass destructions and severe damage to the civilian population and infrastructure. A town of 100.000 people is now deserted due to Russian atrocity, there is no electricity, buildings are destroyed, infrastructure is damaged, but most importantly, hundreds of innocent civilians are killed. I am sure you are all aware of the Human Rights Watch report, published on August 12 about the atrocities committed in Georgian villages. As time passes more materials will be published and we will all be shocked by the scale of destruction and atrocities that Russian troops committed in Georgia.

What happened in Georgia over last few days has caused an irreparable damage to the relations between Georgia and Russia. Mending these relations will be a generational task and will take years, if not centuries. Russian government managed to wage war against the neighboring country without analyzing the repercussions of this war. Invasion by Russian Federation looks extremely cynical against the declarations of Russian government officials about the necessity of restoring centuries-old friendship among Georgian and Russian nations. Georgian people have never been enemies of Russians, but the actions by Russian government are seeding this animosity currently. It is up to the Russian Federation now to mend the bridges that it has destroyed as a result of this illogical, brutal and unnecessary war.

Mr. Chairman,

What matters now is to make a first step towards the normalization of the situation in my country. Russian occupying forces are still on the territory of Georgia, but are currently inside the Tskhinvali and Abkhazian zones of the Russian – Georgian conflict. Nonetheless threat coming from the Russian Federation is still imminent. Over last few days they have shown how effectively they can use their aviation and artillery in long ranges mostly against the civilian population.

And I just received alarming information that as I speak now armored vehicles have been introduced into Gori again and the town is being mined. Peaceful citizens of Georgia and foreign journalists trapped in Gori face a real threat, as Russian servicemen do not let them out of the

town. Several buildings in the town are burning. Real humanitarian catastrophe is looming as a result of Russian aggression.

Furthermore, Russian occupation forces returned to Senaki and Poti. They are looting Senaki military base and Poti military port, destroying the property of the Georgian state.

Such actions of Russian invaders once again point to the urgent necessity of the international community's interference in order to stop Russian military aggression in Georgia.

Mr. Chairman,

Now is the time when international community has to mediate a peace deal between the Russian Federation and Georgia. Conclusions by the GAERC yesterday, based on the six-point peace plan suggested by President Sarkozy could serve as a way forward.

It is extremely important to remember that lack of international involvement in the conflict zones is one of the reasons why Russian Federation attempted to occupy Georgia. Despite Georgian claims over last years and months that Russian Federation was building its armed forces in the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, international response was too little too late. We certainly appreciate the support we had been receiving over last years, but the truth remains that there is not a single international mechanism in force today, which would allow the international presence and effective monitoring of the situation, thus creating solid ground for conflict prevention.

This organization, which has been actively seized of the matters in the Tskhinvali region have failed to increase the number of the Mission Military Observers, to establish the joint checkpoint over the Didi Gupta bridge and to introduce effective monitoring of the Roki tunnel. This organization did not manage to prevent crises such as August 6 Tsitelubani incident and April 20 incident, even though these incidents were extensively discussed in the OSCE afterwards. What was the reason for that? Simple answer – the Russian Federation, which did its best to make this organization ineffective by breaking consensus on many occasions, by cutting urgent funds to the OSCE Mission in Georgia and by undermining OSCE's role in the European security.

And this has to be changed. We have been held hostage for many years by one particular country, thus unable to do anything credible and substantial in the Tskhinvali region. As a result that country invaded its neighbor and without any effective international monitoring mechanism present, conducted ethnic cleansing and numerous atrocities. Now we have a chance to change this. Today, is the time when we need to immediately increase MMOs in the Tskhinvali region, so that they can monitor what is happening in this grey zone, uncontrolled area, which has been heavily militarized by Russian Federation and will probably continue to be militarized in the future. International peacekeeping operation has to be launched in the Abkhazian and Tskhinvali regions of the Georgian-Russian conflict in order to monitor the ceasefire and make sure that Russian occupants do not attempt invasion again. All institutional capabilities have to be employed to strengthen the crisis management and conflict prevention capabilities of the OSCE, in order to prevent the wars like this one.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I close, I would like to draw your attention to some atrocities that have been committed at the territory of Georgia during last few days. I would have never imagined that I would have to speak about the facts of ethnic cleansing and genocide in my country in the 21st century, but unfortunately reality showed to be dangerously different.

We have all material evidences at hand, proving that different types of heavy conventional weapons, including Rocket Complex 9M72 Iskander (NATO Classification - SS-26 Stone) etc. have been indiscriminately used against civilian population and infrastructure of Georgia. The deployment of such weapons against peaceful population and civilian objects vividly reveals the inhuman brutality of Russian troops acting on the territory of Georgia.

The number of civilian targets bombed or otherwise attacked by the Russian armed forces clearly indicates that it was not just a collateral damage: Apartment buildings, Gori Market and Municipality, Poti seaport, the railway station and airport in Senaki, BTC pipeline, Kopitnari airport near Kutaisi, airdrome in Upper Abkhazia, Bridge linking eastern and western Georgia, civilian radar station near Tbilisi, schools, kindergartens, universities, and even the churches... I really cannot imagine how the current Russian government can ever manage to reimburse this moral damage to Georgian society. Generational task indeed.

Mr. Chairman,

We have numerous evidences of atrocities committed on ethnic background. Many villages in the Tskhinvali region and beyond, predominantly inhabited by ethnic Georgians fell victims to continuous raids. Reportedly, Russian servicemen, separatists and mercenaries carried out mass arrests and executions of the peaceful civilians (ethnic Georgians) remaining in the Tskhinvali region and adjacent areas.

The humanitarian crisis was even further aggravated, as the Russian troops denied the international humanitarian organizations such as ICRC to enter the occupied area. The OSCE Mission patrols were also unable to reach the territories of concern. CiO referred to this fact in yesterday's declaration. Besides, Russian naval ships prevented humanitarian aid and food from entering Georgian seaports. We have to make it clear to the Russian Federation, and for that matter, to any other country who would act in the same manner, that such deeds are completely unacceptable!

Hereby, let me address the Belarusian representative - Belarus, to put it mildly at this stage, is at least misled by the Russian disgraceful propaganda. You still have the chance to reconsider your current position, which by justifying Russian actions in Georgia in fact justifies aggression, occupation and mass murders conducted by the Russian invading army in my country.

Mr. Chairman,

It is absolutely clear for the whole international community that the pretext of the Russian side to defend Russian "citizens" and "peacekeepers", under which it performed the aggression, are void of any credibility. These arguments very much remind us of pre-WWII situation in Europe. The real aim of Russia was to topple the democratically elected government and occupy Georgia. Russia's government obviously thought that by employing the same means as Soviet Union did in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, Russian Federation, could in the best tradition of the "empire of evil", flex its muscle and demonstrate to the whole democratic world who is the boss in the region and in Europe.

It is not about Georgia any more. If Russia gets away with this, we can easily predict now who will be the next. We've seen them – as ruthless, as lawless, as brutal, as arrogant as they can get. The world

community should continue speaking with one voice, as it has done in recent days. This should be totally unacceptable to all the democratic countries of the world, and should draw us together in strong and universal condemnation of the Russian aggression.

As for “comrade” Voronkov’s remarks with regard of “comrade Stalin”, as he put it, let me remind him that Josef Stalin was a ruthless dictator of a brutal Soviet Empire, collapse of which was assessed as a “greatest geopolitical catastrophe” by the President of the Russian federation Mr. Putin. These words speak for themselves I think.

Thank You.