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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 730th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL

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Conclusions of the Presidency of the Extraordinary European Council at Brussels (1 September 2008)

The European Union wishes to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the Conclusions of the Presidency of the Extraordinary European Council at Brussels on 1 September 2008:

“1. The European Council is gravely concerned by the open conflict which has broken out in Georgia, by the resulting violence and by the disproportionate reaction of Russia. This conflict has led to great suffering on both sides. Military action of this kind is not a solution and is not acceptable. The European Council deplores the loss of human life, the suffering inflicted on the population, the number of displaced persons and refugees, and the considerable material damage.

“2. The European Council strongly condemns Russia’s unilateral decision to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. That decision is unacceptable and the European Union calls on other States not to recognize this proclaimed independence and asks the Commission to examine the practical consequences to be drawn. It recalls that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Georgia must be based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity recognized by international law, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and United Nations Security Council resolutions.

“3. The European Council emphasizes that all European States have the right freely to determine their foreign policy and their alliances, while respecting international law and the principles of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-operation. It is also legitimate for the security interests of each to be taken into account, so long as the fundamental principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the independence of States are respected.

“4. The European Council is pleased that the six-point agreement achieved on 12 August on the basis of the European Union’s mediation efforts has led to a ceasefire, improved delivery of humanitarian aid to the victims, and a substantial withdrawal of Russian military forces. The implementation of that plan has to be complete. The European Council calls on the parties to continue the full implementation in good faith of the agreement they have signed. The military forces which have not yet withdrawn to the lines held prior to the outbreak of hostilities must do so without delay. Besides the provision of assistance to the

victims, the urgent issue at the moment is to finalize the international monitoring mechanism, in which the Union is prepared to participate and which is provided for in point 5 of the agreement, so as to replace the Russian additional security measures in the zone adjacent to South Ossetia. It is also a matter of urgency to begin the international talks provided for in point 6 of the agreement concerning the security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

“5. The European Union is ready to commit itself, including through a presence on the ground, to support every effort to secure a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Georgia. To that end, the Member States of the European Union are making a significant contribution to strengthening the OSCE observer mission in South Ossetia, by sending observers and by making substantial material and financial contributions. The European Union has also decided on the immediate dispatch of a fact-finding mission with the task of helping to gather information and defining the modalities for an increased European Union commitment on the ground, under the European Security and Defence Policy. The European Council invites the relevant Council bodies to conclude all the necessary preparatory work in order that a possible decision to commit such an observer mission can be taken by the Council by 15 September 2008, depending on how the situation develops, and in close co-ordination with the OSCE and the United Nations. To this end, the European Council requests the President of the Council and the SG/HR to undertake all the necessary contacts and discussions.

“6. The European Union has already supplied emergency aid. It is prepared to supply aid for reconstruction in Georgia, including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It is ready to support confidence-building measures and the development of regional co-operation. It also decides to step up its relations with Georgia, including visa facilitation measures and the possible establishment of a full and comprehensive free trade area as soon as the conditions are met. It will take the initiative of convening an international conference shortly to assist reconstruction in Georgia and requests the Council and the Commission to start preparations for this conference.

“7. The European Council notes with concern the impact which the current crisis is having on the whole of the region. The European Union considers that it is more necessary than ever to support regional co-operation and step up its relations with its eastern neighbours, in particular through its neighbourhood policy, the development of the “Black Sea Synergy” initiative and an “Eastern Partnership”, which the European Council wishes to adopt in March 2009; to this end, it invites the Commission to submit proposals in December 2008. In this context the European Council stresses the importance of the forthcoming summit between the European Union and Ukraine on 9 September.

“8. The European Council decides to appoint a European Union Special Representative for the crisis in Georgia and asks the Council to make the necessary arrangements.

“9. Recent events illustrate the need for Europe to intensify its efforts with regard to the security of energy supplies. The European Council invites the Council, in co-operation with the Commission, to examine initiatives to be taken to this end, in particular as regards diversification of energy sources and supply routes.

“10. With the crisis in Georgia, relations between the EU and Russia have reached a crossroads. The European Council considers that, given the interdependence between the

European Union and Russia and the global problems they are facing, there is no desirable alternative to a strong relationship, based on co-operation, trust and dialogue, respect for the rule of law and the principles recognized by the Charter of the United Nations and by the OSCE. It was for this reason that we launched negotiations for a new framework agreement between the Union and Russia last July.

“11. We call on Russia to join with us in making this fundamental choice in favour of mutual interest, understanding and co-operation. We are convinced that it is in Russia’s own interest not to isolate itself from Europe. For its part, the European Union has shown itself willing to engage in partnership and co-operation, in keeping with the principles and values on which it is based. We expect Russia to behave in a responsible manner, honouring all its commitments. The Union will remain vigilant. The European Council requests the Council, with the Commission, to conduct a careful in-depth examination of the situation and of the various aspects of EU-Russia relations. This evaluation must begin now and continue in the run-up to the forthcoming summit scheduled to take place in Nice on 14 November 2008. The European Council gives a mandate to its President to continue discussions with a view to the full application of the six-point agreement. To that end, the President of the European Council will go to Moscow on 8 September, accompanied by the President of the Commission and the High Representative. Until troops have withdrawn to the positions held prior to 7 August, meetings on the negotiation of the Partnership Agreement will be postponed.”