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**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION AT WORKING SESSION III OF THE OSCE
ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 2 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The resolution of regional conflicts in the OSCE area has been and remains one of the most important priorities of Russian foreign policy, given that these conflict zones, particularly those located in the post-Soviet area, are home to a considerable number of our citizens and compatriots whose rights Russia has the duty to protect. In addition, one should not forget that with a number of these conflict regions we share centuries-old cultural, historic, social, economic, ethnic and other ties.

I should like, first of all, to recall the basic principles of regional conflict resolution. These include: respect for the Helsinki Final Act; the achievement of understandings by the parties to the conflicts themselves; consideration in all circumstances for the positions of each of the parties; the inadmissibility of settlement options involving the use of force; a careful attitude towards existing negotiating and peacekeeping formats; a stage-by-stage approach in the resolution process presupposing the overriding priority of confidence-building measures and measures to bring about dialogue between the parties; and, lastly, concern to ensure that persons caught up in the conflict zones do not have a feeling of being isolated.

Permit me now to turn to the actual subject of my statement — the settlement of the conflicts in the Caucasus.

Georgia's present policy with regard to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, accompanied as it is by a concentration of Georgian armed forces on the administrative borders, is giving rise to a serious escalation of tension in the region. The situation urgently calls for the signing without delay by the parties to the conflict of agreements on the non-use of force and on guarantees of security. Tbilisi's policy of seeking to dismantle the existing negotiating and peacekeeping mechanisms is both counterproductive and irresponsible. For it is well known that it is precisely thanks to Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zones that peace and stability have been maintained for more than 15 years, while the local population has had every opportunity to enjoy a calm working environment and peaceful development.

In recent times, the OSCE, exceeding its mandate, has devoted no small amount of attention to the situation in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone. We continue to take the view that what is required in these matters is a clear-cut specialization, for otherwise the result will be chaos and a duplication of work in the provision of mediation services (something that in

fact happened following the OSCE's interference in the Abkhaz problem). For that reason, permit me just a few words on the subject of Abkhazia in order to once again make clear our position, after which I shall dwell primarily on an area in which our Organization bears direct responsibility, namely the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

The further ratcheting up by the Georgian authorities of the issue concerning the presence and mandate of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces (CPKF) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone, using for this purpose the option set out in a decision of the CIS Council of Heads of State of 19 September 2003 permitting unilateral withdrawal from the agreement on peacekeeping forces, will do nothing but further exacerbate the situation in the region.

We ought not to forget that the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces are operating with the consent not only of the Abkhaz but also of the Georgian authorities, as laid down in the 1994 Moscow Agreement. In addition, these forces enjoy support that has been repeatedly confirmed under resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. The provisions on peacekeeping forces represent an integral part of the 1994 Agreement. Were these forces to withdraw, the entire legal basis for the settlement would be called into question and the architecture so laboriously erected for maintaining stability would collapse. I might add that an agreement was reached between the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces and the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) according to which the peacekeepers were given the responsibility of ensuring the safety of UNOMIG personnel. United Nations Security Council resolutions call for a review of the UNOMIG mandate in the event of a review of the CPKF mandate.

If the Georgian authorities are interested in a positive resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, they should first of all sign an agreement on the non-use of force and on security guarantees and should bring the situation in the upper part of the Kodori Valley into line with the Moscow Agreement and with United Nations Security Council resolution 1716 by withdrawing all their armed formations from that area (according to our information, there are at the present time up to 2,700 Georgian military personnel in the upper Kodori). What is more, this must be carried out without any additional conditions or counter-conditions.

As far as the Georgian-Ossetian settlement is concerned, here unfortunately the situation continues to leave much to be desired. The negotiating process has been brought to a halt. Important previous decisions by the Joint Control Commission (JCC) — on the establishment of a working group to prepare a settlement plan, on demilitarization, on joint activities by law enforcement agencies, and on other subjects — are not being implemented. At the same time, the greatest disquiet is caused by the fact that the Georgian Government has consciously adopted a policy aimed at dismantling the JCC, while simultaneously ignoring proposals even for informal meetings on the part of its co-chairmen. Instead, we are offered an inoperable 2+2+2 format, which is not only artificial but also lacks any legal basis. There is no need to explain that in the absence of a normal negotiating process the most militant forces, of which there are more than enough in Tbilisi, will develop an irrepressible desire to solve the existing problems through the use of force.

According to available data, Georgia has long since well prepared itself for initiating a military operation in South Ossetia. In the districts adjacent to Tskhinvali it has deployed rapid-reaction forces. Without clearance with the Joint Control Commission, Georgians have

been setting up illegal police checkpoints one after the other in the conflict zone and have been erecting fortified sites.

These facts cannot be ignored. There is no alternative to a negotiating process.

A second factor that is causing serious concern is the presence of a so-called provisional South Ossetian administration headed by Dmitry Sanakoyev in the village of Kurta. The artificial inflaming of passions having to do with this structure is exacerbating the politico-military situation in the region (for the reason that parallel law enforcement and security agencies are being created without the requisite legal basis or co-ordination by the parties) and is deepening social divisions among the inhabitants of South Ossetia. It is understandable that amidst conditions of this kind the restoration of confidence between the parties to the conflict will be extremely difficult.

We believe that the OSCE Mission to Georgia should adopt a more active and resolute position with regard to the need for the urgent resumption of normal work by the Joint Control Commission. The first step along these lines might be a meeting of the Commission's co-chairmen for the purpose of identifying the key measures to be taken with a view to reducing tension and restoring confidence in the region. The Russian Government has proposed that that meeting be held in Moscow. With the assistance of the OSCE, an appropriate agreement on the non-resumption of military activities, an agreement that would eliminate the threat of war in the region, should be drawn up and signed.

I might recall that on 23 January of this year a press conference was held in Moscow by Mr. Eduard Kokoity, the President of South Ossetia, at which he proposed a number of new initiatives (the setting up of a most favoured economic zone, including the territory of South Ossetia, the Alagir district of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania and the Gori district of Georgia, and the establishment of contacts through the channels of parliamentary and religious organizations) as additional measures for building confidence between the parties. For his part, he again reaffirmed his willingness to begin direct political negotiations with President Saakashvili. So far, however, there has been no constructive response from the Georgian capital.

Sometime back, both sides proposed essentially similar three-stage programmes for the resolution of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict: demilitarization and decriminalization of the region, the restoration of confidence and socio-economic rehabilitation, and the settlement of political issues. This outline would seem to be just as relevant today. The sole obstacle to progress is the absence of political will on the part of one of the parties. The OSCE, as a unique European security organization, must display political wisdom in this matter and contribute to a resolution of the problem. As the principal mediator and facilitating party, Russia will continue its efforts to achieve a lasting settlement.