

**Statement by the H.E. Gela Bezhuashvili, Minister of Foreign
Affairs of
Georgia at the OSCE Ministerial Council, 4-5 December,
2006, Brussels**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me join my colleagues in expressing our appreciation to the Belgian Government for the warm welcome, and to commend the hard work of the Minister Karel De Gucht, all members of his team for the excellent leadership and work in 2005.

Mr. Chairman,

Three years ago our Government adopted the same comprehensive approach to ensuring common values and principles the OSCE has upheld from the outset. Today, Georgia has managed to establish herself as a sound and open democracy nearly indistinguishable in many ways from its European neighbors.

We are convinced that investing in democracy is good both for us and the entire OSCE area. The improved human and economic dimension is the only means to address the challenges we are facing and we want the benefits of our choice to be available to all our compatriots, including those in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

With this in mind we proposed the Peace Plan for South Ossetia endorsed by the Ljubljana Ministerial Council. Unfortunately, few things have changed since then. Instead of demilitarization we see heavy rearmament, instead of improved security and human rights situation we see criminal and contraband growing. Our citizens are subject to rampant violations and in many cases blind deaths due to uncontrolled mined territories.

For too long, the faith of conflicts on Georgia's territories had been left in the hands of biased and ineffective peace brokers. Currently, the situation is posing as a deteriorating *status quo*, threatening to dissolve territories of a sovereign country.

To rectify this grave inheritance, my Government has recently proposed to change the existing ineffective negotiating and peacekeeping formats, in order to ensure a direct dialogue with Abkhaz and South Ossetian sides under the patronage of the UN and the OSCE, respectively.

We do not mean to interrupt the current peace process; we just need your help and support to revitalize it. We call for the participation of other international actors as facilitators and guarantors of the peace talks to equalize a dominant role of the Russian Federation, as its credibility as an honest broker of the peace process has long been shaken. We believe, this way the process can produce credible results.

We commend OSCE for its help in organizing a Donor's Conference for South Ossetia's economic rehabilitation and are eager match the funds.

In this context, we regret to note that, under cover of the rehabilitation programme and in contradiction to the Conference agreements, the Russian side is implementing projects in the region, having no consent of OSCE and the Georgian side, and without any transparency. None of the projects carried out by the Russian side is envisaged by the programme. We urge the Russian side to refrain from unilateral steps undermining the essence of the Programme as an important confidence-building measure, and to strictly follow the agreements achieved at the Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

How is it then, that we bring new momentum to our own efforts at building peace? We believe the answer lies in our own decisions. As an organization, we must be strong enough to follow them through. The OSCE's role and significance will be marginalized if its decisions are not implemented, and if all participating States do not comply with the principles enshrined in the founding documents.

Georgia has always been among supporters of the idea of strengthening the OSCE. We support cross-dimensional perspectives to put solid linkages between three OSCE dimensions. This is particularly important in the area of conflict prevention and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

We hope that it will contribute to using by the Organization of its full capacity and increasing its role in achieving stability in the OSCE area. We need a strong political willingness of the members and change in attitudes, ensuring that all OSCE members are sharing its founding principles.

Mr. Chairman,

I cannot stress enough the importance of the OSCE's contribution to strengthening democracy, human rights and rule of law in my country. Georgia highly appreciates the activities of the ODIHR, particularly in promotion of democratization and rule of law, human rights protection, election observation, tolerance and non-discrimination.

It is due to your support that the recent local elections in Georgia were hailed as free and fair, and we look forward to our further cooperation with the Office.

It is our strong belief that, as partners, we can overcome the scourges of our times: from terrorism and human trafficking, to the trade in illegal drugs and weapons of mass destruction. And,

perhaps above all, the specter of energy dependence. We reiterate our support to the activities of the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, in particular in the field of energy security and transport as well as environmental issues.

We have to formulate a sound **energy security strategy**, which would derive from the balance of interests among energy producing, transit and consuming countries and identify alternative ways of transporting energy resources from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea via Black Sea region to the European consumers.

We intend to build Europe's security by cutting off **illegal trafficking** of human, drugs, weapons, and other goods. Thus, any credible help that OSCE can provide to strengthen our border security would be invaluable.

Adoption of the *OSCE Border Security and Management Concept* at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council provides a solid basis for the OSCE to effectively carry out its border-related activities. The current *OSCE Capacity Building Program for Georgian Border Police* is a valuable component of the Georgian border security and we would appreciate the support of the OSCE to further extend and enhance it.

Mr. Chairman,

It is clear that OSCE has to evolve in order to be able to respond to new challenges. We will need strongest willingness of the members to translate their commitments to Helsinki and Paris agendas into real activities, first of all, contributing to conflict prevention and management, human rights protection and promotion of democratic development. Only then the OSCE can play a key role in international relations.

Finally, I would like to wish every success to the incoming Spanish Chairmanship in 2007 and to reiterate Georgia's unremitting support of your endeavors. I look forward to working closely with you on our common agenda.

I also take this opportunity to say that Georgia welcomes Kazakhstan's candidacy for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009. It will be a positive impulse for further strengthening the process of political and economic reforms, not only in Kazakhstan, but in the Central Asia region as a whole. A positive decision will contribute to the country's greater integration into OSCE community of values and principles.

I thank you for your attention.