

# **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

## **AD HOC DELEGATION TO GEORGIA**

**12 - 17 AUGUST 2008**

### ***REPORT FROM THE CHAIR:***

***Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BEGUIN***

**Annexes: Press statements  
Programme**

EURO/SP/sw/19.08.2008

## **1. Development of events**

The mission began on 12 August in the evening, at a time when the Georgian army was already defeated, its military infrastructure and most of its equipment destroyed, and when the Russian Army was moving from the conflict zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into the Georgian territories.

In spite of the fact that the peace agreement was in principal already concluded on 12 August, on 12, 13, 14 and 15 August the Russian Army moved further forward, from Tshkinvali, southwards to Gori, thus cutting the country in two. It closed down the main transport connection between Poti harbour and the capital Tbilisi by blocking the railway and main road at Gori, where the BTC pipeline also passes, and moved also from Abkhazia inland and south to Poti and then east towards Gori.

On August 15 and 16 the Russian line was at Kaspi, only about 30 km west of Tbilisi.

As the Russian front moved on, a similar pattern evolved in many, if not all parts of the occupied territory:

behind the Russian lines unidentifiable military personal - uniformed but without insignia of rank or unit - followed along, and eyewitnesses reported on violations, looting, killing, burning, and the destroying of houses, kidnapping etc which in many cases were filmed as evidence.

this vandalizing and destroying of everything "Georgian" to a maximum made the population panic and flee, thus giving the opportunity for more looting and burning of their homes.

the population fleeing in large numbers sought shelter with relatives or friends in Tbilisi and other regions so far untouched.

in Gori almost the entire population had fled, and the government knew of about 20,000 refugees having come into Tbilisi already on 14 August.

On 16 August the necessary signatures were finally collected on the peace agreement and the different additional documents, and President Medvedev announced the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the territories outside the conflict zones into the conflict zones. He also announced the newly declared perimeters of security for the peace keeping forces, although the troops were still moving deeper into the Georgian territories between Poti and Gori, they did not pursue their way towards Tbilisi.

## **2. Development of the mission**

As documented by the different attached press releases, the mission developed along with the political situation.

On August 12th, the Russian President declared having completed his military objectives but continued operations advancing into Georgian territory towards Gori.

On 13 August, the rapporteur therefore drove up to Gori in an international convoy to observe whether the Russian Forces were still moving forward or withdrawing,

meeting Russian Army General BORISSOV outside Gori, who declared to be withdrawing back into the South Ossetian (SO) conflict zone as of August 15th.

On 14 August the rapporteur wanted to join a convoy of humanitarian aid waiting for departure in Tbilisi, and to open thus a "Humanitarian Corridor" into the conflict areas, badly needed by the population still in Gori.

The Russian army authorities refused the opening of a humanitarian corridor and did not allow any foodstuffs or other goods to be delivered into the conflict area.

Therefore on August 15th the rapporteur joined a TV crew and a film team, and travelled towards Gori, but could not go beyond Kaspi, half way between Tbilisi and Gori. There, thanks to local contacts, the EP team visited damage caused by earlier Russian air raids bombing the Tbilisi - Poti railway, a bridge and Cement factory, all in Kaspi.

When the Russian army moving east from Gori towards Tbilisi reached Kaspi and cut off the main road, the EP team returned to Tbilisi via Mzketa on a secondary road.

On 16 August the Russian President Medvedev signed the peace agreement, and immediately a "diplomatic convoy" led by French Ambassador Eric FOURNIER which included the EP team and the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, his Ambassador and a French journalist started towards Gori. The objective was to make the Russian army recognize and honour the agreement and to carry the news of the signing of the agreement into Gori, at the same time learning more about the humanitarian situation in the city. The convoy met with the only two representatives of the civic administration still in town, the Governor and the local Member of Parliament, and some quite desperate population, clearly in need of help, in particular food.

