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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 July 2009

**Regarding the first anniversary of the Georgian aggression against  
South Ossetia**

Madam Chairperson,

In a few days' time it will be the first anniversary of the armed aggression unleashed by Mikheil Saakashvili's regime against South Ossetia and the Russian peacekeepers there, costing hundreds of people their lives. We deliberately stress that this was a military adventure undertaken by the Georgian leadership, an adventure that the President of Russia referred to as "boorish aggression".

At the same time, it is of fundamental importance to us not to confuse Georgia and the friendly Georgian people with the Saakashvili government. Regimes similar to the current one in Tbilisi come and go, while age-old feelings between nations remain. We should particularly like to mention our long-standing and traditionally cordial relations with the Georgian people. We hope that relations between Russia and Georgia will at some point be restored on a new basis, with due account taken of the realities that have emerged in the region as a result of the rebuffing of the aggression undertaken by Saakashvili. We are certain that in any case he will be unable to evade moral and political responsibility for the crimes he has committed, first and foremost responsibility to his own citizens. We firmly believe that the Georgian people themselves will decide the fate of those politicians, whose reckless actions had the most serious and dramatic consequences.

The world will not forget the tragedy that occurred in South Ossetia last year, when in the early hours of 8 August on Saakashvili's orders Georgian troops opened a volley of direct fire on Tskhinval and neighbouring villages, using among other things "Grad" multiple rocket launchers, large-calibre artillery systems, tanks and mortar guns. This is how it began – the treacherous attack by the Georgian militarists on the peaceful residents of a sleeping city and also on the Russian peacekeepers, who were serving in the region in accordance with international agreements, to which Tbilisi had also put its signature. In this way, Tbilisi chose the worst possible scenario for resolving the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, namely one involving the use of force and military means, and consciously committed a most flagrant violation of international standards and humanitarian principles. The fate of South Ossetia awaited Abkhazia too.

On the orders of this same Saakashvili, Georgian military personnel from the peacekeeping contingent of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces began shooting at their own colleagues in the Russian battalion. This was very likely an unprecedented first in the history of peacekeeping: soldiers belonging to one peacekeeping unit opened fire on their fellow peacekeepers and began killing them, instead of fulfilling their direct obligations under their mandate, that is, working together to maintain peace and order in their area of responsibility.

Further evidence of the treacherous nature of the Georgian aggression is the fact that the military action was undertaken despite repeated public assurances by representatives of the authorities in Tbilisi, including at meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council, that they had no intention of launching military action against South Ossetia. In other words, the Saakashvili regime hid behind a veil of hypocrisy while secretly and methodically preparing a massive armed invasion of South Ossetia and the cold-blooded murder of civilians. Not that any further proof was needed, it has long been obvious that the current Georgian leadership is not to be trusted.

To date, there has been no shortage of comments within the OSCE on the tragic events of last August, including their consequences. However, the paradox lies in the fact that so far neither the OSCE nor its field mission in Georgia, which has closed down, nor our partners have as yet provided a fundamental assessment of Georgia's military actions. We once again call for a balanced assessment of the situation, facing up to the truth. It is high time we admitted that Tbilisi is the aggressor and the South Ossetian people are the victims and for us then to conduct an impartial analysis of what happened. We must not remain silent about the war crimes of the Georgian leadership, which took it upon itself to regain control of South Ossetian territory by annihilating the South Ossetian population that was living there and the Russian peacekeepers who were protecting them. History will yet pronounce on the South Ossetian tragedy of last August; it is, however, already clear today that the OSCE community ought not to whitewash Saakashvili's criminal actions, giving him a feeling of impunity.

Russia made its choice, taking a difficult decision last August, a decision which is irreversible. In that critical situation, conducting an operation to force Georgia to stop waging war and recognizing the independence of the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia as a reliable safeguard in favour of protecting the lives and dignity of the people there and against a repetition of the Georgian aggression were the only possible solutions.

We can foretell the reaction of some of our opponents from the fact that as yet no one from the OSCE community has followed Russia's example and recognized the independence of the republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia. We do not consider this a problem. Every State has the right to determine its relations with the new sovereign countries of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Last August, we were not thinking about some immediate political advantage, we were not trying to assemble anti-Georgian blocs and coalitions, but were guided by the purest humanitarian considerations, namely saving ordinary South Ossetians from literal complete annihilation by the Saakashvili regime.

The Georgian aggression against South Ossetia coming as it does after the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and the notorious "solution" of the Kosovo problem has graphically demonstrated the OSCE's weakness and ineffectiveness in preventing and resolving conflicts and crisis situations. We believe that the OSCE's behaviour during and after the events of last

August has damaged the Organization's prestige. For that reason, it is so important to draw proper conclusions from the South Ossetian tragedy once the situation has been analysed in an unbiased manner. A unique chance for doing just that is provided by the discussion that has begun on the initiative by the Russian President calling for the conclusion of a legally binding Treaty on European Security, in which, among other things, the principles of the peaceful settlement of conflicts exclusively by means of negotiation would be stressed.

If we are to restore the OSCE's lost authority it is essential that we begin by providing safeguards against military operations by Georgia against its neighbours in the future. A first step in that direction would be the signing of agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia and South Ossetia and also with Abkhazia as a basis for normalizing Tbilisi's relations with Tskhinval and Sukhum and strengthening stability and security in the Trans-Caucasus in general. The OSCE can and must provide practical assistance in the drafting and adoption of agreements of this kind.

In conclusion, I should like to stress once again that we have the most fraternal feelings towards the friendly Georgian people, feelings that nothing and no one can compromise. We firmly believe that the upheavals we are currently experiencing in our inter-State relations will be ultimately overcome.

I would ask that the text of this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting of the Permanent Council.

Thank you for your attention.