

EU – GEORGIA PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

ELEVENTH MEETING 16-17 February 2009 BRUSSELS

Co-Chairs: Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BÉGUIN and Mr David DARCHIASHVILI

Final Statement and Recommendations pursuant to Article 89 of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

Under the co-chairmanship of Mrs Marie Anne ISLER BÉGUIN (Greens/EFA, France) and Mr David DARCHAISHVILI, the eleventh meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Brussels on 16-17 February 2009. The Committee exchanged views with H.E. Mrs Salomé SAMADASHVILI, Ambassador of Georgia to the European Union, representing the Government of Georgia, Mrs Nadezda HOLIKOVA, representing the Czech Presidency-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, and Mr John KJAER, Head of Unit, representing the European Commission.

The Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC)

Internal situation of Georgia after the war with Russia

1. recalls the damaging armed conflict between Georgia and Russia of August 2008; deplores the grave humanitarian consequences of the war;
2. welcomes the conclusion of 12 Aug 2008 and 8 Sept 2008 Ceasefire Agreements negotiated by President Sarkozy, on behalf of the EU and the parallel rapid deployment of a EU civilian Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) whose mandate covers Georgia's entire territory; deplores, in this regard, the failure of the Russian Federation to fully implement all points of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008;
3. strongly condemns the plans of the Russian Federation to locate additional military bases in Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia, including a naval base in the town of Ochamchire and an airbase in the town of Gudauta;
4. takes note of the efforts made by President Saakashvili to keep the internal political situation under control; also takes note of President Saakashvili's pledge to implement a "second wave" of democratic reforms and steps undertaken including strengthening of parliament, ensuring participation of representatives of oppositional parties in decision making process, ensuring the inviolability of private property, improving freedom of the media and increasing the independence of the judiciary;
5. notes the appointment of the new Government of Georgia and its actions regarding the rapid provision of housing for Internally Displaced Persons from South Ossetia and

encourages it to focus on urgent economic action that is needed in order to take the country out of the current situation and improve conditions for the internally displaced persons from the breakaway provinces;

6. welcomes the direct involvement of the Georgian Parliament in establishing the truth about the origin of the war with Russia by setting up a parliamentary commission to study the events surrounding the war. It also takes note that commission hearings were mostly broadcast live and of the fact that the commission finished its work and published its report in December 2008;
7. welcomes the investigation launched by the Georgian Prosecutor General's Office into alleged human rights and humanitarian law violations committed by both sides in the course of the war and in its aftermath;

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

8. strongly condemns the recognition of independence of the two provinces by Russia and Nicaragua, as well as the non-mandated presence of Russian military troops in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia, especially in Akhagori, Perevi, Upper Abkhazia and in villages around Tskhinvali controlled by the central government of Georgia before the breakout of the conflict;
9. expresses concern over the decision of the Russian Federation and the de facto authorities of the two regions to cut all residual links with Georgia and their refusal to allow international monitors of OSCE and EUMM access to Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia; expresses concern over the human rights and security situation of ethnic Georgians remaining in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who are reportedly increasingly under pressure to renounce their Georgian passports and their Georgian identity or leave. In line with PACE resolution 1633 and 1647, urges the Russian Federation to ensure that these acts of ongoing ethnic cleansing stop and that necessary conditions are met to ensure the safe return of *all* IDPs;
10. is very concerned about several shooting incidents and continued provocations along the administrative lines of the break-away regions, which could lead to renewed hostilities; it deplores in particular the shooting of 16 Georgian policemen and the recent attacks on EU monitors close to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Considers in this regard that the full access of international monitors to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as the establishment of a new internationalised peacekeeping force in the region, are essential to guarantee stability and security of these regions;
11. regrets the lack of an agreement so far for the extension of the OSCE military monitoring mission in Georgia and on the closing down of the mission from 1 January 2009; takes note of the decision of the OSCE to extend the presence of 20 unarmed monitors in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia but stresses that this presence does not fill the vacuum left by the OSCE military monitoring mission in Georgia;
12. regrets that the mandate of UNOMIG has been extended for only 4 months and furthermore regrets the fact that the UN mission is now mentioned without and geographical definition
13. welcomes the memorandum of understanding signed between the EUMM and the Georgian Ministry of Defence stipulating certain restrictions to the movements of the

Georgian armed forces in the vicinity of the administrative border lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that will contribute to stabilise the situation and implement the 6-Point Plan;

The humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia

14. deplores in particular the high number of casualties of the war and the increased number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from South Ossetia and from Upper Kodori Valley, who added to the hundreds of thousands of victims of the ethnic cleansing of 1993, and who are still deprived of the possibility of returning safely to their homes; calls upon the Russian Federation, as the occupying power, and the de facto authorities to provide secure conditions for the return of IDPs and to respect the inviolability of property rights in the conflict zones, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council; calls on the Council and the European Commission to continue playing an active role in assisting Georgia in this regard;
15. welcomes the report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population and subsequent PACE resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 12 January 2009, which describes in detail the plight of the internally displaced persons and refugees in Georgia;
16. is deeply concerned about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Perevi, Upper Abkhazia, in the Akhagori and Gali districts where few remaining Georgians could be forced to leave due to lack of security, ongoing process of forced delivery of passports and ethnic cleansing as well as increasing isolation from other parts of Georgia;
17. calls on Russia and the de facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to remove unreasonable restrictions on the access of humanitarian organisations to the conflict areas and to guarantee the safety and security of all persons under their de facto control also in the newly occupied territories of the Akhagori district and Perevi, and the Kodori Valley; ensure that no further evictions take place that will lead to ethnic cleansing;
18. welcomes Georgian government's ongoing efforts to provide durable solutions for those internally displaced persons who have little or no prospect of return in the near future, especially the building of over 6,000 small two bedroom family houses before the winter;
19. calls on the Georgian authorities to continue providing primary medical aid, access to healthcare facilities and psychological assistance paying particular attention to the needs of children and young people; guarantee that the internally displaced women or children do not become victims of trafficking or violence;
20. notes the importance of well coordinated and adequate donor aid response, taking into consideration the needs stated by the Government and the civil society organisations operating in the country;