When in Gori, the delegation learned of substantial Russian military movements about the size of a batallion, leaving Gori in the direction of Tbilisi, and saw a unit of some 50 heavy vehicles in same direction.

### **3. European Union as negotiator**

President Sarkozy exercised his function as President-in-office of the European Council when negotiating the peace agreement, as he made very clear at his Press Conference on the night of Tuesday 12 August in Tbilisi.

Therefore the European Union now has a very visible role and responsibility in the resolution of this conflict and in the follow up to it, as the Foreign Affairs Ministers Council confirmed on August 13th.

This certainly has very important consequences not only for the immediate humanitarian aid, but also for the short term rehabilitation and return of refugees into the conflict areas outside South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as for the mid- term rebuilding of homes and infrastructure and re-allocating of refugees who cannot return in their homes, and, in a longer perspective, also for the reconstruction of the heavily damaged economy of the entire area.

However efficient the peace negotiations were, there was an absence of administrative infrastructure on the side of the European Council during and after the negotiations for the resolution of the conflict. Thanks to the French Presidency's quick reaction and immediate availability to be active, that the negotiations took place already four days after the conflict broke out. However, the peace agreement could have been implemented quicker and been honoured by all sides earlier, had there been a more coherent handling of the procedure of signing and depositing the relevant documents.

Many elements of the peace agreement, notably

- the respect of the agreements in detail,
- the role of the peace keepers, their composition, military strength and position in the zones,
- the exact role and responsibility of international observers,
- the definition of perimeters of additional security for peace keeping troops

and many more points will need close supervision when implemented. The different sides of the conflict also need to have an authority to turn to in case of non-compliance by their opponents and compulsory complaint procedures have to be set up.

#### **4. The European Parliament**

The European Parliament had a good presence during this difficult crisis period, at the national level in Georgia and on the international media level, whereas OSCE PA and Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, where both parties are members, were not present.

A great number of contacts were made on the political level and also on the "street" level and in the conflict area, and the rapporteur was approached and honoured for the European Parliament's stand during the conflict. The message of the President of Parliament which the rapporteur transmitted was clearly well received. The Parliament could consider how to continue with this effort, now, in the immediate period of implementing the agreement, but also in the longer view of the reconstruction period.

#### **5. Regional consequences**

Further to the very dubious future of the conflict zones within the territorial sovereignty of Georgia, there will be consequences far beyond Georgia's boundaries, in the South Caucasus region and even further, concerning

- Georgia being no longer a CIS member
- Georgia and Russia both being members of the OSCE and the Council of Europe
- the EU-Georgia PCA
- Georgia as part of ENP East, wishing to adhere to the EU and Nato
- the role of EU neighbours such as Bulgaria for Georgia's reconstruction

and many more (Pabsec e.a.), without even raising the subject of 3rd countries, for example the pending negotiations of the EU-Russia PCA.

## ***“EU now major partner in Georgian peace process”***

### **Press release**

Tbilisi, 13 August 2008

**Marie Anne Isler Béguin**, Chair of the European Parliament’s South Caucasus Delegation, sent on an ad hoc mission to Georgia by European Parliament’s President Poettering, joined the European peace negotiations in Tbilisi, meeting up with European leaders on Tuesday night when they concluded an immediate cease-fire.

“This agreement is a framework for peace between Russia, Georgia and the concerned regions, negotiated by the French Presidency of the European Union. The EU is now a major partner in the Georgian peace process and will have to follow up to make it work. This needs the European Member States to stand together”.

Mrs Isler Béguin stressed the importance of the internationalization of the peace process and of the agreement respecting Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

She said the most important element of the peace plan is the immediate cease-fire and an immediate halt of all atrocities and she called on Russia to respect the agreement and the withdrawal of its troops.

With regard to the still ongoing Russian military operations reported from in and around Gori, she pointed out that the peace agreement as finalized in the early morning hours might take a day to be put into place by the Russian deployment and that one should not judge the agreement by its first day results.

Mrs Isler Béguin underlined that the most urgent step now is to help the victims and the estimated up to 100 000 refugees that have left or lost their homes.

