

**Statement of Amb. Valeri Chechelashvili
Secretary General of Organization
for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM
at the 16th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council
(4 December 2008)**

At the outset, I would like to express sincere gratitude to OSCE Secretary General for inviting GUAM to make written contribution to 16th Meeting of OSCE Ministerial Council.

On 10 October 1997 the Heads of States Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine shaped the process of GUAM cooperation and integration. This far-sighted step was determined by similarity of challenges and threats that GUAM countries were faced with, and based upon commonality of approaches in seeking efficient solutions to the existing problems.

We are proud to state that being a natural and voluntary association of like-minded states GUAM has successfully passed through various tests and proved its strong viability and practical relevance. The effectiveness of GUAM is proved by the growing trade turnover between its Member–States. Throughout more than 10 years our Group has transformed into a full-fledged international organization with a distinct identity devoted to democracy and economic development. Our Organization established strong cooperative and mutually beneficial ties with the partner states and other international bodies in many fields effectively using the “GUAM +” format. We remain open for active multi-faceted cooperation based on GUAM principles and values with any European or Asian state or organization.

Projecting the GUAM prospective for the future, the Member States reiterate their strong determination to contribute actively to the international security, stability and peace in the most effective and appropriate manner. As a natural transportation route connecting Europe and Asia GUAM will continue to play an increasingly important role in economic development and regional integration, thus bringing continents together. Uniting representatives of different cultural, ethnic and religious groups GUAM is promoting the vital process of dialogue between civilizations bringing mutual respect through knowledge and understanding.

We note with a great concern that the process of development and integration of our States is still burdened by many outstanding problems, among which are the unresolved conflicts in the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Republic of Moldova. In this connection the Member States reiterate their

unswerving commitment to finding peaceful solutions to these conflicts on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognized borders of States. It is our firm belief that aggressive nationalism, armed separatism and disintegration have no future in our region, since they fully contradict the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights, which constitute the very basis of GUAM. Common position of GUAM on these conflicts in the GUAM region is based on the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State on the issue of conflict settlement, adopted at the GUAM Kiev Summit on 23 May 2006, which stress that “the territory of the state may not be a subject of acquisition or military occupation, resulting from the threat or use of force in breach of the relevant norms of international law. No territorial acquisitions and the resulting self-declared entities may be recognized as legal under any circumstances whatsoever”.

Our Organization calls upon the international community to support the ongoing efforts by the GUAM States, which will play a constructive role in improving situation in the GUAM region, eliminating remaining barriers to full-scale development of our states and promoting the goals of the GUAM cooperation.

GUAM has many advantages and still developing potential. In this part of Europe it is one of few, international full-fledged organizations of regional cooperation with well-institutionalized format of interaction. Particular and undisputable advantage of GUAM is the fact, that Member-states share common values as well as common foreign policy priorities. As a result, decision-making process is dynamic and efficient. This is exactly why our Organization had tackled problems and implemented projects, impossible for other neighboring initiatives even to address. Namely – GUAM Free Trade Zone and Virtual Law Enforcement Centre were established.

GUAM internal trade, less than 2 billion USD in the year of 2006 (GUAM Free Trade Zone was established on GUAM Kyiv Summit of 23 May 2006), hit the ceiling of 3 billion USD in 2007 and reached the same level by October 2008. So that in current year will reach at least the level of 4.1 – 4.2 billion USD. We consider the level of 10 billion USD GUAM internal trade by year of 2012 is quite realistic.

In the framework of Virtual Law Enforcement Centre set of common activities is being developed with the priorities of illegal drug trafficking and illegal human trafficking. Respective Working group on combating terrorism and organized crime is interacting actively, assessing current cooperation and drawing guidelines for future interaction. “NARCOSTOP – 3” integrated operation conducted through VLEC in the fall of 2008 is the vivid demonstration of the fact, that law enforcement cooperation in GUAM format is gaining new quality. Protocol to the Agreement on Cooperation among the Governments of GUAM Participating States in the Field of Combat against Terrorism, Organized Crime and Other

Dangerous Types of Crime of 20 July 2002, which will be signed By GUAM Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki, will further facilitate cooperation of our law enforcement Agencies.

GUAM is an Organization based on the developed network of mechanisms and instruments of interaction including GUAM Strategy for Sector Cooperation Development, serving as roadmap for Working Group activities. Secretariat, according to GUAM statutory documents, provides to Member states technical and organizational support, based on new technological opportunities – interactive dialogue capacity and video conference system.