Relations between Georgia and Russia in the aftermath of the armed conflict

21. expresses concern over the swift action by Russia to strengthen links between the military, economic and administrative structures of the two separatist provinces with its own; In this regard, condemns the decision of the Russian Federation to build new

military bases in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia in violation of the post-conflict cease-fire agreements;

22. notes the importance of international discussions launched in Geneva last Autumn, brokered by the UN, the EU and the OSCE as a unique forum for dialogue between conflicting parties; regrets blocking of incident prevention mechanism proposed by co-chairs-OSCE, EU, UN by the delegation of the Russian Federation; looks forward to a more concrete outcome after the next round of talks in the middle of February 2009;
23. welcomes the resumption of gas supply to South Ossetia and the recent agreement reached between Georgia and Russian state-owned Inter RAO UES concerning the management of the hydropower plant located on Inguri River;
24. calls on the two sides to resume dialogue on other areas where some form of bilateral cooperation is possible; welcomes the positive outcome of recent contacts between the Georgian Patriarchate and the Russian authorities;

Economic situation of Georgia after the war with Russia

25. takes into account the significant financial assistance granted by the international financial institutions; however, draws attention of the Georgian authorities to ensure that the funds allocated will be used for the economic recovery of the country from the conflict;
26. notes the establishment by the government of Georgia of a special Anti Crisis Council mandated to oversee spending of the international aid chaired by a representative of parliamentary opposition;
27. welcomes the swift measures taken by the National Bank of Georgia in order to ensure that the banking sector continues to function, thus averting the collapse of the Georgian banking system and maintaining relative stability in the financial sector; urges the Georgian authorities, however, to pay particular attention to the vulnerability of this sector;
28. recalls the success of the earlier tax reform and welcomes the reduction of income tax from 25% to 20% from January 2009; as a result of this action, expects the President's pledge to make the fight against poverty and unemployment his top priority to become a reality in Georgia, in particular regarding the job creation policy;
29. expresses concern, however, about the general slow-down in the economy after the August military conflict with Russia and as a result of the economic downturn of Georgia's main trading partners;

The relations between the European Union and Georgia after the war

30. welcomes the deployment of the European Union Monitoring Mission to Georgia (EUMM) and the appointment of a European Union Special Representative for the crisis in Georgia; stresses the need for the EU to continue to seek effective ways for the peaceful solution of the Georgian-Russian conflict, including the strengthening and extension of the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to cover protection and peacekeeping functions covering both sides of the *de facto* borders of

South Ossetia and Abkhazia and other parts of the former conflict zones that are occupied;

31. welcomes the establishment, by the European Union (EU), on 2 December 2008, of an independent international fact-finding mission on the conflict in Georgia to investigate the origins and the course of the conflict; welcomes Georgian government's declared willingness the support the establishment of an independent international inquiry and to fully co-operate with it;
32. welcomes the successful Donor's Conference for Georgia and the EU's own pledge of up to 500 million EURO financial assistance package granted to Georgia for 2008-2010, which started to be delivered by the end of 2008;
33. welcomes the signature on 20 January 2009 of a Joint Statement between the European Commission and Georgia concerning political conditionality linked to the implementation of post-conflict increased EU financial assistance to Georgia;

Georgia and the Eastern Partnership

34. welcomes the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of December 2008 on "**Eastern Partnership**", which constitutes a step further in forging closer relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours, at both bilateral and multilateral level, taking into account the current political and economic realities;
35. strongly supports Georgia's European aspirations and expects the clear expression of its strong commitment to European democratic principles and values, and substantial progress Georgia has made over the last years, which will give Georgia the perspective of the conclusion of an Association Agreement with the EU in a foreseeable future;
36. strongly supports the conclusions of the EU extraordinary Council in September, 2008 that called on the Commission to start negotiations with Georgia on visa facilitation and an enhanced free trade agreement; notes, however, that five months have passed since then and urges that real efforts be made by the Commission to speed up the process on both issues with a commitment to concluding both during the Czech Council Presidency;
37. acknowledges the growing relevance of the Black Sea as an "energy corridor" between Europe and the Caspian Sea and its crucial strategic importance for the EU; Encourages the conclusion of a **Memorandum of Understanding** on energy issues, *inter alia* with Georgia, that will support and monitor the security of energy supply and transit;
38. highlights the substantial complementarity between the Black Sea Synergy and Eastern Partnership Programme, which combine efforts to solve problems at regional level with the European aspirations of the countries of the Black Sea region;

Adopted unanimously.