She added, “my mission here is now to find out what the Georgian people need from the European Union”.

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## ***"Humanitarian Corridors urgently needed in Georgia"***

### **Press release**

Tbilisi, 14 August 2008

Marie Anne ISLER-BEGUIN, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to Georgia, at a press conference held today in Tbilisi jointly with French Ambassador Eric FOURNIER, representing the Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, urgently appealed to the French Presidency to exercise the utmost pressure on the follow up of the successfully negotiated peace agreement between Russia and Georgia.

"Having been outside of Gori city yesterday evening, where I was stopped and impeded to enter the city by the Russian army, and based on many eyewitness reports from Gori city and from a great number of Georgian villages in the Gori region, atrocities allegedly continue to take place. There is no medical help, no food and no shelter available for these people. Many are hiding in the woods and the Russian army is not keeping up the public order. Now we need most urgently to install the necessary corridors for humanitarian aid, as foreseen by the peace agreement, to allow the Georgian people to look after and care for their refugees, their wounded and their dead."

Marie Anne Isler-Béguin insisted on the need for the European Union to put the necessary pressure on the Russian Federation and also at the international level to set the peace process into action as scheduled by the peace agreement.

"The next step is for the Russian army to withdraw from Gori and to resume its positions as peace keeping mission. I will personally stay here and observe this move, and I want the Russian army to leave Gori by tomorrow, 15 August.

Mrs. Isler-Béguin denied having evidence of the Russian Army allegedly placing mines in Gori or blasting public buildings and infrastructure and thus deliberately creating maximum damage in Gori.

Mrs Isler-Béguin decided to prolong her stay in Georgia until Sunday, 17 August, since she is one of the few international observers on the ground, and wants to see personally the Russian side to follow the peace agreement and to honour their commitments.

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## ***People in Gori need urgently food***

### **Press release**

GORI, 16 August 2008

**Marie Anne Isler Beguin**, Head of the Delegation of the European Parliament to Georgia participated in a first diplomatic convoy into the city of Gori led by the French ambassador Eric FOURNIER representing the Presidency-in-office of the European Union, and including Mr. Milen KEREMEDCHIEV, deputy foreign minister of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Ambassador, this 16 August 2008 afternoon.

She met Mr. VARDZELASHVILI, governor of Gori city and Mfr. Barsoshvili, Deputy of Gori, the only Georgian administration left in the ghost town of Gori.

“The city is empty, almost all population has fled. Those staying behind have no more food supplies. While Russian troops patrol during day time, after curfew at 22.00 hrs illegal militias of unknown origin are free to loot, steal, and intimidate those still in Gori.

There is urgent need to open a corridor for humanitarian help for these people, now. They need food, they need hope, and they need to know that we are here and will look after them!”

Mrs Isler Beguin calls to the International community to assure an immediate opening of this first humanitarian corridor and especially food supply to the population of Gori city.

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COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE - Tbilisi/Brussels August 16th, 2008

**Russian Army moving to Tbilisi**

**Isler Beguin: "I call International community to stop Russian army from entering Tbilisi"**

**Marie Anne ISLER-BEGUIN, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to Georgia**, having returned from the village of Kaspi in the night of 15 - 16 August, when the Russian army already moved into Kaspi and occupied the main road and railway connecting Gori with Tbilisi about 50 km outside of Tbilisi, launched an international appeal to stop the Russian army short of entering the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, although the cease fire had been agreed since Tuesday 12 August between President Sarkozy and President Medvedev:

***"Russian troops are blowing up the railway bridges in Kaspi, uniformed soldiers are pillaging the village, and the troops are moving on towards Tbilisi on both sides of the river, burning and looting the peaceful Georgian territory. This has to be stopped immediately..I call on the international community to intervene with the Russian President by all means, most urgently!"***

Marie Anne ISLER-BEGUIN pointed out, that the Russian army, having destroyed all river crossings at Kaspi, would now have to move up to Tbilisi where the next bridge is. She herself will join diplomatic convoy led by French ambassador Eric Fournier as president in office to Kaspi.

