



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 730th Permanent Council
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Mr. Chairman,

Let me update you about the situation in Georgia since the last Thursday, when my Minister briefed Special PC session about the developments in my country.

Situation after the recent aggression and subsequent occupation of sovereign territories of Georgia by the Russian Federation is still quite grave. Civilian and economic, as well as military infrastructure has been seriously damaged by the invasion of Russia. Russian troops are still deployed in Georgia without any legal ground. Russian Federation is establishing military, not peacekeeping presence in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia. Ethnic cleansing which has been ongoing for last days is still taking place as we speak, as Georgian villages are being burnt and Georgians are expelled from their places of residence in and outside the Tskhinvali region.

On top of this, President Medvedev, as you all know unilaterally recognized the independence of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus not only legitimizing previous and ongoing ethnic cleansing condemned by the Budapest, Lisbon and Istanbul summits of this organization, but also destroying the very foundations of international law. These acts of the Russian Federation represent serious blows to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and UN Charter.

We would like to herewith thank the United States, European Union and other actors, especially the OSCE participating states for expressing strong support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and condemning illegal and dangerous steps by the Russian Federation. We would like to especially note the role of the CiO and the Presidency of the EU in doing their best to mediate the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia.

At the same time I have to note separately that the six-point ceasefire agreement, which was mediated by the French President, is being completely ignored by the Russian Federation. Russia has disregarded this agreement from the very first day of its existence, despite the fact that Georgia has done everything to comply with its provisions in good faith.

Namely, the Russian Federation has not withdrawn its military forces to the places of their permanent deployment as foreseen in the point 5 of the cease-fire agreement. There are currently up to 17.000 troops deployed on the territory of Georgia, around 1.000 of them are located outside the conflict regions. Russian Federation maintains presence well beyond the conflict zones, in such places as Poti – the main Georgian seaport – and Senaki (You can see the locations of the Russian checkpoints on the map). We have heard many pretty unconvincing “arguments” from the Russian Federation over last days why Russian troops are still staying in Georgia. Nevertheless, I would like to ask my Russian colleague now, what are Russian military forces doing in Poti, Senaki and other parts of Georgian territory? What ends does their illegal presence serve, if not occupation of the parts of Georgian territory?

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to reiterate here once again, to make my position clear, which is also shared by the Presidency of the EU, United States and other members of international community. According to the cease-fire agreement, the Russian peacekeepers can only implement additional security measures in the conflict zone, a few kilometres around Tskhinvali until international mechanism is in force. Russian military forces are currently well beyond this territory. And this is the occupation in its classical meaning. At the same time, we should all clearly understand that as soon as the international mechanism is in force, and deployment of 20 MMOs was already a first strong step in this direction, military forces of the Russian Federation have to immediately cease implementing any kind of additional security measures. In this regard, Mr. Chairman it will be important to adopt the decision on deploying remaining 80 monitors throughout Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as soon as possible.

But this is not the only provision of the ceasefire agreement the Russian Federation gravely violates. Point three of the “Sarkozy document” envisages the parties to grant free access of humanitarian assistance to those in need. The Russian Federation has prevented a number of international organizations, including ICRC from entering not just the conflict zone and the Tskhinvali region but the territories adjacent to South Ossetia, at the rest part of Georgia. The same is true of the OSCE MMOs. On August 19 we together adopted a decision which was supposed to be enough to have unarmed MMOs access the territories adjacent to South Ossetia. Unfortunately, signature of the Russia’s ambassador here in OSCE proved to be not enough. General Kulakhmetov and the Russian armed forces, who are now groundlessly calling themselves “peacekeepers”, are not allowing OSCE monitors into the territories adjacent to South Ossetia.

Mr. Chairman,

Most importantly, Russian Federation has precluded any possibility of seriously starting international discussions about the security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as foreseen by the point 6 of the cease-fire agreement. Now it remains an open question how can the international debate evolve around the stability and security in these regions, when Russia already recognized them and declared that it is the Russian military only that will be protecting their security and stability.

