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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

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Madam Chairperson,

I think we all remember well that the Russian Ambassador has on a number of occasions persistently called on us to finish with the so-called “Georgian case” and to turn the page. Equally, I am sure the Russian Ambassador remembers that no one in this room has ever agreed with his suggestion.

With his statement today, although it is largely misleading, the Russian Ambassador has revised his previous position, which must be a welcome turn. We all now seem to agree that in our future work here in the OSCE we need to address the conflict between Russia and Georgia in a more substantive and structured way, not least in the context of our demanding exercise on European security. Needless to say, the Organization, together with its institutions and relevant structures and mechanisms, will provide us with meaningful options to this end.

Madam Chairperson,
Dear colleagues,

Almost one year has passed since the tragedy my Russian colleague referred to – the war between the Russian Federation and Georgia. Last year, in August 2008, Russia started a war against my country and invaded Georgia through the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia by land, sea and air. This large-scale military aggression resulted in the occupation of about 20 per cent of the territory of Georgia. Russian forces and their proxy militia have conducted ethnic cleansing and committed crimes against humanity that have resulted in the displacement of more than 100,000 persons. In gross violation of fundamental principles of international law, Russia has unilaterally recognized the “independence” of the occupied territories, subsequently turning them literally into military camps of its own against the will of the people of the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia.

In parallel with its military build-up, Russia is continuing to undermine the efforts of the international community to bring a peaceful solution to the conflict between Russia and Georgia. Russia has forced the OSCE and UN presences in Georgia to terminate their activities and is continuing to deny access to the war-affected territories both to the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and to providers of humanitarian aid. Together with its proxy regimes, Russia bears sole responsibility for the frequent provocations, incidents and murders that have taken place along the administrative boundary lines.

Regrettably, Russia is opposed to giving serious consideration to the present proposals on introducing international security arrangements – notably international peacekeeping, police and monitoring operations, and due commitments on non-use of force and non-resumption of hostilities – as the best possible measures for building confidence among all the participants in the Geneva discussions. Furthermore, Russia is continuing to impede the full implementation of the joint incident prevention and response mechanisms agreed in the Geneva format.

Regrettably, the main lesson learned from developments since August 2008 is that Russia is still a destabilizing force in the whole Caucasus region, including North Caucasus, and still an aggressor that continues to refuse to comply with its international obligations.

Madam Chairperson,

I guess it must be time for the Russian Federation to look more carefully at its foreign policy, especially in the context of the situation following the Russian-Georgian war, and to realize that this policy, which is similar to the Soviet one and in many respects even worse, is increasingly leading to Russia's isolation from the international community.

It must be time for Russia to get rid of its Soviet legacy in its actions and to be guided by the norms and principles of international law. Russia should start fulfilling its obligations under the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, it should revoke its unlawful recognition of independence of the occupied territories, it should allow and facilitate the return of IDPs and refugees, it should allow international missions into the occupied territories, and it should co-operate constructively on ensuring peace and stability in the whole Caucasus region.

Thank you