Further info - Tbilisi

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## COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE - Tbilisi/Brussels 17 August 2008

### Georgia

#### **Isler Beguin: Russia now has to honor its commitments**

Visiting an IDP camp newly erected in the outskirts of Tbilisi, **Marie Anne Isler Beguin, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation to Georgia**, before heading back to Brussels, stated:

“Russia has signed the peace agreement with Georgia negotiated by the French European Union Presidency. Now Russia has to withdraw its troops into the agreed boundaries.

Cities such as Gori where I was yesterday as first international witness after the signing of the signing of the peace agreement by President Medvedev, need urgently to be opened to the Georgian and international humanitarian aid. Georgian civil administration needs to take over and guarantee the safety of the people. This is a precondition for the refugees such as these admirable people I met in this camp in Tbilisi, who only wait to return back to their families and homes in Gori.”

Marie Anne ISLER-BEGUIN pointed out that the European Union and the international community now have to assure that the peace agreement is finally respected not only by the Georgian side, but also by the Russian government and army and all other militia which are actually harassing the Georgian people, looting, burning and vandalizing the Georgian countryside well beyond the conflict areas.

***Next Wednesday, Ms. Isler Beguin will attend the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament in Brussels.***

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# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Programme of visit of Mrs Isler Beguin, Chairperson of the South Caucasus Delegation, to Georgia, 12-17 August 2008

## **Tuesday 12 August**

18.00 Arrival at the Marriott Hotel in Tbilisi

18.15 Briefing meeting with Mr Robin LIDDELL, Chargé d'Affaires, European Commission, Tbilisi Delegation Office

19.30 Briefing meeting with Mr Peter SEMNEBY, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

21.00 Participation at the Mass Demonstration on Avenue Rastaveli/Parliament Square. Encounters and conversations with many Georgians of all classes, including intellectuals, artists, singers, academics etc

22.30 Mrs Isler Beguin addresses the crowd from the stage with a message from the European Parliament

23.00 Meeting with the 'Group of Presidents'

- President Mikhail SAKASHVILI of Georgia
- President Viktor YUCHENKO of Ukraine
- President Lech KACZINSKI of Poland
- President Valdas ADAMSKUS of Lithuania
- President Toomas ILVES of Estonia

and Prime Minister Ivar GODMANIS of Latvia

Joint appearance with the group on the stage at the demonstration

### **Wednesday 13 August**

00.00 Meeting with the 'Group of Presidents', President Nicolay SARKOZY, President-in-Office of the EU and French Foreign Minister, Mr Bernard KOUCHNER at the Georgian Parliament

01.00 Conclusion of the Peace Agreement

01.15 Press Conference with President SARKOZY and President SAAKASHVILI at the Presidential Palace

02.00 Meeting with President SARKOZY, President SAAKASHVILI and Mr KOUCHNER before their departure

02.30 Various interviews and media work

10.00 Working breakfast with President Toomas ILVES

11.00 Working meeting in order to:

- set up a programme
- publish a press release
- EP website
- media contacts

14.00 Meeting with Mr David DARCHIASHVILI, co-chairperson of the EU-Georgia PCC

16.00 Organisation of the 1st diplomatic convoy to Gori

18.00 Departure of the diplomatic convoy led by the National Security Council Secretary, Kahra LOHMAIA with Mrs ISLER BEGUIN, H.E. T. LUKK, Estonian Ambassador to Georgia, and journalists

18.30 Convoy is blocked outside Gori and subsequent meeting with Russian General A. BORISSOV, Commander of the 58th Regiment

22.00 "Le téléphone sonne" en directe avec Mr Tornike GORDADZE, Directeur de l'Institut Francais des Etudes Anatoliennes, Baku