We believe that this stage of our development is particularly important. After high level political interaction was ensured in Organization, we are advancing to the stage of generating and implementing of GUAM projects and Programs of cooperation, some of them being already in the pipeline (in addition to Free Trade Zone and Virtual Law Enforcement Centre, to name a few, following GUAM projects can be mentioned: “Concept of GUAM Transport Corridor”, “Common Tourist Product”, “GUAM Common Telecommunication Space” etc.). It implies further improvement of our culture of cooperation and quality of targets. Thanks to the contribution of the Member States we have upgraded our cooperative capacity. We express our thanks to all those who have contributed to this task, including our external partners.

We are convinced that our Organization will further upgrade its reputation and authority in the net of international initiatives and organizations. All prerequisites are in place; last not least readiness to listen to each other, and develop activities based on shared vision for common future of the region. We are ready as well to work with partners, explaining our objectives of cooperation and upgrading common element. A Secretariat, having moved recently to its permanent location in Kyiv downtown, Maidan Nezalejnosti (Independence Square) has the ambition to become the efficient instrument to promote goals and objectives of the Organization. A simple, understandable structure responding the interests of all Member States and based on the principles of equality is contributing as well to paving the way to full-fledged cooperation in the framework of GUAM.

Kyiv Summit was turning point in GUAM process, as Heads of State declared the establishment of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM and signed its Charter. The Heads of State expressed their confidence that the establishment of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM will ensure achievement of the set purposes and enable to deepen and enhance cooperation of its Member States.

They stressed that the priorities of the future Organization shall be promoting democratic values, ensuring rule of law and respect of human rights, ensuring sustainable development, strengthening international and regional security and

stability, deepening European integration for the establishment of common security space, and expansion of cooperation in economic and humanitarian spheres; development of social and economic, transport, energy, scientific and technical, and humanitarian potential of the Parties, intensification of political interaction and practical cooperation in the fields of mutual interest, and, as a result, achievement of sustainable development and well-being of their peoples.

The Heads of State particularly emphasized that GUAM is open organization, and any state, sharing its purposes and principles, may join it. They also adopted the Decision concerning the GUAM's partnership with the interested states and international organizations, and approved the relevant provisions.

Baku Summit was another step forward, paving the way for further integrating GUAM in wider network of international relations. The Heads of State underlined a steady growth of international influence and authority of GUAM, indicating support by the international community to GUAM and demonstrating that the Organization is on the right path.

The Heads of State signed the Baku Declaration "GUAM: Bringing Continents Together" of the Summit of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM, in which they reaffirmed the commonality of interests and approaches of the Member States and their aspiration towards creation of a common space of integration and security in the GUAM region.

The Heads of State positively assessed the high level of cooperation in the field of fight against terrorism, organized crime, drug circulation and other dangerous crimes, welcomed the conduct in the framework of the Summit of the joint session of the sector working groups on cooperation in law-enforcement and security spheres at the level of the heads of agencies.

The Heads of State identified the prospects of development of cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, including culture, education, healthcare, youth exchanges, tourism and sport. In this regard, the Heads of State welcomed the conduct in the framework of the Summit of the joint session of the sector working groups on humanitarian cooperation and took note of the signing of the Protocol on cooperation in the field of culture for 2007-2010.

Having discussed the development of economic, law-enforcement, security and humanitarian cooperation, the Heads of State adopted the GUAM Strategy for Sector Cooperation Development to give an impetus to the efficient interaction of the GUAM States in the respective directions.

Following the Decisions of Baku Summit, high-level conferences on "Basic principles of conflict resolution", "GUAM-transit" and "Strategy of GUAM development" were organized.

Batumi Summit, capitalizing on decisions of previous Summits and progress of GUAM, positioned it as Organization, promoting European values beyond existing borders of EU. The Heads of State noted with satisfaction the significant success in GUAM development, in strengthening political interaction and solidarity of the Member States as well as the stance of GUAM at the international arena.

The Heads of State signed the Batumi Declaration “GUAM – Integrating Europe’s East”, having reaffirmed the commonality of interests and objectives of the Member States in their aspiration to stand jointly against common risks and threats as well as to develop consistently a space of integration and security in the GUAM region as an integral part of all-European and Euro-Asian areas.

The Heads of State affirmed the role of GUAM as a mechanism of deepening regional, all-European and Euro-Asian integration, expanding the democratic space and promoting European values in the GUAM region, which contributes to the effective approximation of Member States of GUAM and EU.

The importance of implementation of the GUAM Strategy for Sector Cooperation Development in deepening interaction between the Member States in economic, humanitarian and law-enforcement spheres with the aim of ensuring sustainable development, increasing the well-being and prosperity of their peoples was also underlined.

The Batumi Summit reiterated determination of the Member States to assert democratic values, respect for human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, preservation and promotion of spiritual and cultural heritage of the peoples as well as consolidation of the spirit of tolerance, its readiness to make an active contribution to ensuring international peace, security and stability.

