



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

of the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the OSCE
Mr. Paata Gaprindashvili

on the Ninth Round of the Geneva International Discussions

Delivered at the 793^d Meeting of the Permanent Council

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Mr. Chairman,

Ninth round of the Geneva talks was held on January 28, 2010 where the issues of security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region and the return of refugees and IDPs to the places of their habitual residence were discussed. Meetings of the two working groups were held, in which participants took part in an individual capacity. Head of the provisional administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District Dimitri Sanakoev and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia Giorgi Baramia participated at the ninth round of the Geneva talks. Deliberations were moderated by the UN, EU and the OSCE and attended by the representatives from Georgia, United States and the Russian Federation. Representatives of the proxy regimes also participated in the working groups.

Unfortunately, the ninth round of the discussions did not bring required results. Moscow and its proxy regimes in Tskhinvali and Sokhumi stubbornly opposed discussions on the document of the Co-Chairs' on "Basic elements of a framework for an agreement on the non-use of force and international security arrangements" and the paper on "Interim Steps in support of further discussions on a framework for a future agreement on the non-use of force and international security arrangements", which propose the concrete steps aimed at establishing effective international presence in the occupied territories and at a comprehensive agreement in accordance with the full implementation of the commitments under six point cease-fire agreement of August 12, 2008.

We want to reiterate that it is extremely cynical and requires continued and adequate international reaction that after having requested over and over the conclusion of the non-use of force for quite a long period, Russia now resists the proposed documents. In contrast, the Georgian side believes that despite the minimalistic approach of the Co-Chairs, these documents represent a step in the right direction and can be conducive to the establishment of effective international presence and security and stability in the occupied territories.

The Georgian participants once again raised the issue of full implementation of the August 12 cease-fire agreement, and the unconditional withdrawal of the Russian forces from the occupied regions of Georgia. In the spirit of a compromise Georgia proposed a stage-by-stage withdrawal of the Russian forces in a limited time-frame and their parallel replacement with international peacekeeping and police forces. This proposal does not endanger the role of the proxy regimes and, in our strong belief, provides an opportunity to move to a more substantial level of discussions. However, this position has not been shared by Moscow and its proxy regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali so far.

Currently there is no progress on these proposals despite the clear messages from all responsible participants of the Talks that strengthening of international presence is crucial. Participants stressed on numerous occasions the necessity of access of the international organizations, and particularly the EU Monitoring Mission to the occupied territories as an essential element for maintaining the stability and transparency in the occupied regions.

It should be noted that the representatives of the EU Monitoring Mission once again rejected the unsubstantiated claims from Russia on the alleged threat of attack from Georgia on the occupied regions. It was clear again that continued Russian Soviet type propaganda simply serves as a yet another destabilizing factor on the ground.

The Georgian side and the co-moderators once again called upon Moscow and the Tskhinvali proxy regime to engage constructively in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, which is currently stalled because of incomprehensible boycott from Tskhinvali under the instructions from Moscow. The Co-Chairs proposed to hold a working session, which was aimed at discussing the document directing towards the resumption of the IPRM and solving procedural issues. This working session unfortunately was not attended by the representatives from Moscow and Tskhinvali.

During the Discussions the Co-Chairs underlined the position that the local residents should not be detained for crossing the occupation line. It is our strong position that the persons detained for crossing the dividing lines should be released immediately. Currently Tskhinvali proxy authorities are still holding eleven citizens of Georgia, including the six local residents, who have been recently "convicted" for crossing the occupation line. Proxy authorities pledged to release these individuals to Commissioner Hammarberg almost a month ago.

Mr. Chairman, after the latest round in Geneva, just recently, on 31 January another local resident was abducted for accidentally crossing the occupation line and criminal charges were initiated against him over “illegal crossing of the South Ossetian state border”. It is another in chain of extremely dangerous actions provoked by Russia that has already acquired a form of human hunting.

In the Working Group II, participants continued to discuss a set of comprehensive measures proposed by the co-moderators aimed at undertaking joint steps for ensuring safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees to the places of their habitual residence. Here also, position of the proxy authorities and Moscow was extremely negative and cynical.

Those participants went as far as to question the fundamental right to safe and dignified return of the IDPs and refugees. Questioning of this right is even more cynical when it is done by those, who are responsible for and have condoned the atrocious acts of ethnic cleansing. This approach represents a continuation of the decades long policy of Moscow aimed at stalling the process of return at all costs. We have to once again report that even though discussions will continue during the next rounds, regrettably it seems unlikely that substantial steps can be made with respect to the safe and dignified return of the IDPs, unless the Russian occupation forces and its proxy regimes revise their positions.

As during the previous rounds participants discussed the situation with regard to the provision of the basic utilities - water and gas to the war affected populations around the occupied Tskhinvali Region and in the occupied Akhalkalaki district. Some concrete projects and sequence of action was proposed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, which was endorsed by the Georgian side, but has been again rejected by the representatives of the Tskhinvali proxy regime.

Participants agreed to hold a tenth round of the Geneva Discussions on March 30, 2010.

Dear Colleagues,

I also want to underline how much Georgia appreciates Kazakhstan’s active engagement in the whole Geneva process, in its all three dimensions I would say.

Mr. Chairman, we are very much looking forward to the forthcoming visit of CIO, Minister Saudabayev to Georgia.

Last but not least, I listened carefully to the distinguished Ambassador of Spain, who talked on Georgia also in the name of the European Union. Number of important issues has been highlighted in her statement apart from the elaborations on the latest round of Geneva talks. The Georgian position on those issues is well-known and without going into details of these topics, let me just say that it is fully in line with the position of the EU on these important issues.

Thank You.