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

4 February 2010

**Regarding the results of the January round of the Geneva discussions  
on the Trans-Caucasus**

Mr. Chairman,

In connection with the ninth round of the international discussions on security and stability in the Trans-Caucasus held in Geneva last week, we should like to make the following comments.

As usual, the delegations of the Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the Republic of South Ossetia participated in these discussions – and we stress this – on an equal basis, along with representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE. The Russian delegation was headed by Mr. Grigory Karasin, State Secretary and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The discussion of the agenda proposed by the co-chairmen in consultation with the participants proceeded with difficulty. Once again there were attempts to divert the discussion from the essence of the problems. We might recall that the main priority of the Geneva discussions – not least given the fact that they were conceived in accordance with the agreements of the presidents of Russia and France in 2008 – was and remains the elaboration of lasting guarantees for the security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In practical terms, this means concluding as soon as possible legally binding agreements on the non-use of force between Georgia and Abkhazia and Georgia and South Ossetia. Given the continuing calls by the Georgian leadership for a restoration of the territorial integrity of the country at any price and Tbilisi's growing armed presence near the Abkhaz and South Ossetian borders, the question of providing Sukhum and Tskhinval with lasting guarantees of security is becoming a priority.

Unfortunately, there has still been no progress in this fundamental question, although the Geneva discussions are already in their second year. A delay in the achievement of concrete results cannot but cause disappointment for the delegations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The leading negotiators from these republics have stated directly that they are participating in the Geneva discussions on the instructions of their presidents with a single

goal – to obtain from Georgia firm commitments that there will be no repeat of the tragic events of August 2008, and from the international community guaranteed conditions for the implementation in good faith of those commitments.

Contrary to the logic and the essence of the Geneva discussions, there was an attempt during the ninth round to impose a discussion of the clearly pro-Georgian so-called “interim steps for international security” aimed at replacing the Russian military contingents and border guards in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with some kind of international presence. This almost wrecked all the work that had been done. The Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides clearly stated that this proposal was completely unacceptable for them. At the same time, they made it known that they would be forced to analyse this situation to determine whether there was any use in their continued participation in the Geneva discussions.

In the meantime there has been an exchange of views on the provision of support on the part of the co-chairmen to the meetings in Geneva and on the work of the incident prevention mechanisms, especially in view of the fact that the transfer of the OSCE’s co-chairmanship of the Geneva discussions from Greece to Kazakhstan and the forthcoming replacement of the United Nations co-chairmanship. It is perfectly clear that any proposals on the work of international structures on the territory of Abkhazia and South Ossetia must be agreed upon with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are now sovereign republics, and the new politico-legal realities that have emerged in the Trans-Caucasus since the Georgian aggression was repulsed must be taken into account in any practical efforts.

In the January round, consideration was given to the current situation in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian border regions, with a focus on the work of the incident prevention mechanisms, which was for the most part viewed positively. Measures were outlined to resolve the problem of missing or detained persons on the basis of the internationally recognized principles of voluntary return in safety and with mutual respect.

It was decided to continue the discussion of ways of ensuring security for Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the next stage of the Geneva discussions scheduled for 30 March.

Mr. Chairman,

It is no accident that we are outlining the position of Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the Geneva discussions. We believe it is of fundamental importance to make the participating States aware of their points of view, since the representatives of these republics have no opportunity to address the OSCE community directly. The seminar with the imposing title of “Conflict Prevention and Resolution: Successful Strategies and Practice” planned for 23 February as part of a thematic meeting of the Corfu Process could improve the situation in this regard.

We believe that the informal and open nature of the Corfu dialogue make it ideal for inviting negotiators from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to share their views on the events of August 2008 in the South Caucasus and the prospects for the development of the situation in the region. After all, since the United Nations, the EU and the OSCE are co-operating with Sukhum and Tskhinval as fully fledged partners within the framework of the Geneva discussions, why should their representatives not be offered a forum within our Organization for an informal exchange of views.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to hear the comments of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides regarding Georgia's much publicized "Strategy on the Occupied Territories: Engagement through Co-operation" – a document to which many have made reference here – to find out first hand, as it were, the position of the two main actors for whom this strategy was after all written.

We also believe that it would be useful to invite Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini to that seminar to discuss the basic conclusions of last year's report prepared by the EU Commission under her guidance. This would help our partners and the OSCE as a whole to better understand the lessons and the consequences of the crisis of August 2008.

Thank you for your attention.