The Heads of State adopted the Statement on Development of GUAM Transportation Corridor and the Decision on Intensification of GUAM Sector Cooperation.

The implementation of the new mandate issued by the Heads of States through the Batumi Summit Declaration “GUAM: integrating Europe’s East ” as well as materializing provisions of the GUAM Strategy for Sector Cooperation Development continues to constitute the main core of the GUAM activities during the Georgian Presidency.

Eight Working Groups of GUAM (on Economy and Trade (Country-coordinator – Ukraine), on Transport (Country-coordinator – Azerbaijan), on Energy (Country-coordinator – Georgia), on Information Technologies (Country-coordinator – Ukraine), on Combating Terrorism, Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking (Country-coordinator – The Republic of Moldova), on Civil Emergency Planning (Country-coordinator – Azerbaijan), on Culture, Science and Education (Georgia), on Tourism (Country-coordinator – Moldova)) following guidelines of GUAM

Strategy for Sector Cooperation Development and new cooperation capacity of Secretariat, are streamlining their activities with a view of GUAM projects and programs implementation. Country-Coordinators, having taken responsibility for the respective 2 WGs each, are actively involved in the process, drafting Roadmaps for cooperation, based on GUAM Heads of State Council Documents, to serve with their Agendas implementation process of GUAM goals and objectives.

Building a stimulating environment for the economic prosperity is a shared responsibility. We believe that a regional level of policy making is highly relevant. Not as a substitute for good national policies, which will always be the key condition to build strong comparative advantages; but as a complementary activity to establish, at the regional level, a platform for partnership, cooperation and synergies.

We believe, due to such an approach we are gaining both collectively and individually. We expect that the Working Groups, being the backbone of the whole process, can and should strengthen this tendency and eventually introduce greater element of the common vision and synergetic strategy in the Organization. With this approach, in some years from now the situation will improve dramatically, considerably raising the profile of the Black Sea-Caspian region in the network of the international relations.

Although reaching its southeastern borders, GUAM is an integral part of the European space. It is an important, but not the sole reason, why EU cooperation with GUAM Member states, as well as idea of “Eastern Partnership”, involving all four GUAM Member states, should be treated as important development. We believe this trend is creating a new bilaterally advantageous and beneficial platform for EU-GUAM dialogue. New opportunities are emerging, which we need to further build up on.

The benefits of the regional cooperation are already well understood. Politically they lay in capacity to strengthen environment of stability and security through cooperation with neighbors. Assessment of political developments in the region on behalf of GUAM will be offered to the 16th Meeting of OSCE Ministerial Council by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia H.E. Madam E. Tkeshelashvili in Her capacity of GUAM Presidency. As far as economic benefits are concerned – they are based on the assertion, that access to large markets not only permits efficient management of the national economies, but also allows business communities to direct their personal business cost-effectively in a diverse market place. It also gives companies access to extended opportunities, usually at lower cost. It is difficult to imagine how any country can play a constructive role in the region unless it actively participates in a regional integration processes.

Needless to say, that last assertion is more important for the countries with limited human and natural resources, for the simple reason, that they have limited markets as well. Active engagement in the wider economic systems also has a positive impact on the institutional management, imposes more discipline and eventually leads to the improved competitiveness.

Membership in any international organization comes at a cost. But the benefits to be derived from uniform standards in areas as diverse as the environment, transport, energy, combating organized crime, employment laws, safety, human rights, borderless markets, harmonized taxation and, most importantly, a unified regional identity should outweigh this costs.

To implement its goals and objectives, our Organization is facilitating cooperation with external partners, both individual countries and organizations. GUAM has well-structured format of cooperation with the United States (priority – law enforcement cooperation, facilitation of trade and transport), Czech Republic (energy security and education), Poland (transport, tourism, training of diplomatic personnel) and Japan (energy efficiency, investments in GUAM region, tourism).

Our possible cooperation modalities with OSCE have strong foundation of shared philosophy: through facilitation of cooperation in all spheres to contribute to better understanding in Europe, enhance trust and, as a result, promote security and stability on the continent. First meeting with the Secretary General of OSCE H.E. Mr. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut had taken place on November, 29th, 2007 in Madrid. OSCE and GUAM started to mutually participate in each other's events – in Madrid, Batumi and now in Helsinki. GUAM is strongly in favor of developing cooperation with OSCE, both on ad hoc and wider basis, since goals and objectives of two Organizations are fully compatible.

To conclude with, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM express its gratitude to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for the invitation to attend 16th Meeting of OSCE Ministerial Council and for the opportunity to disseminate this written contribution.

www.guam-organization.org

secretariat@guam-organization.org

+38044.2063737 – tel.

+38044.2063006 – fax.