Nevertheless, we are still very grateful for various creative ideas coming from the CiO, EU, United States and other representatives of the international community regarding the future modalities of stability and security of these Georgian regions. Last week my minister aired here an idea about launching an independent international commission, which would look into the emergence and genesis of the conflict and establish the facts in question. This could be one way forward. Adjoining various international organizations in creating a common international platform could be effective as well. There are many options in this regard and we are looking forward to exploring them.

In this context, we have to note that by its belligerent actions against Georgia, the Russian Federation has finally discredited its role as an impartial facilitator of the peace process, and now it is at risk of discrediting its role as a participant of the future peace process.

Mr. Chairman,

Because of the aggression and occupation carried out by the Russian Federation, as well as the illegal unilateral recognition of the Georgian regions and legalization of ethnic cleansing, on August 29 the government of Georgia decided to cease the so-called 'peacekeeping operations' in Abkhazia and former South Ossetian autonomous province, and to immediately terminate any ground for the presence of the armed forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Georgia.

Following the aforesaid decision and in accordance with paragraph 1 of the Decision by the CIS State Heads Council's 'On Presence of Joint Peacekeeping Forces in the Conflict Zone in Abkhazia, Georgia and Further Conflict Settlement Measures' of 7 August 2003, Georgia declared termination of the CIS peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

Besides, in conformity with the aforesaid decision Georgia unilaterally declared termination of the Agreement 'On Principles for Settlement of Georgian-Ossetian Conflict' of 24 June, 1992 and demanded an immediate withdrawal of the peacekeepers (Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation N6/4141-10 of 01.09.2008).

At the same time, the Parliament of Georgia has made a decision to declare the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the former Autonomous Region of South Ossetia as territories occupied by the Russian Federation and to declare the Russian armed forces, including the so called peacekeeping force, currently deployed on the territory of Georgia, as occupying military units. We also cut off diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation, leaving only a consulate operating in Moscow.

We did not want to take these steps, but the full-scale aggression from the Russian Federation and a whole cascade of unfriendly acts, culminating in the recognition of independence of Georgian territories, left us no choice.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite this decision of the Government of Georgia, it must be stressed that Georgia is not terminating the peace process or jeopardizing future peace processes, as we understand the importance of its continuity. Our proposal is to replace negotiation and peacekeeping formats, which have been effectively invalidated following the military aggression of Russia, with neutral international peacekeeping mechanisms.

The Government of Georgia remains strongly committed to the cease-fire agreement achieved with the mediation of President of the French Republic, as well as to the provisions of the respective letter of the President N. Sarkozy and the explanations enclosed. We believe that the cease-fire agreement has to be fully implemented and Georgian government has all the intentions to follow it.

Mr. Chairman,

The International Community should realize that what is now happening in Georgia represents a direct threat not only to my country. What we are witnessing now is an attempt of the Russian Federation to revive the totalitarian Soviet empire, and what is even more alarming, to reconsider established world order, *inter alia*, by reshaping state borders in Europe.

On August 27, President Medvedev, in his article in Financial Times, acknowledged that “after the collapse of communism, Russia reconciled itself to the “loss” of 14 former Soviet republics”. We all know very well the words of the Prime Minister Putin that “collapse of Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century”. Several days ago Minister Lavrov stated that the way Georgia left Soviet Union was in contradiction with the Soviet constitution.

I regret very much that Russian leadership still thinks with the old Soviet geopolitical codes. What Russia did in Georgia was nothing but the outcome of such thinking. It is sad to say, but the Soviet Union is back, empire of evil has struck back. Same force, same thinking which led to the invasion and occupation of Baltic States, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Afghanistan is now back. And this force is challenging us today with new dangerous tools, such as ethnic cleansing accompanied by abusive and militant rhetoric articulated at the highest political level. And we need to respond to it. The response should be tough, steady, and assertive and of course civilized.

Mr. Chairman

I want to close by saying once again and I will keep repeating this over and over – “Russian occupants have to withdraw immediately from a sovereign state of Georgia and have to start respecting Georgia’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity!”

Thank you!