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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

STATEMENT

Delivered by Ambassador Victor Dolidze in response to the Statement made by Mr. Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, at the 742nd Permanent Council Vienna 27 November, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to warmly welcome the High Commissioner Vollebaek at this Permanent Council meeting and sincerely thank him for his comprehensive statement, where he raised many important issues, which I'm convinced, all delegations will study very thoroughly, and which provided us with necessary information on the situation in the fields of his competence within the OSCE area, for the delegations to build upon while elaborating the plans for way forward with regard to the minority issues in particular and the OSCE Human Dimension in general.

I would like to once again reiterate what my delegation had been declaring at this forum in numerous other occasions in the past – Georgia remains fully committed to active cooperation and support to the activities of HCNM in all its efforts in its fields of responsibility.

After having listened with great interest to the statement of Mr. Vollebaek, I would like to inquire with him, upon your permission Mr. Chairman, on some of the most important issues for Georgia:

1. We would like to hear about the observations by Mr. Vollebaek of the situation in the Georgian villages during the visit of the HCNM representatives to the Tskhinvali Region. More precisely, we would like to hear more on whether HCNM team was able to observe

there signs of post-conflict destructions and lootings.

2. We would be glad if the High Commissioner would give us his assessment whether the processes which have taken place in the Tskhinvali region were ethnically motivated, or not
3. We would also be grateful if the High Commissioner could elaborate more on his view regarding the challenges existing in the Akhgori region. We know that there are serious problems expected as winter comes. It would be interesting to hear High Commissioner's opinions in this regard?
4. Finally, we would like to ask the High Commissioner whether the denial of access from the South to the Tskhinvali Region pose a logistical problem for him. According to our information a number of international organizations (CoE, OCHA/UNHCR et al) complained about this. We would be grateful if Mr. Vollebaek could give us his position on the issue.

Thank you.