



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLICS OF AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

S T A T E M E N T

*Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze at the 699th Special Permanent Council
Vienna, 31 January, 2008*

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome the European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy, H.E. Benita Ferrero-Waldner. We would like to note with satisfaction the excellent cooperation which we enjoy with European Commission and particularly Ms. Ferrero-Waldner and would like to reassure of Georgia's readiness to further enhance and deepen relations with the EU. Hereby I would also like to mention that we are expecting the visit of the Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner to Tbilisi in the framework of Troika visit during February 4-5.

The EU-Georgian cooperation has been marked by constant strengthening of the ties, including through democratic reforms in Georgia aimed at high European standards. In this regard we would like to once again reaffirm our allegiance to the democratic values of the European Union and express readiness to receive advice and expert help in relation to various democratic reforms that we are planning to undertake.

The main framework for EU-Georgian cooperation – the EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan serves as a comprehensive framework for expanding our relations and focusing our cooperation on producing real results that will help Georgia move beyond cooperation to a significant degree of integration.

We are now starting our second year of ENP AP implementation and we witness a significant progress in certain areas of cooperation.

Furthermore, we believe that conflict zones should not be devoid of the opportunities foreseen by the ENP. Georgia is ready to share the benefits of the EU-Georgia ENP AP with the population of these regions. We propose to search for joint prospects that will facilitate inclusion of conflict regions in

the ENP implementation process.

In this regard we express our deepest gratitude for the active participation of the EU in assisting Georgia to further peace processes, providing financial and technical support for the rehabilitation of conflict regions, which should lead to improving the economic, social, cultural and political situation and create solid basis for peaceful reintegration of these regions and the communities residing there, into the Georgian state.

We consider the joint EU Council/Commission assessment mission of January 15-19, 2007 a further step in the EU contribution to the conflict settlement process. In this regard, we welcome the final recommendations elaborated through joint, Georgian and European, consultations. We are in particular encouraged by the EU intention to deepen the Union's role in the conflict-settlement process through proposing concrete initiatives.

We deem that any further EU initiatives, based on the mentioned EU mission results, should be implemented within the EU-Georgia cooperation in order to avoid:

1. Encouraging illusions of the separatist regimes about developing direct contacts with the EU;
2. Using the EU assistance by the separatist regimes for propaganda, militarisation or any other purposes not in line with the peaceful resolution agenda;
3. Capacity building of the separatist regimes instead of assistance to the local communities.

Mr. Chairman,

Important issue, which we are determined to resolve together with our EU counterparts in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner, is the issue of visa facilitation—always a priority for our government, which recently has acquired greater urgency in light of the EU-Russia Visa Agreement, by having political ramifications in the conflict zones. We hope that the EU-Georgia visa dialogue can advance quickly and adequately address our concerns.

In this light, we welcome the EU decision to establish EU-Georgia Cooperation Subcommittee on Justice, Freedom and Security issues in the beginning of 2008 that will address visa issue, among others. We consider the EU Member States' support and contribution in advancing EU-Georgia visa dialogue crucial. Therefore, we rely on the Slovenian EU Presidency to foster the process of the establishment of the mentioned Sub-committee.

In this context, Georgia is satisfied to have made serious progress on readmission talks with EU Member States and stands ready to start a dialogue on an EU-Georgia readmission agreement.

Regarding the issue of economic cooperation, we would like to underline that further liberalization of trade with the EU through a Free Trade Agreement with the EU bears vital importance for Georgia. In this light, we welcome the commencement of the FTA feasibility study in Georgia and hope for the positive results, which will lead the parties to start the negotiation process.

Mr. Chairman,

Now, I would like to stress vital importance of the regional cooperation for Georgia. Economic cooperation figures high on our agenda and therefore, we will further seek for closer economic ties in the wider Black Sea region, including the South Caucasus.

The Black Sea regional cooperation should ensure safety and security in the region, bearing in mind that the EU became a fully-fledged player in the Black Sea region, a Black Sea littoral power. In this view, the existing regional cooperation formats (BSEC, GUAM) in this region may prove highly instrumental in reaching the goals of the new EU regional initiative – Black Sea Synergy.

We believe that, with a view to regional integration and progressive integration with the EU energy system, Georgia's role as an energy transit country is to support the development of diversified infrastructures connected to the Caspian energy resources and facilitate their transit to the EU.

Finally, expressing our sincere gratitude to H.E. Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner for being with us today and informing us in a detailed way on the European Union's views regarding the OSCE, we would like to conclude the statement with our best wishes to and success in all of her activities and endeavours.

Thank you.