24.00 Return from Gori to Tbilisi

### **Thursday 14 August**

11.00 Working breakfast with media contacts

13.00 Meeting with Mr David RAKVIASHVILI, Deputy Minister for Re-integration

14.00 Meeting with Mr Temuri YAKUBASHVILI, Minister for Re-integration

15.00 Meeting with Mr David USURPASHVILI, Chairman of the Republican Party (Opposition)

16.00 Press Briefing at the Marriot Hotel

17.00 Joint Press Conference with H.E. Eric FOURNIER, French Ambassador representing the EU Presidency (Press Communique: 'Humanitarian Corridors')

19.00 Meeting with Mr David BUKRADZE, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament

20.00 Direct Emission with TF1

22.00 Direct Emission with France 24

### **Friday 15 August**

Morning meetings with the EC Delegation Representative, Mr Per EKLUND, the Council Representative, Mr Peter SEMNEBY and various Government officials concerning the possibility of sending a first convoy of humanitarian aid into Gori, including Mr Vaivo MERABASHVILI, Minister of Interior, Mrs Gila BARAMIDZE, Minister for Integration and Mr Sandro KVTASHVILI, Minister of Health along with representatives of the Ministry for Finance and Tbilisi Town Hall and contacts with Mr Giga BOKERIA, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Georgian Convoy of Humanitarian Aid was refused entry into Russian occupied Gori.

14.00 Departure for the town of Kaspi (jointly with the France 24 TV crew and Bernard Henry Levy film crew)

16.00 Visit of Kaspi, witnessing damage from the Russian air-raid of the Tbilisi-Poti railway, the cement factory and the civilian area

17.45 Direct Emission with France 24 from Kaspi Bridge (which was blown up the next day)

18.00 Departure from Kaspi via Mzketa as the Russian Army had closed the main road from Kaspi to Tbilisi, only about 30 kms from Tbilisi

21.00 Dinner with French Ambassador Eric FOURNIER, Georgian Prime Minister Lado GURGENADZE and US State Department Representative Matthew BRYZA

23.00 Repeated telephone and fax contacts establishing the exchange of the signed agreement between the US Secretary of State, the Elysee and the Kremlin

### **Saturday 16 August**

11.00 Press Release and working breakfast with media contacts. Organisation of diplomatic convoy

14.00 Meeting at the French Embassy

15.00 Departure of the Diplomatic Convoy to Gori, composed of:

- French Ambassador Eric FOURNIER
- Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Milen KEREMEDCHIEV, accompanied by the Bulgarian Ambassador to Georgia
- Mrs ISLER BEGUIN accompanied by Mr Stefan PFITZNER and Ms Tamar GUGULASHVILI

and escorted by French and Bulgarian Embassy security vehicles

15.30 Meeting with Mr David BARAMIDZE, Georgian Deputy Prime Minister at the Kaspi checkpoint

16.00 Arrival at the Russian checkpoint outside Gori  
Meeting with the Georgian Security Council Secretary Kahra LOHMAIA  
Escorted by Russian Military to the city centre of Gori

Meeting at the Town Hall with Governor VARDZELASHVILI and Member of Parliament, Mr Zureb BARSOSHVILI

Meeting inhabitants of Gori outside the Town Hall

18.00 Departure of Diplomatic Convoy from Gori

20.00 Press Conference at Hotel Marriott Tbilisi jointly with

- Mrs Eka ZGULADZE, Ministry of Interior
- Mr Vano MERABASHVILI, Minister of Interior
- Mr Sandro KVTASHVILI, Minister of Health
- H.E. Ambassador Eric FOURNIER  
(press communiqué)

### **Sunday 17 August**

09.00 Meeting with Patriarch Catholicos ILIA 2nd at Tbilisi Cathedral

11.00 Visit of the IDP camp  
Meeting with Mr Koba SUBALIANI, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Health, responsible for refugees and Mr TETERUCHADZE, Camp Official  
(press communiqué)

13.00 Departure for the airport

18.08.2008/SP/sw